

## Angels and Devils

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**Author:** Beren ([Beren@dtwins.co.uk](mailto:Beren@dtwins.co.uk)) (beren\_writes at LJ)

**Website:** <http://www.plotbunny.co.uk>

**Pairing:** Harry/Draco

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**Warnings:** This story is set post OOTP and therefore has SPOLIERS. If you don't want to know anything that went on in book five do not read this story.

**Summary:** Harry defeated Voldemort: his act of heroism is famous throughout the wizarding world. He's trying to finish his final year at Hogwarts in peace, but something peculiar is happening to him, something he never would have expected. It's all rather embarrassing and making his life very complicated.

**Author's Notes:** This fic has Veela!Draco and lots of other things that appear to have become fandom clichés, which was part of the point in writing it :). I've had great fun with this fic, trying to explore ideas in a slightly different way than I have seen before. It may have Veela!Draco, but it is all from Harry POV in case you were wondering. I will be posting in two blocks, the first five parts now (05Jan05) and the second five parts next week. Thanks go to Soph for the beta.

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## Chapter 1 Discoveries

Harry sat up away from the back of the sofa and stretched, but it did no good, the ache that felt as if it was coming from under and between his shoulder blades failed to go away. At first he had thought that maybe he had pulled something in Quidditch practice, but usually aches and pains just went away. A trip to the hospital wing had crossed his mind after a couple of days, but Harry didn't like to bother people with minor things. If growing up with the Dursleys had taught him anything it was to be self-sufficient, and a minor back pain did not warrant any fuss.

"You okay, mate?" Ron asked from where he was currently trouncing Neville at chess.

"Back ache," Harry replied and climbed to his feet to see if that would help at all.

"Still?" his friend said with a small frown and turned to face him fully.

Ron had noticed his discomfort the previous day and Harry had put him off with something about wrenching his shoulder while flying. From the expression on his friend's face now though, Harry doubted that he was going to get away with the same this time. All he really wanted was for the annoying ache to go away. Being a wizard he thought that he really should be able to cope with a simple pain, but so far the muscle relaxant potion he had made in detention the previous week was not working.

As he shifted his shoulders in an attempt to dislodge the dull throbbing it suddenly became a sharp stabbing pain. The agony shot through his back and down his spine causing him to give a startled, pain filled cry and for a moment he felt light-headed.

"Harry!" Hermione said worriedly and shot out of her seat to his side.

His friend placed one hand under Harry's elbow and one gently on his back as she offered her support. Almost instantly she pulled one arm back and he looked at her to find her staring at her palm.

"Harry," Hermione said very slowly as if trying to remain calm, "we need to take you to Madame Pomfrey."

The expression in his friend's eyes was very worried and it occurred to Harry that the pain was gone, but the ache had increased considerably. At his questioning glance Hermione turned over her hand and revealed a deep red palm.

"You're bleeding," she said evenly.

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Ron and Hermione had both insisted on accompanying him to the hospital wing and it had only been both of their firm stances on the matter that had stopped half the seventh year from following them as well. Ever since the end of the war they had been a very tight-knit group and they were protective, especially when it came to Harry. The fact that he had survived at all was something of a miracle and his housemates took looking after him very seriously. The fact that he had been in a coma for two months after his victory over Voldemort and the whole year in his house had visited him in rotation the entire time seemed to have made him central to their lives. It had been over six months ago and Harry was

as back to normal as he ever had been, but Gryffindor house did not seem to see it that way.

The moment they had entered the hospital wing Poppy had sat him on one of the beds and lifted the back of his black t-shirt to take a quick look. That was where things had become a little stranger. Poppy had muttered something to herself, sent Hermione and Ron off with platitudes, and then pulled screens round the bed.

"Please remove you top and lie face down on the bed, Harry," the woman said in a fair impression of her normal calm tone, but missing it just slightly.

Harry had spent months recovering under Poppy's care after he had defeated Voldemort and he knew her very well. That was why when there was no one else around he always called her 'Poppy' and she always called him 'Harry'. It was also why he knew something was not right. He had come to know the healer very well over the weeks he had been bed ridden after the coma, and the summer holiday where he had stayed at school to catch up with all the work he had missed while unconscious, and his instincts told him something was bothering her as she busied about doing her job.

Lying down on his front with his arms under his head he was very nervous about what Poppy had found, but he had not yet worked up the courage to ask. He found that the position was actually far more comfortable than any he had used as of yet and it eased the ache somewhat, which was at least a relief.

"The bleeding is superficial," Poppy said efficiently and he felt her gentle touch on his back, "but it is messy. I shall clean the wounds first, it may sting a little."

Before Harry could ask the obvious question of 'What wounds?' the healer moved away to retrieve her supplies and almost as soon as she returned something cold and painful touched the skin between his shoulder blades. He groaned and buried his face in the pillow as whatever Poppy was using did, as suggested, sting like buggery. It took about thirty seconds for the needle like sensations his nerves were sending him to slowly ebb away into blissful numbness and Harry slowly relaxed. The healer's touch was gentle and as she cleaned the injury and the rest of his back he was lulled into a thoughtless daze.

Only when the swabs were replaced by the slight pressure of fingers did Harry remember his burning question.

"What is it, Poppy?" he asked as the healer efficiently probed his back. "Why was I bleeding?"

There was worrying silence from the school nurse for a few moments and Harry swivelled his head to try and look at the woman. Poppy was staring at his back seriously and he did not like the expression on her face. He really didn't like it when she stood back, noticed he was looking at her and gave him a forced smile.

"Nothing to worry about, Harry," she said in a far too cheerful voice. "I'll be back in a few minutes: there is just something I need to check from your medical records. You lie still and relax."

And with that Poppy pulled the blanket from the end of the bed up over him, turned, and left him in his isolated little world inside the screens. For about ten seconds Harry tried to peer over his own shoulder and see what had caused the healer such discomfort, but of course it was futile, and it hurt. Eventually he

collapsed back onto the bed and stared at the headboard wondering what on earth he had managed to do this time.

After the defeat of Voldemort Harry had hoped his days of lying in the infirmary were over, but obviously he had been wishing for the impossible. Whatever potion Poppy had used on his back had eased the discomfort and he managed to stay alert for five minutes waiting for her to return before the relief let his mind drift. It had been three days since the ache had started and at least Harry could enjoy the fact that it was gone for a while.

He was not sure how long he was alone, but he snapped back to reality when he heard the familiar tones of Professor Dumbledore and Poppy. They were talking quietly and their voices were very low, but if he strained hard he could just make out some of their conversation.

"And there is no doubt, Poppy," the headmaster was saying calmly, "this is not someone's idea of a joke."

"No," Madame Pomfrey replied in kind, "I checked for hexes and potions: this is a natural phenomenon."

"With no signs of complications," Dumbledore sounded as if he was confirming something the healer had already told him.

"They look perfectly healthy," the woman told the old wizard firmly. "The poor dear must have been in pain for days. I sometimes wonder what that boy's been though when something like this didn't bring him running the moment it started."

Their voices dropped much lower suddenly and Harry could not hear what they were saying. He was intrigued and a little worried, but it didn't sound as if he was about to die or anything like that, which put pay to his worst fears.

"Ah well," the headmaster's voice rose again, "I suppose we should give Harry the news. I do wish it was not always him."

Poppy made an agreeing noise and then Harry could hear the sound of footsteps. He swivelled slightly as the screens rustled and his eyes met those of Dumbledore.

"Good evening, Harry," the headmaster greeted warmly, "I do hope you are not feeling too dreadful."

"Whatever Madame Pomfrey put on my back has helped a lot thank you, Professor," he replied while trying to gauge Dumbledore's mood. "What's happening to me?"

Harry did not want to play games and he did not want anyone trying to break it to him gently; he just wanted to know. Dumbledore looked at him calmly for a few seconds and then the headmaster nodded.

"It is quite straightforward, Harry," Dumbledore said calmly, "you are growing wings."

The desire to laugh rose in him at the absurdity of the headmaster's statement and it took him long seconds to realise that the man was not joking.

"I'm what?" Harry asked incredulously.

"You are growing wings," Dumbledore replied evenly. "The pain you experienced earlier was the nubs breaking through the skin."

Harry's brain rebelled and completely failed to believe the headmaster, but he knew Albus Dumbledore far too well to consider the possibility that the old wizard had finally lost it, even when his own psyche told him this had to be true. Human beings did not grow wings, not even magical human beings, unless they were under a spell.

"This cannot be happening," Harry said more to try and calm the thundering of his heart than because he thought it was true.

"I'm afraid to say it is," Dumbledore said kindly, "but do not worry, my boy, it is perfectly natural."

"Natural?" Harry almost lost it at that moment, but managed to bring himself under control before he yelled the place down. "How can wings be natural?"

He tried to turn over at that point, but the headmaster's firm hand on his shoulder prevented that.

"Lie still, Harry," Dumbledore said gently, "you do not want to aggravate the wounds until they have sealed in their new form. I shall come and sit where you can see me and then I shall answer all your questions."

There was no arguing with the tone Dumbledore was using and doing his best not to curse the world in general, Harry buried his face in his hands and waited for the headmaster to sit down. He heard Dumbledore exchange a few quiet words with Poppy, but he ignored them as the shock poured through his system. Only at a light touch on his shoulder did Harry turn his head to find the headmaster watching him from little more than a foot away.

"Why am I growing wings?" he asked a little desperately. "Please tell me this is not some joke of Voldemort's from beyond the grave."

"This has little to do with Tom Riddle," Dumbledore assured him calmly, "except for the fact that you absorbed his power, but I shall come to that shortly."

The headmaster paused and observed Harry thoughtfully, giving him no doubt that the old wizard was about to go on.

"Harry, my boy," Dumbledore began eventually, "this may come as a surprise to you, but this is not the first time you have had the makings of wings."

The headmaster was right, that was a surprise, but Harry did not need to voice it as his companion continued.

"You were born with vestigial wings," was the next revelation to pass Dumbledore's lips, "which is not as unusual as you may think. There are several wizarding families with ancestral irregularities that result in such occurrences. The Potter line is prone to the occasional hint of wings and the happenstance actually delighted your father, since it is a sign of the strength of the child's magic. Your wings would never have developed and hence your parents had them removed when you were only a few days old."

This was enough of a shock, but the news did of course beg one obvious question.

"Why wings?" Harry asked; not sure if he really wanted to know the answer.

"Seraphim," the headmaster said calmly and Harry blinked at him wondering if he had heard correctly.

"Seraphim," he said slowly. "Isn't that a kind of angel?"

Harry's religious knowledge was limited, the Dursleys had not been particularly devout Anglicans, but he definitely remembered something about cherubim and seraphim. Christmas had been the one and only time Aunt Petunia had seen fit to drag the whole family, which surprisingly, until he went to Hogwarts, had included Harry, to church. Looking back he suspected that it might have been one of his Aunt's vague ploys to de-magic him.

"I believe Muggles used the name to mean that," Dumbledore told him thoughtfully, "and I suppose Seraphim do meet most of the descriptive criteria, but they are in fact magical creatures. They appear human in many ways and from a distance you would never know until they unfurl their wings. They are more secretive than centaurs and very few ever come into contact with what they consider the lower races. One of your ancestors found her way into one of their hearts and the heritage has descended through the Potter line."

"But why now?" there were hundreds of questions floating in Harry's mind and he chose one at random.

It was a reasonable enquiry and one which the headmaster took time to think about.

"Because of how powerful you have become, Harry," Dumbledore explained kindly. "Seraphim are much more than simply magical: they are magic. For Seraphim to reproduce takes a great deal of raw power and when one combined with a human line the amount of magic required was not available. That is what I meant when I said that any hint of wings was a sign of a wizard's potential. That you exhibited any indication of Seraphim heritage at all as a baby showed a staggering magical ability on your part, Harry. When you absorbed Voldemort's powers you, shall we say, initiated the previously dormant subsection of your nature."

Harry felt like screaming, but he bit his tongue and tried to remain rational. For once he would have preferred something like this to happen to someone else.

"Can we get rid of them?" he asked quietly, dreading the answer that he knew was coming.

"I'm sorry, my boy, but no," the headmaster said gently. "When your wings were removed as a child they were not developed and hence, were more of an adornment than a limb. Your new ones, as far as Poppy can tell, are fully functional and have evolved as part of your physical being. To remove them would seriously damage you."

Harry couldn't help himself, he moaned and buried his face in his hands. Dumbledore placed a calming hand on his shoulder and appeared to be waiting until he was ready to continue.

"How big are they going to be?" Harry finally asked and turned tired eyes to his headmaster.

"Unfurled," Dumbledore said calmly, "at least five meters in span. What you must remember is that Seraphim wings are not natural wings like those of a bird, they are far more useful and far more dynamic. They are magically controlled rather than physically and are a powerful defence mechanism. Very few hexes can penetrate a Seraphim's wings when they are used as a shield. They will of course allow you to fly, and the best news is that unless you choose to use them they will be no more noticeable than they are now."

That made Harry mentally sit up and take note. When he had been told he was growing wings he had imagined six-foot high masses of feathers or wispy little butterfly wings, and now he was confused.

"How can wings with a span of five meters not show?" he asked, not sure how it could be possible.

"Magical wings, remember, Harry," Dumbledore said with a slight smile. "The wing nubs are all that are physically visible normally. When the wings are unfurled the nubs split open and the wings are released."

Harry winced: that sounded unpleasant.

"I believe the wings are retracted in the opposite manner," the headmaster said brightly.

There was of course something else that occurred to Harry as he did his best to assimilate the whole explanation. He did not really want to ask, but he had learnt painfully that not having all the information was worse than knowing the truth.

"Will the wings be the end of it?" he asked quietly.

"Quite possibly, my boy," the headmaster said openly, "but there is no way to be sure. You are the strongest wizard the Potter line has ever seen and hence you are the first to ever display this level of integration with your heritage. I would suggest that we leave crossing any further bridges until they arise."

At least on that point Harry agreed with him.

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Harry walked into the Gryffindor common room feeling sore and a little depressed, although nowhere near as bad as he had felt the previous evening. The wounds through which his wing nubs had grown had healed with unnatural speed and although still somewhat raw, did not send shooting pains down his back every time he moved anymore. Poppy had helpfully held up a mirror behind him so he could examine what his back now looked like and it had not looked as bad as he had feared. The wing nubs were in fact two iridescent ridges about an inch wide that ran just below each shoulder blade for four or five times their width. If he had not been told what they were, he never would have guessed.

It was Saturday and still early and there was no one to see Harry as he trudged across the common room in his jeans and a regulation hospital wing pyjama shirt. He had not slept well because Poppy's potion had worn off after an hour or so and the soreness of the healing wounds had kept him awake. Hence he was very tired and he had been quite surprised when the healer had released him after an early

breakfast. He had a pot of ointment in one hand, his ruined t-shirt in the other and only one thing on his mind: fall into his nice comfy bed and sleep the day away.

He made it as far as falling on his face on his mattress before the plan crumbled.

"Harry's back," it was Neville's voice and his dorm mate sounded excitedly pleased.

There were sleepy replies from around the room and Harry groaned as he heard more than one person slip out of bed. When the curtain beside his head moved to let in the early morning sunlight he slammed a hand over his eyes and considered burying his head under his pillow.

"Go away," he said petulantly, "I'm trying to sleep."

"Wow, you look rough, Mate," Ron's uncooperative voice said from close by.

"Too right," Seamus agreed loudly.

Knowing a losing battle when he heard it Harry slowly opened his eyes and peered at his friends. After a quick inspection he realised that his dorm mates were gathered on either side of his bed. He would have turned over so he could see them better, but he didn't feel like sitting up, and lying on his back was not happening at the moment.

"Funny that," Harry said sarcastically and put his head back down on the bed, "might have something to do with the whole half hour's sleep I got last night."

"Very rough," was Dean's helpful input into the conversation.

As Ron shifted beside the bed, a shaft of sunlight that had previously been obscured by his friend found its way through and hit Harry squarely in the face, at which point he reconsidered shoving his head under the pillow. It was an extremely close thing.

"How's your back?" Ron asked in a very concerned manner. "Not serious I hope."

"If it was serious Madame Pomfrey would have me chained to a bed in the hospital wing," Harry pointed out as his mood failed to improve, especially with the mental images he had just conjured for himself.

His annoyance failed to encourage his friends to leave him alone and part of him was grateful, but most of him just wanted to sleep.

"So what was it?" Ron asked sounding a little put out.

Harry really did not want to explain everything to his dorm mates, if at all possible he never wanted to explain, which was why he picked a white lie.

"Wings," he said, which was the truth, "someone hexed me with wings," he elaborated in a lie, "Madame Pomfrey fixed me up, but it hurt like hell where they came through for a while."

"Really, you had wings?" Neville sounded surprisingly delighted by the idea. "I've never heard of a hex that grows them like that though."



Sleep was beckoning Harry with open arms and he honestly wanted to simply close his eyes.

"Probably Snape's idea of a joke," he mumbled into his pillow and let his eyelids droop.

Somebody asked him something else, but it didn't make a lot of sense. The growth of wings had taken more out of Harry than not allowing him to sleep for one night and he drifted from the waking world gratefully. He barely noticed that he was still holding the small bottle of ointment.

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When he woke up Harry felt less sore, and this progress in his health improved his mood somewhat. As he tentatively shifted and slowly climbed off the bed he was not surprised to find Ron sitting on his own bed reading a Quidditch magazine. Harry didn't really mind, although he knew his friend was keeping an eye on him.

"Welcome back," Ron said with a cheerful smile, "feeling better?"

Harry nodded and slowly stood up, experimentally flexing his back. There was a slight twinge as he moved his shoulder blades, but that was all, which was even better than the morning had been.

"What time is it?" he asked, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and picking up his glasses from where he had thrown them.

"About two I think, Mate," Ron replied, standing up as well. "I tried to wake you for lunch, but you weren't having any of it."

As if to point out that this had been a bad thing, Harry's stomach grumbled quite loudly.

"Guess I'll be taking a trip to the kitchens then," Harry said with a half smile. "Sorry about this morning, it was one hell of a night. When I'm cleaned up, have found some food, and can put two thoughts together, you, me and Hermione need to have a long talk."

At that Ron walked up to him and seemed torn as to whether to be worried or not.

"So what you told the guys wasn't true?" his friend asked seriously.

"Not completely," Harry replied, deciding that honesty was the only way to go with his closest companions, "it's a bit more complicated than that. Nothing terrible, but let's just say I could live without it."

Ron gave him a sympathetic thump on the shoulder and Harry winced as this gesture caused another twinge, but smiled anyway.

"Never mind, Harry," his best friend said supportively, "I'm sure we'll figure it out."

Since the defeat of Voldemort, Ron had turned out to be surprisingly optimistic about most things; his faith that everything would work out was a great comfort to Harry.

"Yeah," he agreed, feeling much better about the whole situation than he had earlier, "let's hope."

And with that he stretched again and then bent down to rummage for his wash things in his trunk. What he needed right now was a nice hot shower.

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Showering and letting the house elves feed him and Ron until they burst improved Harry's mood even further and he was feeling much happier by the time they tracked down Hermione and convinced her to leave her Potions homework and follow them to an empty classroom. It was not as if he was pleased by his new anatomical additions, but he had faced much worse and it was not as if this was a life or death situation. All he had to do really was forget about them and get on with life.

"So what is it, Harry?" Hermione asked after she closed the door. "Ron said something earlier about someone hexing you with wings."

"It wasn't a hex," he said honestly, "but it was wings."

Although he had not explained much, this answer seemed to please Hermione.

"Well that at least explains why I've never heard of a hex like that," she said firmly.

Ron did not seem to share her opinion.

"Hexes are usually instantaneous," Hermione explained calmly, "Harry was showing symptoms for days according to what you told me. Now if it had been a long term curse I could have understood it but..."

She trailed off and Harry gave her a little smile for her restraint. As far as he could tell Hermione's explanation cleared up Ron's confusion, after all there were several hexes that could give a person wings; the twins had used enough of them over the years he had known them. Harry watched the interplay calmly and waited for them to sort themselves out.

"What was it then, Mate?" Ron asked curiously.

"This," he replied and turned his back on them while pulling his oversized T-shirt over his head.

"Harry," Hermione said almost instantly, "those look sore."

He didn't move as both of his friends moved forward to take a better look.

"They aren't so bad now," he told them honestly, "but they hurt like hell most of the night. I have some ointment in the dorm and they're going to be tender for a couple of days, but the worst is over."

There were a few seconds of silence and then Hermione asked the obvious question.

"You mentioned wings," she said curiously, "is this what's left of them?"

"Those are them," Harry replied openly, "what you can see is the wing nubs. The wings are magical, they come from inside. I'd show you, but I'm a little sketchy on the details myself."

"Wow," was Ron's concise opinion.

"Yes, Hermione, you can touch them if you're careful," Harry said, interpreting the awkward silence that fell after that.

Delicate fingertips connected with the wing nubs almost instantly and Harry couldn't help it; he shuddered. The sensations the light touch sent through his body were not what he was expecting and he shied away rapidly.

"Sorry," he apologised quickly, "that tickled."

Which was sort of true, but he made a mental note that his wing nubs were an erogenous zone and dropped his T-Shirt back down.

"They feel like a cross between leather and silk," Hermione commented as he turned back around. "How long are you going to have them?"

"Forever," Harry replied with a little shrug and saw the shock register on both his friends' faces.

It was obvious that even though they knew it wasn't a hex they had assumed that some other magical method had created and would remove the wings.

"But if someone did this to you can't Madame Pomfrey reverse it?" Ron asked and looked worried.

It was explanation time and Harry chose to perch on a nearby desk.

"No one did this to me, unless you count one of my ancestors marrying a Seraphim being someone doing something to me," Harry told them and found himself surprisingly calm about the whole thing. "I was born with vestigial wings, but they were removed and when I absorbed Voldemort's power it started them off again."

Hermione sat down with her mouth open; Ron also appeared at a loss to find anything to say.

"Seraphim," the head girl said slowly, "aren't they very rare?"

"I'm not sure they're rare," Harry replied honestly, "but considering how much magic it takes to make one, they probably are. I do know they aren't fond of mixing with humans; worse than the centaurs according to Dumbledore."

He could almost see his friend cataloguing everything she knew about Seraphim in her head. He had no doubt she would be heading for the library at the earliest opportunity. Ron had been staring at him in amazement, but his expression was softening as he accepted the facts.

"No wonder you were in a bad mood this morning, Mate," his best friend said sympathetically. "So can you fly or what?"

It was just like Ron to move straight to the point and Harry found himself smiling at his companion's bluntness.

"Dumbledore says I should be able to," he replied, "but I won't be jumping off the Astronomy tower any time soon. I'm going to have to figure out how they work, and I'd rather most people didn't know I'm even weirder than they think I am."

"You're not weird, Harry," Hermione said firmly, "you're incredibly magically gifted and you had a madman after you most of your life; that's not weird it's a combination of good and bad luck that happened to make you an icon."

His friend's tone was so resolute and she nodded as if to back up her point, but Harry couldn't help it; he laughed. Since the previous evening he had been so tense and worried even if some of his anxiety had eased and Hermione's show of support both touched him and tickled him at the same time. It was just what he needed to crack the tension and once he started chuckling he couldn't stop. For a moment Hermione just looked at him, but slowly she smiled and then she began to laugh as well. Ron appeared at a loss for a while, but it didn't take him long to join it.

The whole situation was faintly ridiculous: he had wings; he was related to barely understood magical creatures; and everything always seemed to happen to him. Harry just let it all out, and by the time he had finished he could barely stand up.

End of Chapter 1

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## Chapter 2 Changes

The first indication that something was strange came when Harry managed to bang his head on a low beam as he headed to the bathroom during his normal morning routine. Some of the taller boys were always walking into it, but up until the moment he hit his head he had never had any trouble; after all he had always been short. In his half asleep state he put it down to Hogwarts rearranging itself again and went about what he always did.

After cleaning his teeth, washing his face and careful consideration in the mirror he decided he needed to shave. His facial hair was still sparse, but with very dark hair and pale skin the need still arose quite often. There were charms that could be used to take care of the problem, but Harry was more comfortable with the Muggle method. When he reached for his razor he had to stretch to the shelf and he heard something rip. That woke him up completely and he looked down at himself for the first time; his wrists were sticking out the end of his pyjama sleeves as if he was wearing a pair two sizes too small as were his ankles, and the cotton felt tight in several places.

It took him less than a minute to make it back to the dorm at which point he slammed the door loudly. Neville had been the only other boy awake, but the other three all sat up at the loud noise. Four pairs of eyes looked directly at Harry and he glared back.

"Who's idea of a joke is this?" he asked pointedly and indicated his attire.

Seamus laughed immediately, losing the frown he had affected at being woken up.

"Did the house elves mix up your PJs with the second years, Harry?" the Irish Gryffindor asked lightly.

"They were perfectly all right when I went to bed," Harry said pointedly. "Would whoever shrank them please just undo the charm, I've ripped them already and I'd rather they didn't fall apart."

Seamus' laughter had cut through the anger that had caused him to storm up the stairs, but he was not really in the mood for games this morning. His four dorm mates all looked at each other and no one stepped forward.

"Wasn't me," Seamus promised when everyone looked at him and the others nodded in agreement.

"If it wasn't one of you, who could have done it?" Harry asked, believing his friends, but at a loss to explain his current state of dress.

The others all shrugged and Harry wandered across the room with a frown on his face. Surely someone couldn't have entered the dorm without any one seeing, and time coded charms were more difficult than people usually used for a lark.

"Um, Harry," Ron said thoughtfully as he passed his friend's bed and Harry stopped, "are you sure it's the pyjamas that have shrunk?"

Harry looked at his friend blankly for a moment and then down at himself, the question took him completely off guard.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Ron climbed out of bed and moved to stand next to him, at which point Harry blinked in surprise. His normal eye line on Ron was about chin level, but now he was clearly looking at the bottom of his friend's nose.

"Mate," Ron said with a puzzled little frown, "you've grown."

For a moment Harry just stared stupidly at his best friend.

"No way," he said eventually.

He moved to the side of his bed quickly and stood next to one of the posts; he'd been measuring himself against it for years hoping that one day he would grow, but this was just crazy.

"I cannot have grown two inches over night," Harry protested as he looked at the evidence.

Seamus and Dean both climbed out of bed to walk across the room and Neville wandered over as well.

"Bloody hell, Harry," Seamus said as he stood next to him, "you're almost as tall as me now."

Harry sat down and grimaced at the ripping sound that the move created. Careful to keep his back away from his friends, just in case his top decided to disintegrate, he tried to figure out what to do. This could not be normal and he had a sneaking suspicion it was likely to be something to do with the latest addition to his anatomy.

"You should go and see Madame Pomfrey," Ron said seriously, "have her check you out. I've heard of wizards growing half an inch or so, but never two in one night."

"Gran said my dad did that," Neville offered supportively, "grew out of all his clothes in one day."

That caused Harry to realise something.

"Oh hell," he said pointedly, "my uniform isn't going to fit."

"No worries," Seamus said instantly, "you can borrow my spare set until you can fix yours. I think you're about my size now."

Once again Harry was incredibly glad that he had such good friends.

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Harry shot through the Great Hall to where his friends were sitting and took a seat hoping no one would notice the changes in him.

"You okay, Harry?" Hermione asked giving him a curious glance as he hunched down.

"Fine," he replied loudly enough so that anyone listening could hear, "needed a headache cure, that's all."

Then he gave Hermione a look and tried to convey that he'd explain as soon as he could. Of course nothing ever went quite the way Harry hoped and this was just the same; his dorm mates were carefully avoiding drawing attention to him, but that didn't stop the rest of the table.

"Harry," Ginny said from where she was sitting opposite him, "you've grown."

Every eye of those within hearing distance turned to him and although those who knew sent sympathy his way, the rest of them were eyeing him curiously. Lavender frowned at him thoughtfully.

"You do look," the girl paused and scrutinised him a little longer, "bigger, Harry."

"Umm," was about the most sensible thing that Harry could find to say; this was rather embarrassing.

For years he had been begging his body to forget that it had been neglected for eleven years of his life and every summer holiday, and catch up with his friends in stature, but that didn't mean he had wanted to start the process over night. It was a known fact that wizards and witches occasionally went through changes in a more rapid fashion than Muggles; their magic helping along the growing process if it so felt like it, but even Poppy had raised an eyebrow when she had measured him earlier.

"Harry had a growth spurt," Ron stepped in as Harry glanced at him desperately. "He grew out of all his clothes last night so he's a bit embarrassed, now drop it."

When Ron used the particular tone he had chosen just then, most people took note and did not push him; Lavender, however, was oblivious.

"You grew, really?" she asked in a rather excited manner. "You mean you're not shorter than most of the girls anymore?"

Heat travelled up Harry's neck and into his face, he knew he had to be blushing bright red by now. Where Lavender went Parvati always followed and whether she recognised the danger of a spontaneously combusting Weasley or not, she joined her friend.

"If you grew out of your clothes it must have been a lot," the inquisitive young woman said brightly; "how much?"

There was really nothing for it now, the entire seventh year and most of the sixth had their eyes firmly on him and were waiting for an answer.

"Two inches," he mumbled and reached for some breakfast even though he had suddenly lost his appetite.

"You look broader too," Lavender observed as if Harry was a specimen in one of Snape's jars.

He was painfully reminded that he was wearing a borrowed uniform and transfigured shoes and that everything he owned that hadn't been passed down from Dudley was now too small. Poppy had been very calm and professional about the examination she had given him, but she had insisted on measuring him all over. He was not just taller; he was wider across the shoulders, the chest and the hips; and his feet were bigger as well: his whole skeleton had decided to

change. Poppy had told him that he was much more the size his father had been at his age now.

"Lavender," Ron said firmly, "if you'd rather eat your breakfast than wear it you should shut up now."

If it hadn't been for the fact that Poppy had given him strict instructions to make sure he ate breakfast, Harry would have bolted at that point. There was only so much mortification one person should ever have to take and he had found his limit. He thanked every deity he could think of for a best friend like Ron as Lavender huffed and went back to her cereal. It was going to be a long day; he could tell.

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His prognosis at breakfast had been correct; it had been a long and difficult day. So many people had noticed the changes in him and Snape, for a start, had taken delight in ridiculing him as a late developer. Hence he was quite glad to have part of the evening to himself for a little private training in the Room of Requirement.

The Room of Requirement really was incredible in Harry's opinion as he walked into it after excusing himself from his friends in the common room. He was used to seeing it change thanks to the various uses the DA had put it to, but he had not been expecting how radical the change was for his current requirements.

The ceiling was three stories away, the logistics of which he did not try to work out, and on one side was a climbing wall, while on the other was a set of platforms with ladders going gradually higher and in the centre of the room was a big open space. Even if Harry didn't know what he needed it seemed that the room did.

"Thanks," he muttered a little self consciously, not sure who he was talking to, but needing to show his gratitude.

Walking to the middle of the room he looked around nervously, which was ridiculous because he was alone, and then he stripped off his shirt. As if his body was ahead of his brain his wing nubs twitched in anticipation. Painfully aware that he had no idea what he was doing Harry dropped the shirt on the floor and tried to relax.

Concentrating on the slight stirring he could feel under his shoulder blades he made an attempt to understand what was going on. They were magic wings so logically it was similar to any other spell: all he had to do was figure out the key element and he'd be away. Pushing everything else out of his mind he focused on his wings and tried somehow to push. After a minute or so he realised nothing was going to happen.

"What I need is a clue," he grumbled to himself.

From the corner of his eye he saw a flash near the ceiling and it was heading straight for him; he reacted before he thought. Suddenly he was leaning backwards slightly and he was surrounded by soft leathery wings. The missile bounced harmlessly off the protection and Harry stood very still, a little stunned by the incident.

After a second or so of complete inactivity he couldn't help himself, he began to laugh. The room really did seem to know him better than he knew himself.



"Thank you, whoever you are," Harry said eventually and looked around the room, "I get the idea."

His wings felt strange unfurled, causing a heavy sensation between his shoulders, although nowhere near as heavy as it should have been given their size, but strangely he did not feel off balance. His stance had altered automatically to cope with the extra weight and the wings mostly seemed to support themselves.

Harry could feel them almost like another limb, but not quite. Experimentally he tried to move the right wing like he would his hand, but it didn't quite work. The wing tip he was trying to move dipped, but it did not move in the way he had intended and it felt almost lethargic.

Going back over the release of his wings in his mind Harry attempted to analyse the incident. It had happened so quickly that it was quite difficult, but he thought carefully and he decided to try again. This time he thought about moving the wing and rather than seeing it as just a limb he considered it as something between a limb and how he would treat his broomstick. Almost instantly the wing changed shape and furled upwards in exactly the way he had wanted.

Smiling Harry gave a small victory salute and tried the same thing with the other side. It worked beautifully, but not so well when he tried both.

"Well I guess it'll be a while before I'm flying," he commented to himself cheerfully.

It was clearly not going to be a matter of just wanting his wings to work, but Harry knew he was headed in the right direction. With more confidence than that with which he had walked into the room he set about practicing simple moves and analysing the feelings they sent back to his brain. Hermione would have been proud of his technique.

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Harry was dreaming of flying; soaring into the air, free as a bird without any of the awkwardness of his practice sessions. In his mind his body and his instincts worked in perfect harmony and he could fly as if he had been born to it. He felt such joy, revelling in the freedom, and it was with great annoyance that something impinged on his dream.

"Harry," he heard his name and at first chose to ignore it; he didn't want to give up flying. "Harry," the sound was more urgent this time and it broke his mood; he hovered in his dream, knowing that something was calling to him. "Harry, wake up, now!"

Harry's eyes snapped open as Ron's hissed words made it to the conscious part of his brain, and he blinked up to find his best friend's face floating in a gap in his bed curtains with a sliver of light coming in through Ron's red hair. For some reason his friend appeared to be holding the curtains closed just under his chin.

"Ron?" Harry asked sleepily. "What's up?"

Ron's eyes ran down the bed in reply and Harry followed his friend's gaze; it was then and only then that he realised he was not wrapped in soft, warm, blankets; he was wrapped in soft, warm wing.

"Oh, bugger," he said pointedly.

"My thoughts exactly," Ron replied as Harry sat up.

Closing his eyes Harry felt for his wings and retracted the one that was wrapped around him. When or how he had decided to push the covers to the end of the bed and sleep using his wings as shelter instead, Harry had no idea, but in the process he had wrecked another pyjama top. He looked up at Ron gratefully.

"Thanks," he said earnestly.

"No problem, Mate," Ron replied, letting the curtains go and swiftly handing Harry a T-shirt through the gap, "but you might like to think about a sealing charm on the curtains if this is going to happen again. You're lucky it was me."

Harry nodded, his friend was right and he made a mental note to ask Hermione what charm might be best. Moving quickly he slipped his ruined top over his head without bothering to unbutton it and pulled on the T-shirt. His life seemed to be becoming more complicated by the day. The whole Seraphim situation was becoming silly and he briefly wondered if it wouldn't be easier just to stand up in the Great Hall, make an announcement and get it over with.

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Morning was not Harry's favourite time of day just at the moment since he seemed to wake up to various surprises. In a little over a week he had had the growth spurt and two wing incidents; so much so that he slept without a top so he wouldn't ruin another pyjama shirt before he had the whole thing under control. Two mornings after he had practiced in the Room of Requirement the night before he woke up wrapped in wing rather than blanket, and he hoped he would have it figured out soon because it could be rather chilly without his pyjama top on. He'd considered just sleeping wrapped in his wings anyway since that way he was warm and comfortable, but had decided it was too big a risk; the spell he had on the curtains was strong, but would not stop anyone really determined.

As he opened his eyes slowly for a new week he was quietly optimistic: his pyjamas did not feel as if they had shrunk so his rapid growth spurt had not made another appearance and his wings were tucked away right where they were supposed to be.

Sitting up slowly he blinked myopically at the light streaming through the gap at the very top of his curtains, which was the only hole in the shield around his bed, and ran his fingers through his hair. That was the moment his morning began to go downhill; something sharp touched his scalp.

Breaking the sealing charm on the curtains by reaching from the inside to his bedside table outside, Harry grabbed his glasses, shoved them on his nose and stared at his hands.

He bit his nails; he knew it was a bad habit, but it was something he had yet to grow out of, only now, his stubby, brittle nails were no more. Where last night there had been chewed stubs there were now long, elegant talons that tapered into sharp points about a quarter of an inch after the end of his fingers. Harry first thought was that if anyone saw them he would never live it down.

With a small groan of resignation he set about rectifying the situation. Using the only tool he had to hand he moved to bite the nails back down to a manageable length. There was only one snag; it was like trying to chew steel. It took him twenty seconds to realise that his teeth were not even making a dent in the thumbnail he was trying to remove at which point Harry began to panic.

He had never dressed quite so fast, which was a feat, considering that he also had talon like nails to deal with as well. Running down the stairs with his hands in his pockets nearly killed him when he tripped at the bottom, but he was not about to let anyone catch sight of the latest addition to his fingers, and after righting himself he hightailed it to Poppy's domain.

"Good morning, Mr Potter," the healer said professionally as he stumbled into the Hospital wing as she was patching up a sorry-looking Hufflepuff first year.

Almost as if she could read his mind, the woman took one look at him, nodded her head and pointed to her office.

"If you would like to take a seat in there," Poppy said calmly, "I'll be with you shortly."

As he followed the instructions Harry tried to calm down, but this whole business was pushing him to his limits; he never knew what was going to happen next. He spent his entire time waiting for the other shoe to drop. When Poppy finally came in and closed the door he was fidgeting in his seat.

"Now," she said pleasantly, "how may I be of assistance?"

Harry put his hands on the table and spread his fingers.

"Do you have anything to get rid of these?" he asked bluntly.

Poppy leaned over her desk and looked at his talon's thoughtfully.

"I assume they are impervious to normal methods of removal," she observed calmly.

"Hard as steel," Harry replied openly.

Poppy picked up one of his hands and gently touched the nail on his index finger.

"Sharp as well, I see," she said before placing his limb back on the desk. "Never fear, Harry, the Diffindo Ungula charm should do the trick. It is a derivative of the Diffindo charm designed for use on magical creatures; when kept in captivity, several require their hooves and claws trimming and it is much safer than the basic charm. I have had occasion to use it when Professor Snape took it upon himself to teach the first years how to brew a nail growing potion."

With a smile she drew her wand and Harry was very glad of the healer's dry sense of humour; it made him feel a little better.

"You cast it like this," Poppy told him and then proceeded to demonstrate.

It took him a good half an hour, but he had just enough time to make it to breakfast once he had learnt the charm and all his nails had been reduced to a manageable length. Once again he found himself very grateful to be friends with a healer like Madame Pomfrey.

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Life was absolutely determined that Harry should not be normal, at least that was what he had decided by the time it came to Friday November the twelfth. So far his Seraphim heritage had given him wings; three growth spurts so that he was now five inches taller than he had been and, although still slim, broader as well; nails that could gouge through anything softer than stone and which he had to trim every morning with a charm; and a craving for ice mice that just would not go away. Even Poppy couldn't explain the craving for sweets.

It was during Quidditch practice that Harry noticed something else was not quite right with him; or rather it was as it ended after he descended to the ground having been chasing the Snitch all over the sky while Ron had the rest of the team running complicated strategies. Everything was very loud, or at least it was for the first few moments when he met up with the rest of the players, almost as if everyone was shouting. He winced when Ron did actually yell at Ginny who was chasing down one of the bludgers, because it was so loud that it hurt.

"You alright, Harry?" Ron asked as he turned and caught the tail end of the grimace.

Much to Harry's pleasure, by the time his friend had finished the sentence his voice seemed to be back to a normal level.

"Yeah," he replied quickly, not wanting to worry Ron, "I think my ears must have got cold while I was flying; it was a bit weird for a moment."

His friend moved closer as the rest of the team headed towards the changing room.

"You sure," Ron asked quietly; "it's not something to do with your changes?"

Harry did take a moment to consider this, but he shook his head.

"Nah," he replied, almost sure of his conclusion, "those seem to be permanent and this went away."

He didn't realise he was completely wrong until they had washed, changed, made it back to the common room and he was on his way to the library to find a book for his Transfiguration homework. About half way there his footsteps suddenly became rather louder than he expected and he could hear some people talking. When he rounded two corners and made it to the library he found a couple of Ravenclaws chatting outside the door in what should have been hushed voices, but by then it was like they were talking loudly. Changing his mind, he headed straight for the hospital wing; Poppy was probably ready to give him a bed permanently.

"Your hearing is definitely more sensitive," the healer said slowly as she examined the results of the spell she had just cast on Harry, "and I believe your eyesight is changing as well. I can adjust your glasses for you and place a spell on them so they will alter with your eyesight a certain amount; however, I suggest you come in for daily check-ups until whatever changes are taking place stop. As for the hearing, I have some ear plugs which will lessen the effect, but I suggest you only wear them for sleeping; you'll need to learn to cope with the extra sensitivity at other times. It doesn't hurt does it?"

Harry shook his head.

"Only when someone shouts close by me," he replied honestly, "but I think I can cope with that."

Poppy smiled at him.

"Good," she said warmly. "If you have any problems, Harry, I want you to come straight to me. These changes must be hard on you, but they will eventually stop, and even if I am far too old to be saying so, you are becoming quite the dashing young man."

Harry felt himself go red, but couldn't help the embarrassed smile that played at the corners of his mouth. He had never really been the epitome of a hero, no matter what role life had thrown him into, but even he had to admit that he was beginning to look more the part.

"Thank you, Poppy," he said gratefully, "I think I'd be lost without you."

"That's all right, Young Man," Poppy replied with a twitch of her eyebrows, "though I do say so myself, so would the majority of the school. I have absolutely no idea how the staff, let alone the pupils manage to find so many dangerous things and walk straight into them."

That drew a full fledged grin from Harry; over the time he had been a constant resident in the hospital wing he had seen several members of staff visiting Poppy's care and it had been rather eye opening.

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The common room was full of people all going about their own business and Harry sat by the fire with his nose in a book, pretending that he was taking no notice of any of them. However, with his hearing as sensitive as it was; it was difficult not to notice that several of the conversations were about him. Even though he was not an attention seeker it was hard not to realise that the changes he had been going through recently had not gone unnoticed. If he had been the densest Gryffindor known to man it would still have been obvious.

"I know," Lavender was saying to Parvati, "I had no idea a boy could change so much in a month."

"It's like he's been for one of those wizard's makeovers," the other girl replied with a note of adoration in her voice, which disturbed Harry somewhat, "only he doesn't even have to try. Did you see him after the last Quidditch match; covered in mud thanks to Malfoy and still gorgeous."

"Malfoy wasn't half bad either. Could you imagine the pair of them..." Harry flicked his attention to another conversation before he could blush too deeply.

"How on earth did he grow his nails so fast?" Ginny was whispering to May, one of the other girls in her year. "Three weeks ago they were bitten to the quick, and now they're long and hard."

"I'd give anything to know what potion he's using," her friend agreed equally as quietly. "Do you think he's finally coming round to the idea of being a superstar?"

"I don't know," her companion replied and she sounded a little confused. "It sure looks like he's taken an interest in his appearance, but he's still Harry and he seems embarrassed that everyone is looking at him."

"Which makes him twice as hot," was May's response and then the pair dissolved into giggles.

Harry moved his attention away and sank down further into his seat trying to hide his face with his book. Maybe if he kept his features distant no one would notice quite how furiously he was going red.

"... you'll be honest won't you, Hermione," his focus caught the end of something Ron was saying where his best friend and Hermione were snuggled up on the other side of the room.

"Of course, Ron," the young woman returned in a loving tone that made Harry smile even though he wasn't supposed to be listening and 'Potions for the Auror' should in no way have caused such a fond expression on his face.

"All the girls are thinking it right?" Ron replied quietly. "It's not just the rest of us getting inferiority complexes. Harry has gone from the cute and innocent saviour of the world to the sexiest thing on legs in just over four weeks?"

His best friend's tone sounded resigned and a little unsure. Hermione greeted the enquiry with a small laugh and a gentle sigh.

"I wouldn't have put it like that," the head girl replied lightly, "but if you mean everyone's looking at him in a different light, then yes. And Ron, I hate to break it to you, but it's not just the girls."

"I know that," Ron's voice was full of laughter, which surprised Harry, "bloody hell, if I wasn't in love with you I might give him a second glance."

Harry dropped his book.

That was most definitely something he had not expected to hear. The wizarding world was no where near as hung up about sexuality as the Muggle world, but there were some constants in Harry life that did not need tearing down and one was that his best friend was firmly heterosexual.

Several pairs of eyes had turned to look at him as the heavy book crashed onto the floor, but as he sheepishly picked it up only two gazes remained in his direction. Harry looked up to meet the eyes of his friends and Hermione raised an eyebrow at him.

"I think Harry heard you," she observed to Ron, keeping her voice low and Harry knew he was being watched for a reaction.

Quite aware that he had been caught Harry closed the tome he was holding and unfolded himself from the armchair. It still surprised him when he kept going up from where he thought his eye level should be. He was used to being shorter than all his male friends and several of his female friends as well: the fact that he had shot up five inches in the last month was still something with which he was coming to terms. He walked over to his friends slowly trying to look innocent.

"How did you hear us from all the way over there, Mate?" Ron asked in his usual blunt but friendly manner.

"My hearing's improved," Harry admitted quietly with a small shrug having chosen to keep that new fact quiet until he was used to the whole idea, "along with just about everything else. These glasses aren't real anymore either; Madame Pomfrey changed them for window glass this morning. I'm going to start dropping hints about getting my eyes fixed and then get rid of them for good."

He was going through so many changes that he sometimes felt that he was no longer living in his own body.

"So does this mean if you go for a little walk by the Quidditch pitch when the Slytherins are practicing, you'll be able to hear their strategy discussions?" Ron asked thoughtfully.

Hermione hit him, and Harry laughed; right about then that was just what he had needed.

End of Chapter 2

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### Chapter 3 On Display

After his hearing changed and his sight improved things seemed to settle down and Harry had gone without any alterations for five days before things took a turn for the even more bizarre. It was so ridiculous in fact, that he managed to put it down to not paying attention or bad luck for nearly an entire week.

They may have ended up fighting on the same side in the war, but that didn't mean that the seventh year of Slytherin would even pass the time of day with the seventh year of Gryffindor; the prejudices were too well ingrained on both sides. The fact that the Slytherin turn around to the side of the light had been led by Draco Malfoy did not mean that he and Harry were ever going to pass pleasantries in the hall, which was why when Harry found himself looking at the sarcastic git in any way but with distaste, he shocked himself. Then when he discovered that he was going out of his way to be in the same place as the Prince of Slytherin he had known he was in trouble, but worse than that, over the course of the week of denial he found himself doing the strangest things.

Harry kept his head down in Potions; it was a fact of his life. Snape hated him even though they had been allies and if he so much as breathed out of place the head of Slytherin relished in taking house points. Then one day just after he had started denying that he wanted anything to do with Malfoy, Harry spoke up in Snape's class for the first time. The really bizarre thing was that he managed it in such a way that the potions master couldn't penalise him.

The answer to one of Snape's questions had leapt into his head and before he realised what he was doing he'd stuck up his hand. It had been a question designed for Malfoy, who was the unchallenged potions king; the blond boy was a genius when it came to his house master's class and Snape had obviously thought the only other person who could answer would have been Hermione, whom he always ignored.

Harry was pretty sure that Snape had only let him answer because the man assumed he would answer incorrectly. Even Malfoy had looked impressed when he gave the correct response, which had, worryingly, pleased Harry no end. That had been the first incident of several and what was more worrying was that Harry found himself with his nose in books so he would be ready for the next time as well.

It wasn't just potions either; Harry eventually had to admit to himself that it was every subject he had with Malfoy. It felt strangely to him as if he was trying to prove his worth to the Slytherin, which he really didn't want to consider too closely. And it happened out of the classroom as well; twice he had suddenly realised he was trying to attract the other boy's attention. Harry felt as if he was going slightly mad.

He had heard all the bad things about eavesdropping and he really tried not to do it, but when his name popped up in conversation he always seemed to zero in. He was walking to dinner with his hands shoved deep in the pockets of his new jeans and his head down, trying to forget that he was going stark raving bonkers, when he heard himself referenced by another voice. Harry had been finishing a paragraph of his homework when the others had left to walk to the Great Hall so he was a good hundred yards behind them, round a corner or two and they had no idea he could hear them.

"It's like we're not even in the same class anymore," Seamus bemoaned just after having uttered a sentence containing Harry's name.



"I just wish he'd pick someone and let the rest of us back in the game," agreed Dean mournfully.

Ever since he had broken up with Ginny the artistic Gryffindor had been chasing a fair amount of skirt, as his Irish dorm mate put it so colourfully. Harry felt sorry for his friends, he really did, but there was nothing he could do about it.

"It's not Harry's fault he went through a growth spurt," Ron defended him in true best friend fashion.

"You have nothing to worry about," Seamus pointed out loudly, "you're firmly attached. Harry needs to choose and he needs to choose soon."

There was a murmur of agreement from Dean and Harry wished silently that it was that simple.

"He has chosen someone," Neville's calm addition to the conversation drew Harry to a sudden and complete halt.

From the sounds of it, Nev's simple phrase had done the same to his dorm mates as well. Ron was spluttering incoherently and the other two were ominously silent.

"Neville," Dean finally said in a very dark tone, "what do you know and how do you know it?"

"Um," the other boy returned nervously, "I thought it was rather obvious actually."

Harry wanted to hit his head against the wall and willed Neville to shut up. Unfortunately for him his dorm mate was not in a position to keep his mouth shut.

"Longbottom," Ron said pointedly, "just tell us."

"Malfoy," the Gryffindor replied quietly.

That brought a long deep laugh from Seamus, a thoughtful gasp from Dean and a dismissive snort from Ron.

"Oh, good one, Neville," the Irish boy said lightly, "you really had us going there for a moment."

As Harry listened the reactions slowly petered out, and he realised that the others were probably noticing that their friend was serious.

"I wasn't joking," Neville said, sounding a little hurt, "you must have seen it."

"You're insane," Ron said pointedly, "Harry would never..."

His best friend trailed off and now Harry did bang his head against the wall as he realised Ron was putting the pieces together. Sometimes Ron couldn't see what was in front of his own face, but he never forgot and Harry was sure his friend was adding things up. There was complete silence for a few moments.

"Bloody hell," was what came from Ron eventually.

"Holy mother of god," Seamus decided distinctly and what came from Dean's mouth did not bear repeating.

"Harry and Malfoy," Ron did not seem to be able to quite come to terms with the idea, "they hate each other."

"But Malfoy is the best looking boy in the school apart from Harry, and he's probably the most powerful student next to Hermione and Harry as well," Neville pointed out. "It makes perfect sense, in a match of equals kind of way."

There was silence again except for the sound of shuffling feet and Harry thought that his friends were probably having the same epiphany about Neville as he was. No one ever rated Longbottom at anything but Herbology and yet he seemed to be far more than he at first appeared.

"Neville," Ron said in a much gentler, but never the less direct way, "are you gay?"

More shuffling of feet.

"Um, well, yes," the other Gryffindor replied.

Silence again.

"Thank Merlin for that," Ron said and startled Harry because he was listening too hard, "and there I thought the rest of us were out of touch."

"Nev," Seamus commented lightly, "you never cease to amaze me. Now tell us everything you know: we want details."

Harry banged his head on the wall again for good measure and then turned back towards the common room; there was no way he was going to dinner now. It was as he reached the portrait that he met Hermione. As head girl she had been to her regular weekly meeting with Dumbledore that always ran late and into dinner, which was why the others had headed off without her.

"Harry," she greeted brightly until she saw his face, "what's wrong."

"I think I'm losing my mind and now everyone knows," he said dejectedly. "My life is over."

The portrait hole flipped open as he gave the password and he stormed through without waiting for his friend to react. Harry went straight for his dorm without pausing and was about to slam the door loudly when he realised Hermione had followed him. She stood there with her hands on her hips, looking at him with a worried frown.

"You don't think you're getting away with that do you?" she said eventually and took a step over the threshold. "Now sit and tell me what's bothering you."

When Hermione used that tone of voice there was no disobeying and Harry knew it so he shoved his hands back into his pockets, walked over to his bed and sat down.

"Malfoy," he said plainly, guessing that if Neville had noticed then there was no way Hermione wouldn't have.

"Oh, that," she said and nodded sagely, "I wondered when you were going to face it."

"Face it!" Harry replied, his voice rising before he dragged his temper back into check. "What with everything else I do not need this as well. I did a Wronski Feint at practice yesterday from three hundred feet just because he walked past. I'm either going to kill myself or go completely mental if this doesn't stop."

"Or possibly get an 'O' in all your N.E.W.T.s and give the whole staffroom a heart attack," his friend attempted to inject some humour into the conversation and Harry glared at her for her trouble.

"It's not funny," he said pointedly and he knew he was beginning to sulk, but it did feel as if his world was coming to an end.

He had wings for heaven's sake and appeared to be obsessed with his living worst enemy, since the Death Eaters who weren't dead had never met him personally. Malfoy may have led the revolt against the dark in his own house, but he blamed Harry for his father's demise and their relationship was acrimonious at best and homicidal at worst.

"Sorry, Harry," Hermione said gently and sat down next to him, "tell me what's up."

Harry glared at his fingers and picked absently at the corner of one of his oh so perfect nails.

"I just want to be Harry again," he said eventually with a sigh. "Everything was simpler when heads didn't turn if I so much as sneezed. I know people have been watching me forever, but now it's like I'm on display the whole time. And I don't seem to have any control over my hormones at all. I do things without even realising I'm doing them; stupid things and I must look like a real prat."

"Actually," Hermione said and patted him sympathetically on the arm, "so far I think you've been pretty impressive. If Malfoy can't see past this silly feud you two have going on, to what a great catch you are then he's blinder than I ever gave him credit for."

Harry looked at Hermione rather stunned and she smiled at him warmly.

"Don't look so surprised," she said in a very motherly fashion. "Harry, you were always good looking in a boyish way, but now you're stunning. You are the most powerful wizard in the world and you are finally using the considerable brain inside your head rather than muddling through. It would be very difficult for you to be anything but impressive."

He didn't know what to say; he was completely taken aback. Most of his instincts were telling him she was just being nice.

"But it's Malfoy," was all he could find to say.

"I know, Harry," Hermione said sympathetically, "and I wish it was someone easier, but I don't think that's going to happen. I've been doing a little reading and I think I know what's going on."

Harry couldn't help it, he laughed rather hysterically; if there was anyone who could be relied upon to figure things out it was Hermione.

"You're displaying, Harry," she told him calmly, "you've chosen a mate."

At that he couldn't keep the horror off his face.

"How much do you know about Seraphim?" Hermione asked gently.

"Not much," Harry admitted; he had read a little, but there weren't many books on the subject and he had hoped that the physical changes were all he had to worry about.

"Did you know they mate for life?" the young woman asked slowly.

He shook his head.

"Start from the beginning," he said with a resigned tone, "assume I know nothing."

Hermione patted his hand and nodded, at least she seemed to understand how difficult this was for him.

"Okay, well I know you know it takes a lot of magic for a Seraphim to reproduce," she started evenly; Harry had told both his best friends what Dumbledore had told him, "but what you probably don't realise is that Seraphim are androgynous. Some of them can appear more male or female, but they aren't either. They choose a mate based on power as well as physical attraction: the more power the more likelihood of successful breeding."

She paused and looked at him to see if Harry was following, he nodded for her to go on.

"When they find a mate who they deem suitable a Seraphim goes into heat," Hermione continued and held his eyes. "They display for their chosen mate to bring them into heat as well, sort of a chemical and magical reaction. The only way a Seraphim will stop pursuing a mate is if the mate dies or the mate chooses another."

"But Malfoy isn't Seraphim," Harry pointed out, "he can't come on heat."

"No," Hermione said slowly and he could hear the 'but' in her voice, "but I did some digging and he is Veela, or rather there is Veela blood in the Malfoy line. Veela have a similar mating cycle to Seraphim: although they look female they go into heat during the mating season and become hermaphrodites. They don't mate for life, but display and mate once every three years, which is how you end up with pure Veela offspring. They used to lure human males with sex and kill them when not in heat, but for the last few hundred years it seems to be just about the sex and every now and then you end up with half-breeds both male and female. Malfoy's heritage is a little more distant than that, but you may be sensing what's in his blood."

It occurred to the corner of Harry's brain where his dry sense of humour was lurking that purebloods in the wizarding world were actually anything but, if his father's and Malfoy's family were anything to go by. The rest of him was trying to figure out what the hell he was going to do.

"You're saying I want to shag Malfoy within an inch of his life because he's the most powerful eligible wizard and he's part Veela?" he asked bluntly.

Hermione blinked at him.

"Thank you for that visual image, Harry," she said with a slight smile and nodded.

"And my only way out is if someone knocks him off or," he paused and thought about it, "knocks him up?"

His companion laughed.

"Not exactly," she replied as she regained control of herself, "Veela go into heat to mate and produce offspring, Seraphim go into heat to mate with the prospect of producing offspring in the future. It's possible you may lose interest if he just sleeps with someone else."

"So all I have to do is go up to him and say 'Malfoy if you don't want me dogging your every step for the foreseeable future please go and shag someone'," Harry said incredulously. "I can see that going down so well." Then something occurred to him. "Why isn't he shagging someone else? As my hormones have been pointing out for days he is the most eligible bachelor in the school."

Hermione shrugged, Harry did not think it was a question his friend had asked herself. It was not a question he'd ever thought to ask himself until just then.

"Maybe because he is Veela," the head girl offered thoughtfully. "Male Veela descendants don't tend to show much of their heritage other than the obvious physical attributes like hair and bone structure, not like Fleur or her sister. According to the book I was reading, if the males do give any signs it's towards the end of their teens when in nature they would be thinking of breeding." Hermione's face had brightened as if she was beginning to warm to the idea; the young woman was always excited by explanations even when they didn't help the situation. "Maybe Malfoy is going through something similar to you: for different reasons of course, but it could definitely be a reason why he's not, um, active. He'd have to be very careful if he was coming into heat, even partially, if he slept with a girl he'd almost be bound to end up with a little Malfoy running around."

"Hermione," Harry pleaded, "you're not making this sound any easier. Now I have to convince Malfoy to sleep with another boy, which given his track record he will not be interested in."

The young woman thought about it for a moment.

"I think you may be wrong there if Blaise Zabini is anything to go by," Hermione said calmly.

This was all a bit much; Harry was learning things he never, ever wanted to know and his sensibilities began rebelling.

"Zabini," he repeated to himself just to make sure he wasn't hallucinating. "Malfoy and Zabini?"

The surge of irrational jealousy that this caused didn't help his equilibrium very much either.

"For about two months in the final term of last year, after you clobbered Voldemort," Hermione told him with a nod. "I think everyone was so glad to be alive that they let themselves be what they wanted to be rather than what was

expected for a while. You were in the coma for most of it so I can't blame you for not knowing."

Harry grabbed at the lifeline and held on for grim death.

"So maybe if I just come out and tell Malfoy what's going on he and Blaise..." his voice trailed off as Hermione shook her head.

"Blaise is with Pansy now," the girl advised helpfully.  
Harry gave up and ran his fingers through his hair with a sigh.

"Hermione," he said a little at a loss, "how do you keep all this information straight and still come top in all your subjects?"

"I'm a girl," she replied and patted him fondly on the arm, "it's part of the job description."

With a sigh Harry let himself fall back onto the bed and stared at the canopy for a moment.

"And do you know what makes this so much more fun?" he said in a very resigned manner. "All my dorm mates know now as well."

"They do?" Hermione sounded very surprised.

"Neville told them," Harry said shortly and then a question occurred to him. "Did you know Neville was gay?"

"Of course," the young woman said as if it was old news, "didn't you?"

Harry had to laugh; it was that or cry.

"Just chalk it up to the whole dorm missing the blindingly obvious," he said and closed his eyes as if that would help. "What am I going to do?"

It was all so confusing. In some ways it had been so much easier when Voldemort was still alive, at least all he had to worry about then was dying.

"I'm sorry, Harry," Hermione said as he looked at her, "but I don't think you have a choice. You could talk to Madame Pomfrey, but I doubt there's much she can do. I think you're going to have to speak to Malfoy. Sooner or later he's going to figure it out or you're going to do something that makes it blindingly obvious."

Taking a deep breath Harry slowly sat up again, at least he knew he wasn't going crazy. With a small nod he gave his friend's hand a squeeze.

"I'll go and see Madame Pomfrey in the morning," he decided firmly. "If she can't help me I'll try and talk to Malfoy after the Ravenclaw/Slytherin Quidditch match tomorrow afternoon. Don't want to be accused of putting off their Seeker."

The pair shared a small smile. At least with Hermione's support Harry could see that this could be amusing from another's point of view.

"Which leaves only one problem," he said with a small frown, "what to do about Ron, Seamus, Dean and Neville."

"Leave Ron to me," Hermione said and her smile became a grin, "and then tell the others part of the truth. Explain that it's to do with your absorbing of Voldemort's powers and the coma. Tell them your hormones are all out of whack and you're trying to sort it all out, but you need complete secrecy. They're Gryffindors; they'll support you all the way."

Harry considered the idea and he couldn't find a flaw in it.

"Sounds like a plan," he agreed and on impulse reached out and hugged his friend. "Thanks, Hermione," he said warmly, "I don't know what I'd do without you."

"You're welcome," she replied and returned the hug before breaking away. "Now let's get to dinner, the sooner you confront the others the less danger there is of anyone else finding out."

Harry nodded and they both stood up, at least now with an idea of what to do he did not feel quite so lost. Trying to school his features into calm he hurried after Hermione as she disappeared down the steps. It was only as they entered the Great Hall that he began to feel nervous again. All four of his dorm mates turned to look at them both as they moved to sit down. There was mischief in Seamus' eyes and amusement in Dean's which did not bode well; Harry decided to take charge.

"Before any of you say anything," he said firmly, "you should know I wasn't that far behind you; I heard."

Looking each of his friends in the eye he made sure they were paying attention.

"I need to speak to you all in private as soon as dinner is over," he said plainly. "Does anyone have any objections?"

Hermione had been right, the moment he told them seriously what he needed, every one of his dorm mates sobered and nodded. The whole conversation through dinner was about Quidditch and the latest homework assignments. No one so much as mentioned Malfoy or anything else relating to relationships, platonic or otherwise through the whole meal, not until they were all back in their dorm with the door closed.

"Yes, I'm after Malfoy," Harry said bluntly before anyone else could speak, "no I don't really want to be."

He turned to face his friends from where he had just walked to the other end of the room. No one looked particularly clear about the situation.

"Are you going to explain," Seamus asked in a manner that suggested he was not about to push for the information although he'd like it, "or is that it?"

Harry had been preparing this speech all through dinner and he drew in a deep breath to give it.

"You may have noticed I've changed quite a lot lately," he began with the easy part.

"Yeah, Harry," Dean said with a grin, "we noticed."

Harry nodded; it had been rather stating the obvious.

"It's to do with all the power I absorbed when I killed Voldemort," he said truthfully, after all that was what had started the whole process. "It's, um, changing me physically and lucky me, my hormones are out of whack. Do not ask me why I'm fixated on Malfoy, I couldn't give you a positive answer, but I am and I'm trying to sort it out. I'm hoping he and the rest of the school never have to know because the more people who know the more difficult it will be to fix. Please don't tell anyone."

Harry glanced at Ron knowing that his friend knew when to keep his mouth shut and trying to apologise for hedging. Ron nodded very slightly and then shared a look with the other three.

"Whatever you need, mate," Seamus said firmly, speaking for the whole group.

Harry had never been so glad he was a Gryffindor in his entire life.

"Do you ever do anything the easy way, Harry?" Dean asked conversationally and he couldn't help but smile.

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The Hospital wing was thankfully empty of other pupils as Harry walked in on Saturday morning. It would have been unusual for anyone to require Poppy's services so early, it was still before breakfast, but it was not unheard of. Harry knew he would find the healer already in her office or in her supply cupboard; he was familiar with her habits and he knew Poppy was always up early to sort through her inventory on a Saturday. With no lessons going on, Saturday was the day the healer was least likely to be interrupted by pupils poisoned in potions or half changed into heaven knew what from bad transfigurations.

Harry decided to check the supply cupboard first and walked over quietly. Ever since his nails had decided to turn into lethal weapons he had developed the habit of keeping his hands in his pockets, but he pulled them out now. It was a matter of respect and Harry had a lot of that for Poppy. As he stood in the doorway of the supply cupboard he found his guess had been correct: the healer was standing on a small ladder looking at one of her top shelves.

"Um, Poppy," he said after a moment, knowing that the woman would remain engrossed in her inventory until he made himself known, "please may I speak to you?"

The healer turned instantly and smiled as soon as she saw him.

"Good morning, Harry," she said in a warm, motherly tone, "I'll be down in just a minute."

Harry nodded and half smiled back before waiting patiently for Poppy to finish what she was doing. The woman efficiently ticked off lists on her clipboard that was hovering next to her and then climbed down the ladder.

"Now, Harry," she said in the tone she reserved for patients who had become more like family, "what can I do for you today?"

Harry frowned slightly and then decided to just come out with it.

"I think I'm in heat," he said shortly and tried not to appear too embarrassed.



For a moment Poppy looked at him thoughtfully and then she spoke; "Oh dear," was her considered opinion.

"I was thinking something along those lines myself," Harry replied with a slight shrug.

The woman frowned for a moment and then placed a supportive hand on his shoulder and steered him out of the store cupboard.

"Let's go to my office," she said firmly, "I think this requires some tea."

A few minutes later Harry was seated one side of Poppy's desk with a cup of sweet tea in hand and the healer was sitting on the other side with her own beverage. She appeared thoughtful, but thankfully not worried.

"So, Harry," Poppy began eventually, "what led you to this conclusion?"

"I'm displaying," he replied honestly. "I find myself doing the strangest things whenever the subject of my affections is around. I tried denial for a while, but a couple of my friends have noticed and I think I'm going to do something stupid if I don't handle this soon."

"And how long had this been going on?" his companion asked calmly.

"A little over a week," Harry admitted and took a sip of his tea.

It was somehow very easy to talk to Poppy about things like this; she never judged and she was very discrete.

"Do you mind telling me who you are attracted to?" the woman asked in a gentle tone.

This was the difficult bit: no matter what his hormones or his instincts were telling him, he was still incredibly embarrassed that he was fixated on his arch rival.

"Malfoy," he replied and did his best not to run and hide.

Poppy appeared surprised for a moment and then she nodded as if she found the idea logical.

"And is Mr Malfoy aware of your attentions?" the healer continued her enquiries.

"I don't know," Harry told her openly, "I haven't spoken to him. Please say you can just give me a potion and make this all go away."

The slightly pained expression on Poppy's face told him that a quick solution was not about to reveal itself.

"I'm sorry, Harry," she said sympathetically, "but it is not quite that simple. I could give you something to inhibit your sexual drive, but it would not last for long and repressing such urges can be very dangerous. When they came back you might find them overwhelming."

It was the news he had been dreading, but rather expecting; he shrugged in a resigned manner.

"So what do you suggest?" he asked eventually, knowing that he was probably not going to like the answer.

Poppy considered her reply for a moment and placed her cup and saucer on the table.

"Mr Malfoy should be made aware of the situation," the healer said firmly, "and there are some things about him I believe you need to understand, but I will have to ask him and the headmaster about that."

"He's part Veela," Harry said before she could go on, "and probably at least partially in heat himself."

Now Poppy looked very surprised.

"Hermione worked it out," Harry explained honestly.

"Miss Granger always was too clever for her own good," the healer observed with a small frown. "I'm afraid I cannot discuss the subject further at the moment."

Harry nodded: Poppy's discretion was one of her finest qualities. He would not have liked her to discuss some of the things she knew about him and he expected no less for any of her other patients.

"I understand," the Gryffindor replied, "I just thought you should know what I think I know."

"If you would like I will explain the situation to Mr Malfoy," Poppy offered helpfully, "and then we can proceed from there."

It was a tempting proposal, but even though it would be far easier to leave it in the healer's hands Harry shook his head.

"Thanks," he said earnestly, "but he'd take that as cowardice on my part and that won't help at all. I'll try myself and come back to you if he tells me to shove off."

Poppy gave him a supportive smile.

"I believe you may be correct," she told him calmly, "Mr Malfoy can be ... difficult at times. If you have no objections I will make the matter known to the headmaster just in case we require his assistance."

It was difficult to squelch the desire for as few people to know as possible, but Harry recognised the need to make Dumbledore aware of the situation so he nodded. If this got out of hand he was going to need all the support he could get.

End of Chapter 3

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## Chapter 4 Malfoy

The Quidditch game had been quite spectacular with Slytherin only beating Ravenclaw because Malfoy had caught the snitch. Harry had been impressed with the manoeuvre the Slytherin Seeker had pulled off, even if he didn't really want to be. He waited for the cheering supporters to let their team head off the pitch and then Harry stepped into the path of the whole group of players as they headed for the locker room.

"Nice catch," he said and fixed Malfoy with a firm gaze.

One thing Harry did not want the Slytherin to feel was threatened and hence he had decided to make sure his approach could not be misconstrued. Malfoy appeared slightly surprised and not very pleased to see him.

"Come to admire the team who is going to beat you this year, Potter?" the blond Slytherin asked acidly.

"Actually, Malfoy, I need to speak to you privately," Harry said bluntly, "and I didn't want you thinking I was trying to corner you, so I decided to ask in front of your friends."

Malfoy raised an eyebrow at that.

"You could never corner me, Potter," the object of his fixation said coldly with a sneer and Harry had to mentally kick himself for thinking that the boy was attractive.

What he did not need now was a reason to step into la-la land and do something stupid. Malfoy had a very unsettling effect on Harry's psyche and he did not trust himself at all.

"Malfoy," he said firmly, "would I be here if this wasn't more important than our happy little feud? Can we forget the insults for five minutes?"

Baiting Harry was a favourite game amongst the Slytherins and up until the previous week it had always worked rather well, now he was focused on other things.

"But insults is what we do best," Malfoy said snidely, less than willing to acquiesce.

Both Goyle and Crabbe stepped round from behind their glorious leader with their beater bats in hand; Malfoy did not look as if he was about to stop them. From the look in his eye Harry thought the Slytherin was more interested in seeing what he would do than talking about anything. Harry not high on hormones would have thrown his hands in the air and gone back to Poppy for her assistance, but then the problem would have been moot and he wouldn't have been having this conversation anyway. As it was his displaying instincts kicked in and he watched the two beaters approach with contempt.

Harry's wing nubs itched as his defence mechanisms stirred, but he did at least have the presence of mind not to let them loose. He was faster and stronger than either of the Slytherins with his enhanced Seraphim physique and he did not need any of his magical defences. Both Goyle and Crabbe appeared surprised when Harry stood his ground as they approached: it seemed as if they had expected him to retreat.

"Call off the dogs, Malfoy," Harry said pointedly, at least a little of his common sense coming through.

"Why?" Malfoy asked and crossed his arms across his chest in a very final move.

That appeared to bolster the two Slytherins' confidences and they moved forwards faster.

"Fine," Harry said and accepted that he couldn't avoid the confrontation, at which point Crabbe swung his bat at him.

Rather than back away and avoid the blow as he suspected he was supposed to do, he caught the bat on its way down with one hand and yanked it out of the other boy's grasp. A swift hook with his foot on the back of Crabbe's knee sent the Slytherin sprawling to the ground, at which point Harry brought up the bat he was now holding to block the blow coming from Goyle. A sharp left hook under their arched arms sent the other Slytherin onto the grass as well.

A scrabbling noise announced that Crabbe was attempting to regain his feet and Harry simply turned towards the hulk of a youth and snarled, "Stay!" With an almost terror struck gape the boy sat still. When he looked back at Malfoy, for a second Harry saw reluctant admiration, but it was rapidly wiped away by the familiar sneer.

"Malfoy, this is important," Harry said steadily. "Now I can work my way through the rest of your bloody house if you like, but sooner or later you are going to have to talk to me."

The Slytherin raised an eyebrow, but did not immediately dismiss the affirmation.

"One hour," he said shortly, "by the jetty."

At last! Harry nodded and dropped the bat he was holding next to Crabbe; he then fixed Goyle with a glare as the boy nursed a bloody nose; and finally turned and walked back towards the school. That had not quite gone how he had expected it to, but at least Harry had achieved his aim. He shook his head in resignation as he realised what he had just done: taking on Crabbe and Goyle, alone, when they were armed with bats had to be the stupidest thing yet.

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The water was dark and murky, reflecting the sky. There was going to be a storm, Harry was sure of it; which rather suited his impending doom as he sat on one of the jetty posts waiting for Malfoy to arrive. The Slytherin was late and Harry was becoming cold even though he was wrapped in a thick cloak, which was probably his adversary's aim. This was going to be difficult enough as it was without freezing his arse off first.

"Potter," the Slytherin greeted in a surprisingly polite manner when he finally did arrive.

"Malfoy," Harry replied in kind, suddenly forgetting that he should have been annoyed at his school nemesis for being late.

He looked into the Slytherin's strangely calm grey eyes and then glanced out over the lake again.

"No escort?" Harry asked as he tried to gather his thoughts.

"You went to a lot of trouble for a private meeting," Malfoy replied in a neutral tone, "I decided not to ruin it for you."

The Slytherin sat down on another of the wooden posts as Harry watched him from the corner of his eye and finally he turned to face his archrival-cum-object-of-desire.

"Malfoy," he began slowly, really unsure how the Slytherin would take the news, "I suspect it has failed to escape your notice that I've been acting somewhat oddly just recently."

He paused and looked Malfoy in the face to gauge the wizard's response: the Slytherin did not appear to be reacting at all.

"Well, it's, um ... you see," Harry found that all his words were deserting him and he expected mockery from his companion, but none came.

"You're displaying for me," the words out of Malfoy's mouth froze Harry in place and he couldn't help himself; he stared.

"You know?" he didn't quite believe it.

"Potter," Malfoy replied and rolled his eyes, "remember who you're talking to. I'm a Slytherin and in some circles there is a higher price on my head than on yours. When someone starts to act strangely around me, even if it is the boy wonder himself, I check up on things."

Voldemort was dead, but several of his Death Eaters were not and it was still a dangerous world even though the war was over. Malfoy's reasoning made perfect sense to Harry.

"How did you figure it out?" he asked eventually.

"Once I realised you weren't under a spell I dug deeper," Malfoy replied in a surprisingly calm tone. "The information about your family is not difficult to find and I went about it the same way Granger found out about my family."

Harry looked at him questioningly.

"I saw her in the library," the Slytherin provided evenly, "and I assume you know about the Veela."

Harry nodded, he was not about to deny it.

"As soon as I knew about the Seraphim it was obvious," Malfoy continued and an amused quality entered his voice. "You are not subtle, Potter: my god if you had wings you'd be stood on the top of the Astronomy tower displaying like a magpie."

Harry groaned and put his face in his hands.

"Not quite, but it's been close," he mumbled and wondered just how many of the other Slytherin's knew what was going on.

There was silence from Malfoy for a moment and Harry was sure the other wizard had heard him.

"Potter, are you trying to tell me you do have wings?" the Slytherin asked evenly.

Harry nodded: Malfoy needed to know just how far the transformation went if he was going to understand the extent to which Harry was affected. He looked up reluctantly.

"And nails like steel; and enhanced senses; and strength and just about everything," he said plainly. "The only thing I have to be thankful for is that I'm not suddenly androgynous, I'm still male."

"You're sure about that?" Malfoy actually sounded shocked.

"Very sure," Harry replied shortly.

Silence fell again.

"Bloody hell, Potter," his companion said eventually; "how powerful are you?"

"A lot more than I want to be," Harry replied with a sigh: he wanted this to be over. "Look can't you just go and shag someone, please? You must know the only way to get me off your back," that conjured mental images he didn't want, "figuratively," he added and tried to banish the thoughts, "is for you to die or go off with someone else."

Malfoy laughed at his discomfort, but sobered quickly.

"And did it occur to you that me having sex with someone else might not be enough?" the Slytherin asked in a reasonable tone. "Seraphim are much more to do with magical interaction than physical and me shagging someone might not fulfil the criteria."

Harry did not want to think about that, it was the only plan he had.

"It's the closest thing to a solution there is," he replied pointedly, "isn't it worth a try?"

For a while the Slytherin looked at him with a pensive expression on his face and slowly he shook his head.

"I can't," he admitted honestly.

"You're in heat too," Harry concluded: Hermione had been right, "which probably has a lot to do with why we're in this mess."

"You're the one trying to get into my trousers," Malfoy pointed out as if he was insulted.

Harry opened his mouth to deny the claim and then shut it again as he realised that that was what this all boiled down to. It would be stupid to deny it.

"Look," he tried again, "Hermione speculated that you can't go near a girl because you'll end up getting her pregnant, but what about a boy?"

At that Malfoy gave a dismissive laugh.

"Granger will never cease to amaze me," the Slytherin said and shook his head. "For your information, she's right, but it's more complicated than that and I would like to point out I'm only telling you this because otherwise undoubtedly Granger would dig it up anyway. A successful Veela mating can take up to four days. If I let myself go into full heat I could end up pinning someone to a bed for ninety six hours, which would go down so well don't you think. If I chose a girl there is almost a one hundred percent likelihood that she'd come out the other side expecting my child, contraceptive charms or no contraceptive charms. If I choose a boy there is the delightful possibility of about five percent that my heritage will kick in at full strength, I will become a hermaphrodite and I'll end up pregnant myself. Now call me paranoid, but I'd rather not risk either."

"Shit," Harry said with venom.

They lapsed into silence again and he tried to find something in the tatters of his plan to help. It occurred to him that Malfoy was as at the mercy of his ancestry as he was; only he seemed to be handling it better.

"If you don't mind me asking," he said eventually, "if you're in heat how is it you haven't fixated on someone like I have?"

"Will power," the Slytherin said snidely.

Harry was not taking the inference that he had not will power lying down.

"I didn't know this was coming," he protested in his own defence, "no one told me I had magical creatures up the family tree. I was having enough trouble with the bloody wings; no one told me I'd suddenly start lusting over my worst enemy."

They glared at each other for a while and then Harry turned his eyes to the growing storm clouds. Arguing was not going to help.

"How long will you be in heat for?" he asked trying to get back on track.

"Probably another two to three months," the Slytherin replied evenly, "it's difficult to tell."

"And after that you can go and shag who the hell you like?" Harry wanted to be sure.

Malfoy raised an eyebrow at Harry's slightly desperate tone, but nodded.

"Then all we have to do is keep this under control until then," Harry decided firmly. "Is there anything I should try and avoid at all costs? I'm probably going to make a complete prat of myself over the next few weeks, but is there anything that could make this worse?"

"Don't touch me," Malfoy said without needing to think. "Veela mating is chemical; if you touch me in the state you're in we could be in real trouble."

Harry nodded.

"Anything else?" he asked quickly and glanced up as a rumble of thunder rolled across the sky.

"That's it," Malfoy replied and suddenly grinned, "I look forward to your antics. They've been most entertaining so far."

Harry groaned and stood up. It was going to be an uncomfortable couple of months.

"Are you going to tell everyone about the wings?" he asked, needing to know.

"I think it'll be far more entertaining if the rest just think you're losing your mind, don't you?" the Slytherin replied with an evil glint in his eye. "Besides, you keep my secret and I'll keep yours. There are those who would like a liaison with the house of Malfoy and would take advantage of my condition. I would rather not have to deal with that."

Harry faced Malfoy as he also climbed to his feet. He looked into the Slytherin's storm grey eyes and for a brief moment wished that they were not enemies. With a short nod he acknowledged that they understood each other, and then he looked back at the sky.

"We should get back inside," he decided quickly, "it's going to rain."

Without another word the pair set off across the open ground towards the castle. The heavens opened when they were about halfway there and Harry pulled the hood of his cloak up quickly, grateful for the shelter. There was a bright flash and fork lightning lanced out of the sky almost as soon as the water began to fall and it was followed instantly by a roll of thunder. Harry looked around and then at Malfoy knowing that they both realised how dangerous their situation was: they were in the middle of a piece of flat ground and were the only raised objects in a thunder storm. Lightning liked magical things, which was one of the reason Hogwarts had several very large lightning rods, but they were too far from the castle to be safe. As one the pair began to run.

Harry felt the build up of static in their vicinity as his very well developed sense of danger kicked in and he didn't hesitate. His wings ripped through his clothes as if they weren't there and he threw himself at Malfoy, wrapping the Slytherin in a tight embrace as his wings closed round them in a protective shield. The lightning struck his highest wingtip a fraction of a second later and pain lanced through Harry at the impact. Most magic his wings could repel, natural forces were more difficult and he paid for opposing the lightning, nowhere near as much as if he or Malfoy had been hit directly, but enough.

It wasn't as if he hadn't felt pain before, it was almost second nature to him, but even so Harry lost it for a while. He had no idea what he was doing and everything was a blur and when he came back to himself he was lying flat on his back looking at the sun coming out as the storm headed towards the coast. The clouds seemed to be moving too fast to be natural and Harry wondered what the hell had happened. His wings were folded away, he ached from head to foot and one arm was being crushed by another body.

There was a groan from beside him and Harry looked over to see Malfoy picking himself up from where he was laying on his limb. He could not fail to notice that his hand was firmly wound with the Slytherin's fingers and as Malfoy sat up Harry looked past the dishevelled wizard to their joined hands. The Slytherin seemed to realise at the same time and snatched his limb away swearing loudly.

"Potter," Malfoy yelled loudly and scrambled to his feet, "which bit of don't touch me did you not understand?"



"I wasn't trying to touch you," Harry protested his innocence and felt every part of his body complain as he sat up, "I was just trying to prevent you being fried. We just got struck by lightning if you missed it."

The Slytherin was glaring at him, but Malfoy could hardly argue with the logic of the argument. It took Harry a couple of seconds to realise that his companion was staring at him rather hard and not quite as angrily as he had started.

"Malfoy," he said slowly, a little worried by the abrupt change in his companion.

That snapped the Slytherin back to reality.

"Oh bloody hell," Malfoy said loudly, "it's started already. I told you if you touched me we were in trouble. We need to get to the hospital wing now: if we're lucky Madame Pomfrey can stop this before it goes any further."

Harry chose not to argue and hurried after the Slytherin as Malfoy stormed towards the castle.

End of Chapter 4

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## Chapter 5 Complications

By the time they reached the hospital wing it was quite obvious to Harry why Malfoy had wanted to avoid anyone trying to take advantage of his heritage; it appeared that the Veela sex drive, once engaged, was far worse than anything his Seraphim heritage had been putting him through so far. Twice on the way there he had had to redirect Malfoy so that the Slytherin was concentrating on where they were going rather than what Harry was doing.

He might have found himself doing strange things to attract Malfoy, but Malfoy seemed to be completely losing his mind to hormones very rapidly. It was actually quite scary and Harry could only pray that Poppy could do something about Malfoy's problem before Seraphim sat up and took note of sex-crazed Veela.

"Mating frenzy," Malfoy said the moment he set eyes on Poppy, "need suppressant, now."

The Slytherin was obviously not at his most articulate.

"Mr Potter," the healer said efficiently, "please take a seat at the other end of the room. Mr Malfoy, sit on that bed and I will be back in a moment."

She disappeared as Harry went to do as he was told, and he was slightly worried that it was more difficult than it should have been to walk away from Malfoy. He sat down and tried not to think too hard as he watched Poppy come back from her store cupboard and give Malfoy two potions. The Slytherin downed them like his life depended on it and then sat there fidgeting as Poppy cast some diagnostic charms over him.

"You should feel the affects of the suppressant imminently," she told Malfoy professionally, and Harry did not try and pretend he was not listening. "It will suppress any urges you may be having and if we are in time, give the neutralising potion an opportunity to reverse the mating drive. How do you feel?"

For a moment her patient sat there thinking about this and then a very annoyed frown appeared on his face.

"Like I want to kill Potter, rather than do anything else to him," the Slytherin said viciously and quite frankly Harry had never been so pleased to hear a threat in his life.

Poppy tutted at Malfoy for that comment, but did not elaborate on her disapproval and Harry could not help feeling guilty.

"Mr Potter," Poppy said in the usual formal manner she used when in company, "you may return to this end of the room."

Never one to push his luck, even though he and the healer were good friends he quickly walked towards to pair. As soon as he reached them Poppy pulled a small bottle out of her apron and handed it to him.

"Drink this," she said firmly and Harry was not quite sure how much trouble he was in; after all he was supposed to have gone out and just talked to Malfoy and he had returned with him in this state. "It will suppress any reaction you may be having to Mr Malfoy's hormonal state until we have determined if the effect has been reversed. There is an even chance that by tomorrow morning we should be

in no worse a position than we were this morning. I have summoned the headmaster and your heads of houses, and when they arrive I would be most grateful if you would explain exactly what happened."

"It's all Potter's fault," Malfoy said sullenly, but a look from Poppy stopped him from going any further.

Harry opened the bottle and downed its contents, not even bothering to grimace at the awful taste; he was too worried about what was going on. Poppy did not appear happy with him, but then he couldn't really blame her, he had just managed to make a bad situation worse without even really trying. It wasn't as if he could have predicted the lightning strike.

She made him sit down so she could cast a few diagnostic charms, but she said nothing else directly to him as they waited for, as far as Harry was concerned, doom to arrive.

The first to appear was Dumbledore, who breezed in and gave both Harry and Malfoy a bright smile.

"Good afternoon, Gentlemen, Madame Pomfrey, I understand we have a small problem," the headmaster said cheerfully.

Dumbledore's habit of understating the true gravity of anything but life and death situations appeared to be a little much for Malfoy to take right about then.

"Little?" the Slytherin said incredulously. "Potter may have very well wrecked my life."

"No need to be melodramatic, Mr Malfoy," Poppy reprimanded gently.

Harry couldn't help hoping that that was all it was. He prayed quietly that tomorrow everything would be back to normal and he could just get on with making a complete prat out of himself as Malfoy laughed; he didn't even want to consider what would happen if the treatment did not work.

Snape chose that moment to walk in, took one look at Harry and sneered.

"What has Potter managed to do now?" the potions master asked acidly just as Professor McGonagall appeared in the doorway behind him.

"It could quite easily have been, Mr Malfoy," Harry's head of house said in his support and he was very glad to have at least one person on his side.

Snape gave Professor McGonagall a long look and then walked fully into the room.

"There has been an unfortunate accident," Madame Pomfrey explained calmly, "and Mr Potter has inadvertently triggered Mr Malfoy's Veela heritage."

The subject of Malfoy's peculiarities in family line did not seem to be a surprise to anyone.

"He triggered mine first," Harry muttered under his breath, and from the way Professor Dumbledore looked at him he had to assume the headmaster was anything but hard of hearing.

"And just how did you manage that, Potter?" Snape was definitely not going to let him off the hook.

"He touched me," Malfoy said pointedly, "after I specifically told him not to."

"Do not forget the lightning, Malfoy," Harry said pointedly, "you were about to be struck."

Snape opened his mouth to comment on this when Dumbledore put up his hand, drawing the man up short.

"I believe," the headmaster said thoughtfully, "that taking a moment to discover the facts in this case, may shed more light on the situation than recriminations. Harry, did you touch Mr Malfoy after he gave you instructions to the contrary?"

Harry glanced at all the faces looking at him.

"Yes," he said honestly, "but it was an accident."

The look on Snape's face said that he was about to really have a go, but Dumbledore was not ready to relinquish control.

"And, Harry," the headmaster continued calmly, "would you please explain why you took such action."

"We were out by the lake talking," he was very glad to be able to give his side of the story, "and a storm came in. We were on our way back when the lightning started and I felt the static build up and knew we were going to be hit. I jumped at Malfoy and put my wings up to protect us," he saw both Snape and McGonagall raise their eyebrows at the wing comment, "and I don't know what happened after I was hit, but we ended up holding hands."

"You were struck by lightning?" Snape sounded incredulous.

"Yes," Harry replied firmly, "it hurt like hell."

Professor McGonagall was still looking at him enquiringly.

"Would someone mind explaining how Mr Potter comes to have wings," the woman asked evenly.

Dumbledore looked to Harry with an enquiry in his eyes and Harry nodded.

"Mr Potter has Seraphim ancestry," the headmaster explained for the two heads of house. "His defeat of Voldemort has allowed this ancestry to manifest."

Professor McGonagall appeared impressed; Snape looked disgusted.

"And I'm in heat," Harry admitted quietly and saw the surprise in even Dumbledore's eyes.

"Which is why I told you not to touch me," Malfoy took the opportunity for another dig.

"Yes, Mr Malfoy," Professor McGonagall said shortly, "I believe we have established what you did or did not tell Mr Potter."

"If the sources are to be believed," Snape said coldly, turning everyone's attention straight back to him, "Seraphim come on heat when they find another they deem suitable as a mate. Who did you choose, Mr Potter; the Granger girl?"

It did not seem to have occurred to the two members of staff who did not know, that Harry's problem and the Malfoy situation were directly connected, and he found he couldn't bring himself to say it. Going bright red he looked to Poppy for assistance.

"Mr Potter came to me for advice this morning," the healer said evenly, "he is fixated on Mr Malfoy. I suggested that Mr Malfoy be made aware of the situation to avoid possible incidents such as the one which appears to have occurred."

Harry just wanted to disappear into the floor he was so embarrassed. Professor McGonagall seemed to find the entire situation completely unbelievable and stared at him almost as hard as Snape was.

"Harry," the woman said slowly, "why did you choose Mr Malfoy?"

"I didn't," Harry protested firmly, "we hate each other. I didn't have a choice in the matter; the bit of me with wings thinks he's the best candidate and there's nothing I can do about it."

The expression on Snape's face was becoming nastier by the second and Harry didn't like that at all.

"Regardless of why Mr Potter has done what he did," the head of Slytherin said acidly, "he has clearly assaulted Mr Malfoy, and this situation must be dealt with."

Harry would have protested, but the look the other three members of staff sent Snape said everything he may have wanted to express.

"Mr Malfoy," Dumbledore said calmly and turned towards the Slytherin, "since it appears on the surface of things that you are the injured party, I feel it should be you who choose how we proceed in this matter. If you wish we will alert the Ministry and have this matter investigated formally or alternatively, if you wish this matter to remain between yourself and Mr Potter, far from the public eye, we will deal with it as such."

There was glee in Malfoy's eye for a few moments until the headmaster mentioned 'the public eye' at which point the Slytherin seemed to realise that this situation would expose not only Harry, but himself to scrutiny. It was almost possible to see the thoughts track across his face and Harry waited nervously for the answer.

"I would prefer," Malfoy said slowly, "that as few people be made aware of this situation as possible."

Dumbledore smiled at the Slytherin cheerfully.

"Very well," the headmaster said brightly, "we will deal with this as quietly as possible as an internal matter. I believe that the whole incident is clearly an accident and hence little could be gained from punishing either party involved. I assume Madame Pomfrey has the matter in hand."

"Yes Headmaster," Poppy said efficiently; "Mr Malfoy has taken the suppressant and neutralising potions and now all we can do is wait. I have also dosed Mr

Potter with suppressant to prevent his condition affecting Mr Malfoy while the neutralising potion has time to work. The effects of all potions will wear off in approximately twelve hours, at which point if Mr Malfoy still feels himself under any compunction to seek out Mr Potter he should return here and we will try other alternatives."

The smile that the headmaster gave everyone in the room was somewhat over the top as far as Harry was concerned, but he was incredibly glad he would not be in detention with Filch for the rest of his school life.

"Good," Dumbledore said lightly, "then I believe that is settled. Professor Snape, Professor McGonagall, if you wouldn't mind escorting your respective pupil back their common room, I believe we may set this matter to rest."

Neither of the Slytherins appeared very happy with the outcome, but when the headmaster made such cheerful pronouncements the whole school knew you couldn't do anything about them.

"Come with me, Harry," Professor McGonagall said supportively, "and I'll see what I can do about your uniform before you return to your friends."

That also translated as 'we're going to my office and having a little chat' in McGonagall speak, but who was Harry to argue and he followed his head of house meekly.

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It had gone from a not great day to a really bad day and Harry was very unhappy. Not only was he obsessed with Malfoy, but now there was a fifty-fifty chance that the Slytherin would go into heat fully with him as the target. With both of them going after each other the likelihood of them ending up sleeping together was very high and Harry did not even want to consider the five percent probability that Malfoy had mentioned. Fathering a child by Malfoy was definitely not on his to-do list. To top it all he had shredded his favourite jumper and his winter cloak and thanks to the fact that his wings had done so magically the garments were refusing to be repaired by any spell.

He walked into the Gryffindor common room feeling understandably depressed as well as still aching in every muscle and found everyone staring at him. With certain dread he knew his day had just gone from bad to worse.

"Um, Harry," it was Colin Creevy who summoned the courage to speak, "about the wings."

He had been seen. Someone had seen him save Malfoy and Harry knew without a doubt that the whole school would have been informed by now. Not caring who was in the room the golden boy of Gryffindor proceeded to swear in the most colourful way he knew how for a good twenty seconds, and then stormed towards his dorm. As he reached the tower steps he turned and glared at the shocked faces.

"Just to stop the questions; one of my ancestors was a Seraphim," he announced loudly so everyone could hear, "and Voldemort's final laugh is that because of his power I get wings. If that's not freaky enough I'm in heat and I'm obsessing over Draco bloody Malfoy who hates me with a passion that is second only to how the Dark Lord himself used to feel about me. My life is a nightmare and I think I'm going to lock myself in my room and never come out ever again."

He turned and ran up the stairs three at a time.

"He's in a good mood," someone said quietly, but with his overactive senses Harry picked it up.

"I heard that!" he bellowed down the stairs and then marched into his dorm.

He was very glad to find it empty and slammed the door dramatically, after which he pulled out his wand and threw a locking charm at it that had so much power behind it, about the only person who would be able to make it through was Dumbledore. If his dorm mates wanted in they were going to have to persuade him to open it.

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"Potter!" Malfoy's voice rang out across the Great hall as the Slytherin came charging through the door. "Prepare to die a very painful death."

Harry turned from where he was about to sit down and decided that the Slytherin was probably serious since Malfoy had his wand in his hand. Just in case he reached into his sleeve and pulled out his own wand; the pupils in between the pair scattered to either side. Malfoy's anger answered the question as to whether Poppy's treatment had taken: it obviously hadn't.

"I'm going to eliminate my problem before I can't think anymore and I don't care if I have to spend the rest of my life in Azkaban," the Slytherin really was very annoyed.

It occurred to the back of Harry's mind that Madame Pomfrey had specifically said Malfoy should go straight to her if the treatment did not work, but the part-Veela appeared far too angry for that.

"I'm sorry," Harry shouted back as anger warred with desire, "you were about to be struck by lightning, what was I supposed to do?"

"Cast a shield charm, leap in front of me," Malfoy snarled and waved his wand menacingly, "but I thought I made it very clear you were never to touch me."

That was just so unfair that anger won again.

"I had less than a second to act," Harry protested loudly, "if I'd gone for my wand you'd be crispy on the edges and there was no time to get off the ground."

They were no more than two meters apart now and Malfoy was pointing his wand directly at Harry's chest. He couldn't help noticing that the Slytherin's grey eyes almost shone when he was angry. Disgusted with himself and trying to clear his head of any such ideas Harry took a deep, calming breath.

"Let me make it absolutely clear," Malfoy said in a very dangerous tone that Harry found strangely sexy, "if you lay one hand on me I will rip it off."

Cursing every deity under the sun Harry gave up on anything resembling calm and tried for simply not grabbing the Slytherin there and then.

"You think I like this any better than you do?" he replied hotly. "It's not my fault you picked a bloody stupid place to talk when there was a storm coming in."

His problem was, part of him liked the idea of ripping Malfoy's clothes off very much and it seemed to be gaining more of his brain's attention.

"Oh so this is my fault now is it?" the Slytherin shot back furiously. "If you hadn't accosted me after the match we wouldn't have been talking in the first place."

Without his conscious consent Harry took a step towards Malfoy and had to restrain himself from moving any further.

"I was trying to warn you," he said pointedly. "If I hadn't talked to you I wouldn't have known I was not supposed to touch you and I could have done the same thing in Potions without even knowing it. I'm sorry, okay, but there's nothing I can do about it now; it was an accident."

"You're one big walking accident, Potter," Malfoy returned and moved forward again.

A slightly pained expression crossed the Slytherin's features and Harry was almost sure Malfoy was having the same problem thinking straight as he was. The attraction was palpable and he suddenly realised that being in the same room as Malfoy was a really bad idea.

"Malfoy, magical fields interact," he said trying to think logically for one minute, "one of us should leave; now."

By the time he finished his tone was a little strangled. Malfoy swore and tried to turn, but only managed a look away before he snapped back.

"I should have killed you already," the part-Veela bemoaned and closed his eyes in desperation.

Harry just about managed to keep himself in the same place as a surge of almost unstoppable lust ran through him. Oh they were definitely interacting now; both on heat and neither of them could break away.

"Goyle," the Slytherin called to his companion urgently, "get me the hell out of here this instant."

Harry's wing nubs twitched as the wall of a boy moved to do as Malfoy told him; the part of him that was rapidly gaining control did not like that idea. It was as if the primeval part of his brain had woken up and was taking over, leaving his rational thoughts to sit at the back of his mind and kill time. He knew without a doubt that if something didn't happen soon the pull of his instincts would be too much for him. Harry Potter jumping Draco Malfoy in the Great Hall for everyone to see was not how he wanted to go down in Hogwarts history.

When Goyle reached out to take hold of Malfoy's shoulders Harry's wand hand flicked as if it had a mind of its own and the broad Slytherin went sliding backwards; Harry had not even used a spell.

"Malfoy," he said in a desperate voice, "stupefy me, blast me, anything; just don't let me get to you or we will both regret it."

The Slytherin's features hardened in concentration, but all he managed to do was take another step forward.



"I can't," Malfoy admitted and he actually looked slightly afraid.

Harry felt as if his whole body had been ripped from his control and he moved so they were nose-to-nose. He wanted to flare out his wings and show how strong he was; he wanted to sweep Malfoy into his arms; and it was so hard not to.

"If you get me pregnant, Potter," the Slytherin hissed at him in no more than a whisper, "I'll do worse than Cruciatus."

They were millimetres apart now and the pull between them was almost painful. Harry heard the sound of someone casting the stupefy hex and his wings almost flared in response, but for one moment he managed to claw onto his self-control. It only took a fraction of a second before it was too late and he felt the blast hit him from the side. Eternally grateful to whoever had acted, Harry slid into unconsciousness.

End of Chapter 5

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## Chapter 6 Instincts

Harry woke feeling stiff and uncomfortable, as if he'd been lying in an awkward position for too long, but when he tried to move he discovered he couldn't. When he attempted to bring his hand up to his face he managed to shift it no more than a few millimetres before he encountered opposition. Opening his eyes he glanced down and confirmed what his sense of touch was telling him: he was lying on a hospital wing bed and he was attached to it with full body restraints.

There were padded leather cuffs on his wrists and his ankles and there was a long strap across his chest and another over his hips. Harry was very firmly connected to the bed and from the slight tingling that the restraints caused in his skin he didn't think they were Muggle made either.

His first instinct was mild panic and he pulled against the confinement with little effect, but it took him only a few moments to calm himself down. This was still Hogwarts: he could recognise Poppy's touches around the small room where he was being kept and Dumbledore would not have let anything happen to him. However, that still didn't answer the questions: 'How long had he been here?' and 'What on earth had he done to warrant being strapped down?'

Relaxing back onto the bed and taking a few deep breaths, Harry tried to clear his mind and see if he remembered anything. A vague feeling of anger and pain filled him, but no memories surfaced to help him understand; the last thing he could recall clearly was the Great Hall. A certain amount of time had to have passed because he was wearing hospital-wing pyjamas rather than his school uniform and his stomach felt like a very large empty hole, but how long was a mystery. He was considering calling out to see if any one was listening when the door opened anyway.

The moment the oak barrier cracked open so much as an inch Harry felt it: a pull on his senses that filled him with a need so urgent that it physically hurt. Every nerve in his body came alive as he went from relaxed to painfully aroused in less than a second. His mate was somewhere on the other side of that door and Malfoy's magic called to him. Harry couldn't stop himself; he pulled at the restraints as hard as possible, twisting and trying to arch off the bed. He had to get out. He needed to be free and he yelled his fury to the world.

Nothing mattered, nothing but joining with his mate and it filled every thought. He strained to release himself, but Harry was held in place and it caused him pain. He was aware of little except the fire in his flesh, but he felt it when the door closed and the source of his agony was cut off. One moment it was there clawing at his mind and body and the next it was gone, but it did not stop the reactions that it had already started. He could not prevent himself continuing to pull at the leather and although it dimmed, the molten lava in his veins still burned.

His eyes stared at the world, but he registered nothing, all Harry knew was the need and it consumed him completely. His protests were incoherent and animalistic, but he couldn't think enough to make them anything else. Only gradually did it begin to fade and slowly he became aware of a hand gently stroking his forehead and a voice speaking to him. Bit by bit the world started to make a little sense and his reflexive resistance to his bonds calmed from its frantic level. Harry still struggled, but only weakly and eventually he understood who was talking to him and what she was saying.

"It's alright, Harry," Poppy's calm tones washed over him as he gradually shifted flat onto the bed, "let it go. That's right, try and relax."

It took a long time and a stream of gentle words from his carer before Harry could stop moving all together. He heard himself mew quietly as he slowly came down from the over stimulated high that had taken away all control. Only as the last tremor died away did he finally open his eyes properly and actually see Poppy's calm but concerned face looking down at him.

"Thank you," he said quietly, ashamed of his reaction and aware that the physical arousal the incident had caused in him had not faded as completely.

Harry noticed all too well that he was wearing only thin pyjamas and there was no sheet to hide his embarrassment.

"All in a day's work, Young Man," Poppy said in her usual business like fashion and gave him a small smile.

Her completely normal manner and efficient approach was a relief to the confused and self-conscious young wizard and Poppy seemed very pleased by his coherent communication.

"Now, Harry," she continued calmly, "how are you feeling?"

The burning had faded leaving a tingling all over his body, but even so, now that he knew what could happen Harry could feel the raw need sitting just below the surface waiting to return.

"Like I'm ready to explode," he said honestly. "Poppy, I can't control it at all."

"That's what the wards are for, Harry," the woman assured him firmly. "If I had realised you were awake I would have been more careful when I came in. I will do my best to make sure it does not happen again, and when I am satisfied that we have everything perfect I will remove the restraints."

That at least was a relief, but it begged another question.

"What about Malfoy? Is he okay?" Harry asked, finding himself very concerned.

Poppy nodded and rested her hand comfortingly on his shoulder.

"Mr Malfoy is under similar compunctions as you, but he has so far remained lucid," the healer explained evenly. "I believe the stupefy hex caused an adverse reaction in you at a time when your magic was in turmoil. Mr Malfoy has been locked in another isolation room at his request, but it was possible to restrain him physically in the Great Hall rather than magically, so he has suffered no ill effects."

Apart for a desperate need to shag me, Harry thought to himself.

"How long?" he asked and shifted slightly in the restraints to illustrate what he meant.

"Roughly six hours," Poppy replied openly. "You were brought here after Miss Granger hexed you, but when we tried to revive you we managed only to restore your more primitive aspect. I'm afraid it was necessary to stupefy you a second time; I did not think you would be awake for some hours yet."

"I live to surprise people," Harry replied and tried to make light of the whole thing, but his smile faded quickly.

This was just so insane: he was filled with desire for a boy with whom he shared a mutual dislike and he could do nothing about it.

"What are we going to do?" he asked a little desperately; for the first time he was truly afraid that there was no way out of this situation.

"We have the best minds working on the problem, Harry," Poppy said gently but confidently. "Don't you worry, they will find out what to do."

Harry was not so sure there was a solution, but he looked up at the healer and tried to have faith.

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For over twenty four hours there was no choice but to keep Harry strapped to the bed. No matter what the spells on the room, it seemed impossible to find one strong enough to prevent his hyper aware magical senses from seeking out Malfoy if the door was opened. With it closed he could maintain control, but the moment someone had to enter or leave he went berserk even though the spells over the door automatically strengthened when it was used. On one occasion he almost broke the restraints.

One thing Harry had discovered throughout his lucid times was that being unable to move was very boring. Only Poppy and Dumbledore had entered the room for fear of doing further damage to Harry's magical control and although the headmaster had sat and talked for several hours and Poppy checked on him regularly to make sure he didn't need anything, this meant he was mostly alone. The incidents when he lost control took a lot out of him, and he had managed a few hours sleep, but he had far too much on his mind to rest quietly. Harry felt caged on an instinctive and an intellectual level, neither of which was helping him relax at all.

He was lying there, staring at the ceiling when he heard a key in the lock. Instantly he tensed, knowing that even though Poppy had managed to damp down the reaction he had when the door was opened it was still not going to be pleasant. When the healer walked through the door, smiled at him and closed it behind her without him suffering any more than a readily controllable desire to lunge for the opening, he was rather stunned.

"Good evening, Harry," she greeted cheerfully, "how are you feeling?"

For a moment he couldn't help himself; he just stared, at a loss for what to say. At times over the last day and a bit he had been convinced he would never be able to see the outside of a padded cell ever again, and now he suddenly had hope.

"Fine," he said eventually, unable to keep the shock out of his voice. "I felt the pull," he was not about to downplay what he was experiencing, "but it was so much better."

"Good," Poppy said smiling again, "I believe you will owe Miss Granger several votes of thanks when we have this all sorted out."

"Hermione figured it out?" Harry asked, although he didn't know why he was surprised; if anyone could sort out this mess it was Hermione.

Poppy walked over and put down the covered tray she was carrying. There were some rather nice food smell coming from underneath the cloth and Harry deduced it must be about supper time; it was difficult to keep track of the hours ticking by in his little room. He was not particularly hungry and hadn't been since he woke up, but Poppy had explained this was because his body was trying to move into an alternative metabolic state for mating, and it was best to keep a routine to try and stabilise the effects.

"Miss Granger has a remarkable mind," the healer explained pleasantly. "She suggested the solution this morning, but we chose not to reveal it to you until we were sure it would work. She noted that what was needed were two levels of wards in an, I believe the term she used was 'airlock', arrangement. It took some hours to convince the castle to place this room inside another so we were able to achieve this aim, but I am pleased to say it appears to be a complete success."

Much to Harry's growing pleasure Poppy did not adjust the bed to bring him into a sitting position as she had done for all other meals where she had spoon fed him; instead she pointed her wand at the nearest restraint and whispered a spell. All at once the straps holding him down released and Harry was free. It was the most wonderful feeling. Even as he watched, the restraints shrank down into the mattress and disappeared from view.

"Now I'm afraid I must place a charm on you to prevent you leaving the bed," Poppy told him seriously, "but it is just a precaution. I have some books and a selection of your school things in the outside room, which I shall bring in for you once you have finished your dinner. Before you know it we shall have this whole business behind us."

Harry could not help but smile at the healer's optimistic pronouncement; he was so happy to be free that he probably would have grinned if she had been reciting a potion's recipe, as for the first time in over a day he sat up under his own steam.

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There was still no sign of a solution on the horizon and Harry had been locked up for three and a half days. He was beginning to think there was no way out of this and he was more than a little depressed. Trying to put on a brave face he smiled at Poppy whenever she came in and tried to sound confident during his nightly talks with Dumbledore, but it seemed almost hopeless. Over the last day he had noticed that when the door opened the desire to escape was becoming stronger again; no where near as bad as it had been before the double wards, but nevertheless uncomfortable.

Good sense told him that he should tell Poppy exactly what he was feeling, but the memory of the restraints was too fresh and he just couldn't bring himself to do it. He did not want to find himself flat on his back tied to the bed again, and he told himself he'd tell her if it became too bad, but for now he could live with it.

The news about Malfoy had been sparse, but it seemed he was in nowhere near the same state as Harry. The part-Veela was locked in so he couldn't do anything stupid, but with Harry behind very strong wards there had been no need to restrain Malfoy with anything like the charm which prevented Harry from moving from his bed. In one way Harry was glad that he had not caused Malfoy as much

grief as he had caused himself, but another, rather petty part resented that his object of desire seemed to be finding this easier than he was.

To his chagrin, Harry found himself dwelling more and more on Malfoy, even though he was trying to occupy himself with reading and homework. It was quite unsettling to suddenly snap out of a daydream and not realise when he had started or for how long he had been drifting.

He was sitting cross-legged on the bed with his transfiguration text book in his lap when he felt the first stirrings of something. Not sure why he was doing it, Harry looked up towards the door and frowned. It was a very odd sensation, knowing that he was aware of something, but not knowing what that something was, and for a few moments he sat very still trying to figure out what was going on.

Very slowly his frown began to deepen and he felt the beginnings of anger stirring in the pit of his stomach. He had no idea why he was angry, but he could feel the emotion twisting through his body, running up his spine and curling into his brain, leaving tendrils through every nerve.

There was a tearing noise and he looked down to find that the page he had been reading was now scrunched up in his fist. His knuckles were white and almost against his will he found himself moving. It took only a small shift for him to reach what felt like a padded wall, which was what his mind made of the charm to keep him on the bed. Unable to control his reaction he growled low in his throat and his wing nubs shifted under his pyjama shirt.

For a moment he managed to reign in his instincts; shutting his eyes tightly he demanded that his mind and body obey him, but it was unsustainable. Within seconds he pushed against the invisible barrier and when it did not give he snarled and his wings flared out of his back, shredding his top in the process. There was very little first hand knowledge about Seraphim magic; most of the research was speculation and hearsay, and the charm on him and the bed was no match for the reality. As his wings sliced through the air they went straight through the spell and it collapsed with a loud pop.

Harry was moving towards the door before he thought about it and he pressed up against it, listening, even though it was highly unlikely that he would hear anything through two walls and such strong wards. Even though he had freed himself from the bed the anger did not dissipate, in fact it was still building. Something was going on outside of his prison and the Seraphim part of him was very interested in it.

Bringing back both arms in a sweeping gesture he brought them to bear on the door with a tremendous thud. The oak shook at the impact, but it did not give. Suddenly Harry felt his anger spike and from annoyed he went to completely furious in a heartbeat. In a moment he knew why; he was being challenged; someone was trying to take his mate. He had never felt such fury, not even when he had killed Voldemort and Harry stepped back from the door, completely intent on his next course of action.

He flared his wings, curled them round so the tips were facing the door and blasted it with barely controlled power. Lighting-like energy erupted from his wings and the door exploded outwards as if it was made of glass. Stopping and trying to calm down were not concepts that even remotely entered his head and he charged through the smouldering remains of the wood into the outer room. The second door fared even worse when he breached the first wards and the pull

of his mate intensified. It was like pushing through tissue paper as he treated the obstacle and the powerful magic on it almost as if it wasn't there.

As he burst into the hospital wing someone screamed and he scanned the room in one glance. There was nothing of importance here; only a terrified third year in one of the beds at the far end. Now he was through the second set of wards the call from Malfoy's magic hit him full force. The painful arousal and desperate need combined with his fury and he just had to let some of it out; he put his head back and roared, his voice being deepened and amplified by the power running through his body.

Harry did not even consider where he was going he just let his instincts take him. When he reached the locked wooden door, behind which he could feel Malfoy's magic calling to him, it was almost as if he could see through it. Magic was communicating at a basic level and telling him things he would otherwise never have known: there were three people beyond the door; Malfoy; Poppy; and someone he did not recognise. There was something wrong with his mate and the other two had their wands pointed at the door.

Almost insultingly easily he kicked just below the lock and the barrier between him and those inside slammed open. Two stupefy hexes came at him simultaneously, but they bounced off his wings harmlessly and then he was into the room. Malfoy was bent double on the bed, heaving the contents of his stomach into a basin; Poppy backed into the nearest corner; and a strange man stared at him in terrified wonder from where he seemed to be guarding an array of bottles.

There was only one reason he was here and Harry did not hesitate; he jumped past the stranger onto the bed, turned in one swift movement and crouched down behind the suffering Slytherin, placing one hand gently on his mate's back and bringing his wings round as a shield. Malfoy's response was to retch violently and expel more of whatever had so affected him into the basin. Harry growled at the other man in the room, connecting him to the foul smelling liquid Malfoy was heaving into the bowl, but the sheer bliss of the simple contact with his mate prevented him from moving.

Apparently having thrown up everything from his system Malfoy leaned into Harry and rested his head on the Seraphim's leg. The part-Veela appeared dazed and tired from whatever he had just experienced, but almost straight away Harry felt a hand curling round his thigh possessively. He desperately wanted to respond, but he could not take his eyes off the two sources of danger in the room. When the strange man lifted his wand slightly, Harry snarled at him and angled his wing tips at the wizard.

"Mr Philtrum," Poppy said very firmly, "lower your wand."

The healer had her wand down by her side and, looking Harry directly in the eye, she stood away from the wall and took a step towards the door.

"What are you doing?" Philtrum asked in a very bewildered manner.

"Leaving," Poppy replied as if it was what she had intended all along.

Philtrum looked at her as if she was mad.

"You cannot be serious," the wizard said pointedly. "If we leave they will ... will ..."

If Harry hadn't been so wound up he might have found Philtrum's blustering funny.

"I am quite aware of what will occur if we leave, Mr Philtrum," Poppy said in a tone which begged no argument. "The Ministry's assistance in this matter has been helpful," even in his current state Harry recognised that the healer actually thought completely the opposite, "however, it should be plainly obvious that the situation has stepped beyond our control. There is nothing to do except allow these events to run to their natural conclusion."

"I couldn't possibly condone..." the Ministry wizard began and Harry couldn't help himself; he snarled.

"They are both of age, Mr Philtrum," Poppy sounded as if she'd hex the man herself if he didn't do what he was told. "They are far beyond your potions, as Mr Malfoy's reaction made perfectly obvious, and it appears that your attempt to remedy the situation has in fact exacerbated it. You will pick up your concoctions this instant, and you will leave."

Philtrum went pale and did as he was instructed, slowly backing out of the room with his case as Harry growled at him all the way. Poppy looked the Seraphim in the eye as she moved to follow the Ministry wizard; "I am sorry, Gentlemen," she said evenly, "we have failed."

Then she left, closing the door behind her. Harry did not hesitate as something in him knew what to do next and power erupted from his wings, not just the tips, but the whole surface and spread around them like a net. This web of magic began to expand straight away and did not stop until it reached the walls, enclosing them in a cage of power.

He could feel his magic shifting and reaching out to touch the beautiful Slytherin curled around his leg. There was a residue about his mate; something foreign that bore the same aura as the foul liquid in the bowl still on the bed and he banished both with a wave of his hand. The bowl smashed against the wall, the potion it contained fizzling into nothing on the power web, and Malfoy reared up, his back arching as Harry's magic hit him. Harry held him steady in his arms, lowering him to the bed gently.

Bright grey eyes were hidden behind closed lids as Malfoy breathed in gasps, his body still trembling even as he began to relax. Harry watched his lover's face and Malfoy appeared to be somewhere between agony and ecstasy as Harry's magic dispelled the last of whatever Philtrum had tried to pump into the part-Veela. When those eyes opened again they were hungry and fixed directly into Harry's gaze.

Words and real world rationality were gone from his mind and that was the only invitation Harry required. Slowly, almost as if Malfoy might break he leant down and touched his lips to the slight pout of his mate's mouth. It was like closing a circuit as sensation and power flooded through him, dragging him onward relentlessly. When he darted his tongue between his teeth Malfoy's lips were already parting to give him access and a velvet mouth sucked his tongue in as if starving.

His senses exploded with the taste of his mate and Harry drew it in, wanting everything Malfoy had to give. This beautiful creature was his and he belonged to



Malfoy in return; nothing else mattered. Fingers wound in his hair, pulling him even closer as he relaxed into the kiss. This was what he wanted, what he needed; it felt so perfect.

Malfoy had one leg raised and the Slytherin rubbed it along Harry's side as he pushed their torsos together. His mind was filled with his lover and Harry was drunk on the experience. The human part of him knew little of sex, but the Seraphim part of his nature was in control now, and instinct was a far better teacher than the logical mind. Harry knew what he was doing was right because of the way Malfoy responded to him, and he wanted to know every reaction there was to see.

He moved on to his lover's neck, kissing, licking and tasting; testing each millimetre of skin for a response. He was not disappointed as the fingers in his hair tightened and Malfoy moaned beneath him, moving into the touch with the most delicious shift of his body. A pulse of arousal moved through Harry's entire body, focusing on his groin and at that moment it was as if he wanted the man beneath him more than anything he had ever desired in his entire life.

Suddenly there was too much cloth between them and he ran one talon-tipped finger down Malfoy's fine cotton pyjama top, shredding the material where his sharp claw touched it, but leaving the pale flesh underneath completely unmarked. Pulling away slightly he looked down, fascinated by every glimpse of his lover that he revealed, returning to the top once he had finished one slit, only to start again with another one.

Over minutes he reverently destroyed the covering on the top of his mate's body, gently running the pads of his other fingers over the skin given up by the material. Malfoy moaned at every touch, muscles rippling under the delicate ministrations. Harry was in heaven.

By the time he was almost finished there was nothing left of Malfoy's top except thin streamers, even along the length of the Slytherin's arms, and with two last quick movements the seams gave way and the whole garment fell to the bed like so much rag.

Now Harry went to work properly: he nuzzled; he kissed; he nibbled; he stroked; he explored everywhere he could reach and he learned as he went. Malfoy lay like a prince, content to be caressed, desired and investigated, moaning his pleasure and gasping his arousal, barely touching Harry as he moved.

Each contact aroused Harry even more and he felt as if his nerves were tracking every sensation at ridiculous levels, but he could not stop. When he had explored neck, chest, biceps, wrists, fingers, hands, torso and nipples he moved on, ever searching. His mind was in a strange state, totally unafraid and yet needing to learn and to understand everything about his mate. He could sense the Veela in Malfoy just as he could sense the human and it was a heady mix.

Without hesitation he moved downwards, shredding Malfoy's pyjama trousers with less patience than he had the top. The material fell away quickly, but just as delicately, revealing, aroused flesh. For a few moments Harry paused over his prize, looking at Malfoy's engorged cock and breathing in the strong scent of sex. He wanted to taste, but part of him knew that once he did he would not stop and he still had learning to do.

With patience built from a desperate need to know every part of his mate he began to explore everything he had revealed except what he really wanted. He

touched and massaged, kissed and caressed, moving Malfoy anyway he wanted to reveal more soft flesh. When he ran his tongue over inner thigh Malfoy purred. Then Harry almost lost control and pounced, but the Seraphim instincts were still not satisfied and he was not yet finished.

Gently he rolled Malfoy onto his side, and his lover flopped languidly like a cat that could not be bothered to move from where it was put. It was almost as if Malfoy was a toy that was Harry's to play with, a representation of a humanoid male whose responses were limited to the parameters in which Harry was working.

It took him a long time to cover the whole of Malfoy's back, from the base of his mate's hairline to the base of his spine, but he took just as much care to catalogue every response to his touches. Malfoy had beautiful skin and it deserved to be worshiped. It was as he reached round, firm buttocks that Harry finally paused and pulled back to view the penultimate territory.

Lightly he skimmed his finger nails over one exposed cheek, drawing a sigh and a shudder from his lover and leaving four little pink lines on the pale flesh. It was impossible resist what he did next as he leant forward once more and kissed away the tiny marks. His body was singing to him as he pleased Malfoy and his mind was humming with every possibility he had found. What he saw in front of him he wanted and he knew it would be his.

Slowly parting the firm cheeks he ran his tongue over the revealed skin. Malfoy began to moan again and the further he ran his tongue down the crack the louder his mate became. When Harry finally teased the tight, resisting orifice Malfoy actually cried out. This was a taste like none other and Harry nuzzled closer to gain as much of it as he could. Tongue darting between eager lips he made Malfoy pant and moan as he tortured that one spot until it gave way under his probing. He wanted his mate so much and by this time Malfoy was writhing in place.

Needing the one thing he had not yet had, Harry released his painfully aroused lover and rolled Malfoy back onto his back. The erection which had so enticed him before called to Harry like a Siren and this time he did not hold back. Fingers once again tangled in his hair as he took Malfoy into his mouth and sucked gently. It took only seconds as the over stimulated Slytherin thrust into his mouth and then exploded with orgasm, releasing salty liquid in Harry's throat.

He felt his own body shaking as Malfoy shuddered beneath him, but he was not granted his own release as magic swept through him in a wave causing a reflection of orgasm, but not the real thing. When he finally lifted his head he met Malfoy's grey eyes and he knew exactly what was going to happen next. Now it was Malfoy's turn to explore and Harry found himself pushed firmly onto his back as his mate looked him over.

Under that gaze it was as if he had no control over his own body, and he submitted just as Malfoy had submitted; open to whatever his mate wanted of him. Time took on a surreal quality as sensations replaced seconds, and he was only drawn from this partial stupor once, when Malfoy chose to rip his pyjama trousers in two rather than remove them in the more delicate fashion he had used with the top. It seemed that Veela was less patient than Seraphim.

It was exquisite torture as his already aroused body was taken to a level he had never known existed. His limbs moved to where they were put and he lay there, completely unresisting to whatever his lover wanted. One touch melted into the

next and he moaned his arousal loudly, wanting everything he was being given. He sprawled on the bed as Malfoy played with him and made him sing a song of passion.

His mate did not turn him over, but Malfoy did spread his legs until the Slytherin was resting between them. As much as he had wanted to know, he wanted to be known and he had no control of his body. As his mate gently massaged around and behind his balls Harry could no more resist than he could stop the moans of pleasure coming from his mouth. The touch as fingers moved further back was strange, but it melted his bones and made his groin pulse hotly. Magic burned through his nerves and called to the power in his lover.

"Open your eyes," the instruction came in a hissed whisper and Harry obeyed without thought, to be caught by the piercing grey of his mate's gaze.

Malfoy, while titillating Harry with one hand was slowly sucking one finger of his right hand. The Slytherin smiled as he pulled the digit free of his mouth and lowered that hand to join his other.

"I want you to come for me," Malfoy whispered to him so seductively that Harry almost did without any further stimulation, "come for me now."

The slick wet finger found his entrance in the same moments, and relaxed slightly by the teasing, his muscles gave little resistance as the digit was pushed inside. When Malfoy found a spot inside that Harry had never dreamed about, let alone discovered himself, Harry cried out and released. His magic leapt at the same time and the orgasm seemed to go on forever.

What he had not realised would be true, but became very apparent as he came down from the stimulated high, was that although he had come, he was still hard. He was covered in his own semen and yet his body wanted more. This was not over yet and although the human part of his mind was surprised, the Seraphim part was watching Malfoy hungrily.

The Slytherin was still leaning between his legs, but under Harry's watchful gaze, Malfoy began to move. He reached out and calmly covered his fingers in the evidence of Harry's orgasm. Then Malfoy sat back and languidly spread his legs. Harry's breath caught in his throat as he realised what his mate was about to do. The pulse of arousal was so great as Malfoy slowly reached down and spread himself for Harry to see, that Harry felt like he might explode there and then.

No words were spoken this time as Malfoy's nimble fingers worked at his own body rather than Harry's, but the atmosphere between them both was electric. Malfoy must have been relatively relaxed from Harry's earlier ministrations because it was not long before the Slytherin was using two fingers to open himself, and moaning with every thrust.

This was for him, Harry knew it with every fibre of his being, and finally he could not take it anymore. His instincts demanded that he take his mate and claim him as his own; it was what he had to do. Moving from where he was sitting he came to a stop between Malfoy's spread thighs and the Slytherin smiled at him slightly before removing his fingers and reclining onto the bed. Legs decadently lifted, running up his sides until Malfoy's ankles were sitting on his shoulders, and his mate gave him a look as if to say "well what are you waiting for?".

Harry had no practical experience, and only a little theoretical knowledge, but he did not need an instruction sheet to know what he was supposed to do. Following

Malfoy's lead he lined himself up and then slowly pushed at his mate's entrance. Already loosened muscle gave after only a little pressure and Harry found himself sliding into his lover. It was the most wonderful thing he had ever felt.

His body wanted this and sang with pleasure and his magic wanted this, reaching out to touch Malfoy's magical core through the physical connection they had just made. It was a perfect moment.

Then Malfoy moved his hips and thrust up at Harry, causing him to slam all the way home. For a moment he felt his eyes trying to roll back into his head as the sensation overloaded his senses. Oh he wanted more and he had to move. Pulling back he soon found Malfoy urging him back in and when he changed his angle slightly and thrust hard it was his mate's turn to throw his head back and moan. Somewhere in Harry's hormone soaked brain he realised that he must have hit the spot Malfoy had so gainfully employed on him earlier. Wanting his mate to know the same pleasure he had and more, he set about hitting that spot every time.

Harry's body was so sensitive even after one orgasm already that he knew he could not last long, but he was determined to see Malfoy's completion before his own. Pushing himself into his lover with even strokes, Harry reached forward and took hold of Malfoy's straining erection. The answering gasp of arousal was enough to tell Harry he had done the right thing.

It only took a few more thrusts and the added stimulation of Harry fisting his cock for Malfoy to come with a loud exclamation. The muscle spasms all over his mate's body and the clenching of the Slytherin's arse removed all control Harry had left and he shuddered into Malfoy with some very clear vocalisations. It was all he could do to pull out and collapse on the bed before his limbs gave out entirely. Two orgasms in such short a time was a little much even for a Seraphim.

He lay in a tangle of limbs with Malfoy, breathing hard and enjoying the afterglow for a good few minutes before he realised that his peculiar metabolism was not yet finished with him. Malfoy had told him Veela mating could take four days, but he had no idea how long Seraphim took. It seemed his body was very much still interested and he knew somewhere inside that the sex was working up to something. Even as he felt Malfoy's clever fingers massaging the base of his spine, slowly working lower, he knew that turnabout was fair play and that there would probably be a lot more playing before they were finished.

What they were working to he did not know, but he was too caught up in the act and the need, to really care. This was what he was made for, this was his birthright.

End of Chapter 6

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## Chapter 7 Consequences

Opening his eyes, Harry found himself looking at a set of long sharp nails only millimetres from his face. He moved his hand to get rid of the blockage to his vision at which point his brain caught up with the fact that it was not his hand. He was suddenly very aware that he was not alone and there was another person curled up behind him with their arm thrown over his side; memories of wild, uncontrolled sex flooded into his mind. He groaned, partly because he realised that despite everyone's best efforts he and Draco, Malfoy he mentally corrected himself, had inescapably done the deed, and partly because the remembered arousal caused him to move and he discovered there were consequences to their sex marathon. Harry had aches where he had barely realised he had body parts before.

He lay still for few moments trying to figure out what to do. The urgent need to have sex and have sex now seemed to be completely gone, which was good, and he also didn't feel any more inclined to like Malfoy than he had before, which was kind of good because it meant his brain was not addled, but kind of bad because his Gryffindor sensibilities told him that you didn't have sex unless you at least liked the person. Harry was a believer that sex and love went together, but he seemed to have failed on that count all together.

Since he could not avoid looking at the hand that was in front of his face it also slowly dawned on him that the reason he had mistaken it for his own hand was that the nails really did look familiar. The annoying point his mind kept trying to make known was that he did not remember Malfoy having nails like that. Harry had memorised the Slytherin quite well and Malfoy had definitely had short, neatly manicured nails on the end of his long, aristocratic fingers. The hand he was looking at had the same fingers, but they were not Malfoy's normal nails.

That was the point where Harry began to worry and eventually he extracted himself from under the stray arm and moved away from the warm body behind him. His companion groaned once, but made no further sound and after sitting up over the edge of the bed Harry gained the courage to stand up and turn around. Malfoy was lying on his side, but tilted towards his front now that Harry had moved, and there were two iridescent ridges running down the Slytherin's back, below his shoulder blades, with small rivulets of dried blood coming from them.

Harry suddenly found it difficult to breathe and he had to sit back down and concentrate to pull enough air into his lungs. This was just so far out of what he had expected that he did not know how to deal with it.

"Potter?" the confused, sleepy enquiry came from next to him and he turned sharply.

What was he supposed to say? 'Malfoy, about your species, it just changed.' For a moment Harry panicked.

"Why do you look like someone just died?" the Slytherin propped himself up on his elbows and looked down at himself rapidly.

After a quick inspection Malfoy appeared reassured by what he saw and then glanced back at Harry.

"I'm pretty sure we escaped the five percent," Malfoy actually sounded completely unconcerned by the fact that he had just slept with his worst enemy. "Please don't tell me you're worried that I won't respect you anymore."

The Slytherin still hadn't noticed that he was not quite the same and if Malfoy was feeling anything like Harry was, he couldn't blame him for being unobservant, but that didn't change the facts and the joke fell dead.

"Tell me that I didn't manage to impregnate you," Malfoy said and a slight edge of panic threatened in his voice.

Harry shook his head quickly, but reached out and took hold of his companion's hand and pulled it up level with his face.

"We didn't create a baby," he said as calmly as he could, "but we did create another Seraphim."

Malfoy stared at his hand blankly for a moment and then he sat up properly and brought his other hand round. After that his arm snaked up behind him and touched the bottom edge of one of his wing nubs. Harry was not sure what his companion was thinking.

"You made me like you," the Slytherin's tone was half awe, half accusation.

"I didn't do it on my own," Harry said hotly, even as guilt settled firmly on his shoulders. "Think about it and I'm sure you'll remember the moment."

It was all too clear to him now, he could recall the moment their magic had reached out and joined together with perfect detail. Veela had touched Seraphim and known it was not quite what was needed. He remembered his power reaching out and changing Malfoy's magic and body until they were perfectly compatible and he remembered the Slytherin opening himself to the whole thing. When this had happened they had both wanted it, it was only now in the cold light of day that they realised what they had done.

When Malfoy looked back at him, Harry knew that the Slytherin remembered as well and they sat there in silence for a long time. This was not a simple transfiguration, this was a fundamental alteration: Malfoy was no longer Veela; he was Seraphim.

"This doesn't change anything," the Slytherin said suddenly and climbed off the bed, "I can keep this a secret as easily as I did the Veela thing. Cut my nails and make sure no one sees me without a shirt and they'll never know."

As if to illustrate his point Malfoy reached for one of the garments strewn on the floor and picked it up. After a moment he held it up so that Harry could see it and straight through it, as the large rents in it became obvious.

"We need some more clothes," Malfoy observed and Harry became suddenly uncomfortably aware that he was completely naked.

It didn't seem to bother his companion in the slightest, but now that clothes had been mentioned Harry found himself irrationally embarrassed.

"Pink is not your colour, Potter," the Slytherin said with a smirk. "I will never understand Gryffindors: after what we did you're worried about being naked."

"I wasn't thinking then, I was doing," Harry replied, but stood up anyway. "Doesn't this bother you at all?"

Malfoy grinned at him in a very superior manner.

"I had nightmares of waking up pregnant or so thoroughly warped by a magical bond that I couldn't remember my own name," the Slytherin replied. "Instead I have memories of the most incredible sex of my life; I admit to being impressed, Potter; and a significant power boost if what I've read about Seraphim is anything to go by. I will not claim that I would not have preferred to avoid the whole situation in the first place, but it's over and now we can go on with our lives. What is there to be bothered about?"

Harry had a whole list, the top of which was to do with the fact that he had just lost his virginity to a boy who didn't care for him at all, but he was not about to mention that. Right under that there was the niggling idea that maybe he didn't want to just go on with his life, but he wasn't about to mention that either. When Malfoy moved to the door and opened it so he could peer out, Harry moved to join him.

The first thing Harry noticed was that there were screens across the doorway and the second was that there were two robes hanging on their side of the screens.

"Madame Pomfrey thinks of everything," Malfoy said far more cheerfully than Harry felt there was any call for, and then his companion was through the door and reaching for the nearest robe.

What happened next rather shocked Harry as Malfoy picked up the second robe and handed it to him. It was an entirely unconscious gesture, Harry was sure of it, and he did not think the Slytherin would have done it had he been thinking. Slytherins and Gryffindors did not help each other, ever.

"Thank you," Harry said quietly, hoping not to break the truce they appeared to have.

He managed to get over his shock pretty rapidly as Malfoy then went to move one of the screens without giving him a chance to put on the robe, which was a much more normal course of events, and Harry had to hurry before his nakedness was revealed to the world. Struggling to belt the soft, warm material he padded after the confident Slytherin and prayed that there would not be a pack of spectators waiting for them.

In fact the Hospital wing was surprisingly empty until Poppy appeared from the direction of her office. She had obviously had a monitor spell on the door. Her eyes met Harry's and he could barely look at her, but she smiled at him sadly, giving him her support which helped a little.

"Good afternoon, Gentlemen," Poppy said in her usual professional tone, "welcome back. It's been three days in case you were wondering."

Malfoy appeared slightly ill-at-ease at Poppy's approach, and Harry could only assume that the Slytherin had expected at least some recriminations. That was never Poppy's way at all, so Malfoy did not know the healer as well as he thought he did, obviously.

"Well don't just stand there," Poppy said efficiently, "come and sit down so I can take a look at you. We need to make sure neither has done the other a mischief."

Harry might have laughed at her turn of phrase if what they had managed to do to Malfoy hadn't leapt to the forefront of his mind. Instead he followed the Slytherin across the room and dutifully sat on the bed that was indicated.

"What an interesting way you have of expressing yourself, Madame Pomfrey," Malfoy said, for some reason at his most charming, "so refreshing."

Then the Slytherin held out his hands so that Poppy could see his nails.

"Potter has pulled one out of the back again," Malfoy continued in the most annoyingly chatty way. "Nothing as mundane as a male pregnancy for Potter, no, he changed my sub-species for me."

"I did not do it on my own," Harry reiterated through gritted teeth, "you helped."

Right about then his human side was almost dominant enough to want to strangle the smug bastard. Malfoy really did not seem to care in the slightest; the Slytherin had woken up not pregnant and that was all that seemed important to him.

"An unusual state of affairs," Poppy said evenly, "but if you do not mind, Mr Malfoy, I would rather see for myself than take your word for it. Hold still, this may tickle a little."

Malfoy smirked, but did as he was told.

Poppy cast her spells on the Slytherin, then on Harry (they did tickle) and then moved back to Malfoy again. By the time she was satisfied, Professor Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape had entered the room. Harry did his best to try and ignore the glare the head of Slytherin was sending in his direction; if he had not been feeling so guilty he might have done a better job.

Eventually Poppy turned slightly so that she could see everyone in the room.

"No serious injuries," she said succinctly, "and none of the expected side effects."

For a moment Harry actually saw a look of relief cross Snape's face before it was hidden with the usual glower, and Professor McGonagall looked as if someone had just told her she's won the Ministry lottery. Even the twinkle in Dumbledore's eyes seemed to brighten.

"That is wonderful news, Poppy," the headmaster said in his usual fashion, "however, I fear there may be a reason for the qualification of your diagnosis."

Poppy nodded and gave Malfoy a quick glance while Harry tried to look as inconspicuous as possible.

"Mr Malfoy has gone through a rather radical, biological change," Poppy explained calmly. "Although the alterations are not as obvious as Mr Potter's, thanks to Mr Malfoy pre-existing Veela heritage, he is now, for all intents and purposes, Seraphim."

Even Dumbledore appeared surprised.

"Well, well, Potter," Snape said, recovering first and using his most scathing tone, "it seems you have surpassed yourself."



Harry did not even bother to try and point out he did not do it alone, Snape would never have believed him anyway and he just could not find the energy. They may have only woken up minutes ago, but Harry was still tired, and he really did not want to deal with this now.

"Now, now, Severus," Dumbledore said pleasantly, "there is no point in casting blame. We shall just have to deal with the situation as it stands. I'm sure Mr Malfoy appreciates the advantages of his current change as well as the disadvantages."

Malfoy, being the epitome of a Slytherin inclined his head at this; it seemed he and the headmaster understood each other as far as Harry could tell.

"I am sure arrangement can be made to allow life to continue as before," Dumbledore continued, "and I assume, Mr Malfoy, you would prefer this information remain confidential."

"That would be satisfactory, Professor, yes, thank you," Malfoy replied.

It seemed that when the Slytherin was in control of a situation he could be very diplomatic.

"Good, good," the headmaster said with more enthusiasm than Harry thought he could ever muster up again, "then I believe we are almost back to normal. Poppy, do you require Mr Potter or Mr Malfoy to stay under your tender care this evening?"

"No, Headmaster," Poppy replied after a moment's thought. "There are some potions they should take, but once that is done they may go."

Dumbledore virtually beamed at that and Harry felt like banging his head against a wall.

"Thank you, Poppy," the headmaster confirmed with a nod before turning to look at Harry and Malfoy. "Well, boys, I asked Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape to bring you both some of your clothes when we were alerted to your return to us, so I have no doubts that everything will be shipshape in no time."

Intelligent blue eyes met Harry's for a moment and he could see the sympathy there, but Dumbledore did not voice it. Now was obviously not the time, so Harry sucked in his guilt and his anxiety and nodded as if he agreed. As Professor McGonagall pulled a small bundle from her pocket and restored it to normal size he tried to look on the bright side. At least neither of them was pregnant.

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Harry was in a bit of a daze and he did not realise that he was not being led back to Gryffindor tower or the headmaster's office until they were in an entirely different part of the castle all together. Poppy had fussed over him for nearly an hour before she would let him go, despite what she had told Dumbledore before so he had had plenty of time to tie his mind in knots. By the time he looked up and took notice of where the headmaster was taking him he was somewhere he didn't even recognise.

"Where are we, Professor?" he asked, somewhat confused.

Several nasty possibilities about consequences and the like popped into his head, but when Dumbledore turned, the headmaster gave him a reassuring smile.

"These are the guest quarters, My Boy" Dumbledore told him in his usually light tone; "there is someone who wishes to see you."

That sent Harry's thoughts into a thousand more questioning spirals, but the way the headmaster was acting he did not think this was anything bad. Dumbledore knocked on one of the doors and was greeted by a familiar 'come in'. Harry was at once incredibly pleased and horribly nervous and it was with trepidation that he walked into the room behind the headmaster, knowing that Remus Lupin was inside. Remus would never be Sirius, but since his godfather's death Harry and the werewolf had become close, exchanging letters often, the last one being only a few days before the latest debacle in Harry's life. Harry had also spent a large part of the summer holidays in Remus' company as the ex-Professor helped him catch up on his school work.

The guest room was quite large with a double four poster, a writing desk and two large arm chairs by the fireplace. Remus was standing beside one of the chairs as if he had just climbed out of it. When Sirius had died he had left Remus a substantial amount of money; the werewolf had not touched it until after the war ended, but these days, he looked anything but the poor teacher Harry had known back in his third year.

Since Voldemort's defeat, the issue of creature rights had been at the front of Ministry policy, and Remus was now head of a special committee dealing with changing the laws. They didn't pay him, but these days he didn't need the money and Harry knew Remus was doing what he was passionate about.

"Harry," the werewolf said as soon as he laid eyes on him, "I've been so worried. How are you feeling?"

Remus crossed the room in a couple of strides and gently placed a hand on Harry's shoulder; Harry found it very difficult to look at his friend.

"Tired and hungry," Harry admitted quietly, although he really felt like running for the door so he didn't have to face this now.

He wanted to confide in Remus, he wanted to talk, but he felt so confused that he did not know how.

"Well, having delivered Harry safe and sound, I'll leave you two to yourselves," Dumbledore said brightly. "If you need anything do not hesitate to call."

And with that the headmaster was gone, leaving Harry in a quandary as to what he could possibly say to Remus. What were they supposed to talk about? Last time he had seen Remus, Harry had been 5'6", skinny boy with no wings and definitely no sex life to speak of; now he was over six foot tall and his sexual exploits were undoubtedly being published all over the school. It was all so embarrassing and difficult to deal with.

"Harry," Remus said gently and pulled his chin up so that Harry could no longer stare at the floor and had to look the werewolf in the eye.

It was with a start that Harry realised he was now taller than his companion.

"Whatever you are thinking; you have nothing to be ashamed of," Remus told him firmly.

It was what Harry needed to hear, but part of him did not believe it; this was all his fault after all. If he had not touched Malfoy none of this would have happened and the whole school wouldn't know he had slept with his worst enemy and enjoyed it. That was probably the thing that confused him the most; he was aghast at what they had done, but he couldn't say that he had hated it. Every time he let his mind wander back over his time with Malfoy part of him was filled with such joy that it was breathtaking.

"I couldn't stop it," he said quietly, not knowing how else to begin.

Remus did not hesitate and Harry found himself pulled into a warm hug.

"I know, Harry," the older wizard told him as he embraced him, "I understand."

It was only then that Harry realised Remus was one of the few people who probably did truly understand, after all, before the Wolfsbane potion Remus had been at the mercy of wolf instincts every full moon. Harry still didn't know how to express what he was feeling, but he no longer felt alone.

"Let's go and sit down," Remus said with a small smile as they separated. "The house elves will be bringing some food soon and you look as if you're about to fall down."

Harry even managed a rather wan smile back.

Fifteen minutes later he had a large mug of hot chocolate and a plate full of sandwiches in front of him, and he was so hungry that however his mind was churning, his stomach was quite ready to eat. His life just before Voldemort had died had given him the ability to fill his stomach no matter what dreadful thoughts his brain was focussing on, and he tucked in to the food now.

"Before we talk about anything else," Remus said gently but firmly, "I want to make one thing very clear; you have done nothing wrong. No matter what Snape would like you to believe this is not your fault."

"But..." Harry tried to protest.

"You saved Draco Malfoy's life," Remus was not having and of it; "that you managed to kick start a perfectly natural metabolic process in both of you has more to do with the fact that wizards and witches seem completely unable to keep their hands off humanoid magical creatures, than anything wrong anyone might think you have done."

The werewolf paused and looked Harry straight in the eye.

"It's alright to be angry," Remus told him earnestly, "it's alright to be unhappy, it's alright to be confused, but the one thing I will not let you do is blame this all on yourself. Look what happened last time when you did that."

That managed to bring a small smile to Harry's face; the fact that there had been no big final battle for the war and that Harry had gone off on his own and done exactly what the prophecy said had miffed some people and scared the hell out of others. That Remus could now joke about it showed how far they had both come.

Suddenly Harry felt as though he was going to burst and the need to talk became unstoppable.

"It's so bizarre," he said honestly, "I mean before ... I'd never ... it's not like I ever..."

Words were still a little difficult to find even if he wanted to find them now.

"Malfoy was your first?" Remus enquired tactfully.

Harry nodded.

"I never even thought about boys at all until I was suddenly fixated on one," he admitted, "and the furthest I got with any girl was a kiss. In sixth year I was so mixed up that most people stayed well away from me, and this year, until the whole growth spurt thing, I know for a fact that I was relegated to brother by every single Gryffindor female. Then suddenly almost the whole school is looking at me like I'm lunch and I fixate on the one person least likely to want anything to do with me."

By this time he was gesticulating so much with his hands that a piece of tomato from his sandwich went flying across the room and landed with a splat next to the fireplace. That rather stopped him mid flow and that took his mixed up thoughts that one step further into absurdity and he was helpless to stop the snort of laughter that escaped him. Remus had also seen the humour in the event since he was wearing a rather understated smile when Harry looked at him.

"It must all have been incredibly confusing," the werewolf said sympathetically.

"Well I've thrown a couple of tantrums which helped," Harry replied causing another smile from his friend; "Hermione helped out with one and Professor McGonagall spent two hours trying to talk me out of the seventh year boy's dorm after the other. That one was the most satisfying."

"Minerva told me about that one," Remus acknowledged, "I believe her exacts words were, 'and if that boy ever decided to do anything truly bad we'd all be in very deep trouble'; she's very worried about you."

"I doubt she's very pleased that I managed to shag a Slytherin," the words sounded far more bitter than Harry had intended and he found himself staring at the fire, all good humour gone.

In the hospital wing with Slytherins present his head of House had been virtually unreadable, but Harry was almost sure she would be disappointed in him.

"Harry," Remus said patiently, "Professor McGonagall, like everyone else is not worried about anything like that. She's worried about you and how this will affect you. You've been through so much already, and this on top must be very hard."

Harry sat back in his chair contemplating his hot chocolate for a while, and his companion let him think in silence. It was difficult to explain anything when he really didn't know how he felt himself.

"He was so matter of fact about it," he found himself saying eventually, "as if it wasn't important at all. Did they tell you what happened, how we made him like me?"

Remus nodded, which Harry found a blessing.

"Professor McGonagall told me when she came to tell me you were awake," his friend explained. "It seems Albus thought I should be briefed."

For that Harry was very grateful because he knew he could not keep this secret from Remus.

"He said that what we'd done didn't change anything," he continued, "that it was great sex, but that was all. I can't think of it like that and I definitely can't feel about it like that. I know he's going to go back to Slytherin and make fun of the whole thing."

"I'm sorry, Harry," Remus said kindly, "I really am. You shouldn't have had to find out like this, but some people just see sex as a game, a way to find temporary pleasure. I know you, Harry, and you're just like your mum; you should have heard your father swear when she made him wait. You had the choice taken away from you, and it must be terribly hard, but there will be others..."

At those words Harry could not help but grimace and Remus stopped mid sentence. The shudder that ran through him at the idea of others was indescribable.

"Harry, these feelings won't last forever," Remus tried again. "I know that now you probably can't believe it, but Malfoy is not the beginning and end of the relationships you will have."

"But I can't even think about anyone else," Harry protested desperately. "The desire to pin him to the nearest available surface is gone, but I can't get him out of my head. It's like he's sitting behind my eyes."

"You feel everything deeply, Harry," Remus said supportively, "but these feelings will fade. You have overloaded Seraphim hormones to deal with as well, but eventually it will get better."

Harry wanted to believe his friend, and he realised when looking into Remus' earnest gaze that the werewolf was sure of what he was saying, but he also knew in that instant that no matter what other ways Remus might be able to empathise with him, in this the werewolf did not truly understand. Part of Harry knew that he was lost, and no matter the words or platitudes, he was lost forever. Taking another sandwich he smiled weakly at Remus and nodded slightly even though he did not agree.

End of Chapter 7

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## Chapter 8 Fallout

Harry had woken up on Sunday morning and found himself on a transfigured chaise in Remus' room. When he had fallen asleep was not clear, but he and Remus had spent long hours talking before he had drifted off. The old adage that things always look better in the morning was not true and as Harry made his way back to Gryffindor tower after a leisurely breakfast with his friend, he neither felt more cheerful nor any more relaxed about the whole situation. If anything he was more confused than ever.

His dreams had made it more than clear what his subconscious wanted from Malfoy. The images in his mind were graphic, strangely resolute and very difficult to ignore. The Seraphim in him was not ready to give up on Malfoy just because they were no longer controlled by the mating drive. Knowing what this really meant for the future was difficult and Harry could not shake the feeling that his life was much more complicated now.

He walked into the Gryffindor common room and found most of the seventh year gathered around the fire.

"Harry!" it was Neville who saw him first and alerted the others to his presence.

He tensed ready for accusations to fly, and was most surprised when he found himself gathered into an enthusiastic hug by Hermione.

"Oh, Harry," she said, pulling back and looking him up and down, "when Malfoy was at breakfast this morning and you weren't we were so worried. Are you okay? The arrogant prig didn't hurt you did he?"

For a moment he just stared, quite overwhelmed by the caring in the faces around him.

"I'm fine," he said quietly, knowing that his internal dilemma was not exactly 'fine', but needing to reassure his friends. "Professor Dumbledore took me to see Remus last night, I had breakfast with him."

"So no ... uhm ... nasty side effects then?" Hermione was obviously the lead in the group and from the look in her eyes she had been researching again.

Harry shook his head.

"Just a bit sore," he replied and managed to call up a small smile from somewhere.

That made the boys grin and most of the girls blush to the roots of their hair. Hermione slapped him on the arm playfully for his trouble.

"For once in my life I do not want details," she said, matching his opening gambit beautifully.

It was probably quite obvious to his two best friends that they would need to talk about this, but Hermione seemed content to let it rest in front of the others. Harry was grateful because there were just some things he could not talk about in front of most of his year even if they had all but adopted him as family.

As a group they dragged him back over to where they had been sitting and all but forced him into a chair. It seemed that the famous Potter brooding ability was being thwarted.

"So how was ... Malfoy at breakfast?" Harry asked hesitantly.

He was not sure if he really wanted to know, but at least his friends could give him an indication of what he was in for when he next set foot in the Great Hall.

"As arsey as usual," Seamus replied irreverently. "Actually, come to think of it, arsier than usual. Now that everyone knows he's part Veela the snotty bugger is flaunting it."

"Yeah," Ron agreed vehemently, "if I hear Pansy giggle at him one more time I'll put the dozy cow out of her misery and save us all the pain."

"Ron!" Hermione did not seem to like that particular line of conversation.

It was scary how well she could sound like Molly when she wanted to. Harry for his part was fighting down a wave of what he could only call completely irrational jealousy. He tried very hard not to let what he was feeling show, and Hermione missed it thanks to her focus being on Ron, but Neville was looking at him in a very speculative manner. Maybe this was something he could not hide.

"Only if I don't get there first," he said bluntly and most people looked rather shocked.

That had not been the response any of his friends were expecting.

"What?" he asked innocently. "I'm still pumped up on hormones," he tried to make it sound as if this was perfectly normal and was something that would go away, "I'm likely to hex anyone who so much as looks at him sideways."

"Note to self," Neville said seemingly taking Harry's words at face value; "don't look at Malfoy."

This caused a laugh to move around the group and Harry felt a little better with his friends around him. Then there was some shuffling and a small stack of papers were placed on his lap.

"We thought you'd want to know what they were saying about you, Mate," Ron said with an apologetic shrug. "We saved the Prophet for you and some of the mags. The Quibbler's on top because Luna's dad printed the truth, so we thought you'd like to see that first."

Harry gave his friends a smile and tried to push the dread aside. The Prophet tended to try and be nice about him since his defeat of Voldemort, but it was still sensationalist, and he could just imagine what they would have made of him. He had no doubt that his change in status would have been leaked on that first day, but Malfoy had accosted him before the first edition arrived so he had seen nothing of what the press was reporting. Poppy had not let him have the Prophet while he was under her care.

"I think I'll read those later," was all he could come up with as he looked at the pile.

There were bound to be taunts from the Slytherins and funny looks from the rest of the school, along with speculation in the press, but Harry really did not feel like dealing with it all quite yet. He needed some normality after the last few days, and he fell back on a childhood favourite.

"Anyone for exploding snap?" he asked hopefully.

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It was not until Monday morning that Harry was forced into any kind of contact with Malfoy, or rather Draco as his mind had taken to referring to the Slytherin no matter how he tried not to. Monday morning meant Transfigurations, and Malfoy was one of the seventh years taking the subject. Having specialised for N.E.W.T.s all classes were a mixture of houses and so Harry did not even have the luxury of avoiding Slytherins for school work, but at least under Professor McGonagall's sharp eyes there was unlikely to be open trouble.

Harry took his seat next to Ron and tried to be inconspicuous. It was rather like trying to hide a fire sprite in an igloo; it worked for all of about thirty seconds. There was sniggering and pointing from most of the Slytherins almost immediately.

"Just ignore them, Mate," was Ron's sage advice, and Harry did his best to take it.

There was only one Slytherin who was not poking fun to his classmates and that was Draco. However, it was worse; Draco was acting as if he did not exist. Contrary to what he had told his friends, Harry did not feel the insane jealousy he had in the common room when Pansy giggled at Draco, what he felt was dejection. His mate was ignoring him and playing up the affections of another and it had a rather detrimental effect on his psyche.

"We will be continuing with the transfiguration of mice into horses," Professor McGonagall drew the class to order as she stood at the front of the room.

"Remember that your horses should only be a foot tall at this stage. Do not attempt to show off; it will result in deducted marks."

Harry's head of House scanned the room looking at one Ravenclaw and a couple of Slytherins to make her point.

"You may begin," she said and sat back down again once more.

Since he had missed a week of school, Harry had not been part of the preliminaries for this lesson, but he had covered the beginnings of the theory when in the hospital wing room. Because of this he was paired with Ron for the beginning of the lesson to see how far the class had progressed so far. Malfoy was paired with Pansy.

Hence it wasn't until about halfway through the lesson, when they had both been given their own mouse, that either of them had to use magic. Now Harry had felt some peculiar shifts in his magic over the previous day, but he had assumed it was just him being touchy. That all changed when Malfoy cast his first spell. Harry was caught by such surprise as his own magic moved inside of him in response that he dropped his wand.

The Slytherins laughed at him, and Draco glared since the interruption had ruined the blond's concentration, but for a moment Harry could not move.



"Is everything alright, Mr Potter?" Professor McGonagall asked from where she was assisting Dean with his wand action.

"Fine, Professor," Harry said, breaking himself out of his shock and bending to pick up his wand, "sorry, Professor."

The next time Draco cast his spell Harry was ready, but it still made him shudder slightly. It seemed that every time Draco used his magic, Harry reacted, and it was rather a nice feeling. It almost made him smile as he guessed that maybe Draco would experience the same thing. It would be difficult to ignore him if he continually reminded the Slytherin that he was there.

Taking a deep breath he concentrated on the Transfiguration and calmly cast his spell. His eyes flicked over to Draco to gauge the Slytherin's reaction and Harry felt his spirits fall through the floor. There was nothing, not even a twitch to indicate that Draco had felt anything. This was all just him; he was the infatuated idiot, and the Slytherin was completely immune. It was almost as if he could feel the life draining out of himself. Draco didn't care because Draco didn't feel anything.

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"Today," Snape's voice rang across the classroom with the usual sneer evident in the tone and Harry tried to disappear using simple will alone, "we will be brewing an aphrodisiac potion for use with dragons. The potion is called Secus Draconium. Each year the seventh year class brews this potion for the Dragon reserves in Romania, so I expect every cauldron to be excellent."

Harry tried even harder to vanish when Snape's black eyes fell on him.

"Mr Potter, due to your peculiarities of species," the Potion's master said rather viscously, "your brewing capabilities would be even lower were you to come into contact with Dragon's Breath Angel Trumpets, and hence you will be brewing a different potion. You're instructions are on this desk."

The desk in front of Snape's was usually reserved for demonstrations, but it was set up as a normal work station today. Reluctantly, Harry walked towards his Potions professor and moved into place. The look of disdain he earned for his trouble was not settling.

"Mr Malfoy," Snape continued in a much more pleasant tone, "due to your recent exposure to Mr Potter's peculiarities," Harry tried very hard not to react, "you are also excused from making the Secus Draconium. However, since your average mark is so much higher than Mr Potter's you may take a study period."

Draco smirked at his fellow Slytherins and then gathered his things.

"Thank you, Professor," Draco said politely and left without so much as a look back.

The Slytherin did not even glance in Harry's direction and it hurt more than he liked to admit. How Draco was acting as if he did not even exist was beyond him, and it was tearing his heart out.

"Begin," Snape said coldly, and Harry looked down at the parchment next to his cauldron.

For a long time he just stared at the writing without even seeing it properly. The feelings that welled up in him every time Draco rejected him were almost overwhelming, and nothing seemed to matter anymore. It was as if his whole world view had shifted and life revolved around the blond haired Slytherin.

"Mr Potter," Snape's voice snapped him back to the present, "has your meagre brain finally switched off entirely?"

Harry simply swung his gaze up to look his Potions professor directly in the eyes. He had little idea what Snape would see in his face since he had barely looked at himself in a mirror since Draco and he had become lovers, but whatever it was, Snape closed his mouth and turned away. Maybe there was a line which the head of Slytherin would not cross, but Harry could not find the will to care. Looking back at the sheet he finally read it and turned towards the store room to pick up his ingredients.

"Not those, Harry," Hermione's voice cut through the nothingness in Harry's brain as he slowly collected what he needed for the lesson. "Those are the Angel Trumpet stamens; you'd be high as a kite if you picked up those."

He looked at the orange filaments over which his hand was hovering and reached instead to the petals beyond.

"Thanks," he said quietly and ignored the worried look his friend gave him.

It was towards the end of the lesson when he had to return to the cupboard for a cold stored ingredient that he looked at the stamens again. For a while he just stood there, and then, acting on impulse he picked up a nearby test tube, scooped two of the fine filaments into it with a spatula and corked it, before sliding it into his robes. He had no idea what he was going to do with the flower parts, but he took them anyway.

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For two days Harry carried the stamens around in his pocket, and for two days he wondered why he had taken them. Then a group of Slytherins chose to corner him as he tried to enter the Great Hall for dinner. Their words were childish and vicious, and Harry could not even really remember what they had said, but when Draco had walked past them and laughed it was more than Harry could take. That was why he was sitting at the top of the Astronomy tower, snow falling all around the charms that protected the viewing spot from the weather, looking at the vial he had stolen.

Hermione had spent a good ten minutes telling him about the Dragon's Breath Angel Trumpet after the Potions lesson. It had seemed as if she felt the need to warn him about it, since he had not appeared particularly bothered by his near miss. It turned out that the plant had a drug like effect on magical creatures of a certain genus; the genus to which Seraphim belonged. Their lesser cousins had been observed stoned out of their minds on the pollen of the flower, and although no one knew the exact effect it would have on Seraphim, it was likely to be similar.

Well just about then Harry needed to escape reality; it was almost too much for him. He had thought himself settled back into normal life, even with his new heritage making itself known, but no one could have guessed what his liaison with Draco would do to him. The balance he had managed to find since his defeat

of Voldemort was gone and the depression that had almost claimed him once was again taking him. He had not slept in two days, since every time he closed his eyes all he saw was the disdain Draco showed him, and he had barely eaten anything for longer.

He had pretended to eat when he went to the Great Hall, but he was not a wizard for nothing and a variation on a banishing charm meant that his friends were none the wiser. At other times he used the excuse he did not want to face the Slytherins and had cried off going to meals, instead, sneaking down to the kitchens and taking food back to his room as if to eat it. If Ron ever looked under his bed he was going to be in trouble.

Slowly he uncorked the test tube and very gently tapped one of the stamens out onto a piece of parchment. According to Hermione this was very powerful stuff for his type of magical creature, or at least for those similar to Seraphim. House elves were related to Seraphim distantly and Hermione had said something about Angel Trumpet pollen being about a thousand times worse than butterbeer. Butterbeer had no affect on Seraphim; Harry had tried, but Hermione had said that wasn't the point.

Placing the parchment on the roof in front of where he was sitting cross-legged, Harry re-corked the test tube and placed the vial back in his robes. If this was good he might have need of the other stamen. Not quite sure what he was doing he reached out and picked up the pollen covered filament between his fingers. There was a tingle almost immediately and he looked at his yellow stained finger tips to see if anything would happen.

For a few seconds he did not feel any different at all and he was ready to throw the thing away as being a stupid idea, until that was it suddenly went blue. Or rather as he looked up and around at where he was sitting, his vision flicked to the most peculiar level where the warm light around him was now cold greys and blues rather than torch yellows and oranges.

Acting with complete abandon he did something that had his rational brain been working properly would have struck even a foolish Gryffindor as very stupid. He popped the stamen onto his tongue and the world exploded in colour.

Harry lost all track of time as his world vanished into unreality and he had no idea how long he watched rainbows or mentally chased bubbles, but when his mind gave him at least a glimpse of his real surrounding he was standing outside the protective charms on the tower, on the balustrade, looking out over the white Hogwarts grounds. Everything he had been feeling came back with such intensity that it made him want to scream, and it was as if his soul was tearing apart.

He was barely holding on as he swayed on his precarious perch, and he reached into the wind as if it could take away his pain. The drug in his system had taken away his hurt and anger for a few minutes, maybe more, but now it brought it into sharp focus. He could not bare it and he desperately needed release. Wobbling like a new born he tore at his clothes, throwing his jumper, tie and shirt out into space. They were caught by a gust and tumbled into the darkness to disappear from his view as he stared after them.

He wanted to disappear too. Let his trouble go in the darkness and in his drug reality he did the only thing left to him. Jumping in to space he cried his rage to the world and began to plummet downwards. Falling he felt momentarily free and the feeling was wonderful.

Halfway down self-preservation kicked in, because no matter how he wanted the pain to go away, there was a part of Harry that did not want to die. His wings flared and his descent slowed rapidly, but he was too out of control for a good landing. The ground was frozen and only covered in a light dusting of snow so when he hit it, it was very hard. One ankle folded under the strain causing him to cry out in pain and he fell awkwardly, unable to control his movements properly with the drug affecting his system. The arm that landed under him gave a rather unpleasant snap and for a moment the world flipped out.

Harry came back to himself, or at least the best he could do at the moment, lying in the snow, crying. The mental and physical pain was too much even for the almost indomitable Gryffindor spirit and he did not even try and get up. His will to live might have saved him from the fall, but as yet it could not force him off the ground, or even bring him to retract his wings.

"Potter, bloody hell, what are you doing?" the familiar voice was so unexpected that for a moment Harry thought he was hallucinating again, but then a hand touched his shoulder and he looked up to see a very worried looking Draco.

"I can't do it," was all Harry could say, tears still streaming down his face.

His voice sounded slurred and strange even to his own ears, and the expression on Draco's face seemed to indicate that the Slytherin had heard this too.

"Ye gods, Potter," Draco said pointedly, but without his usual sneer, "you're wasted. Where the hell is your shirt?"

"Blew away," Harry replied, since it was the truth.

His companion looked around at the gently falling snow flakes.

"There's no wind, Potter," Draco said exasperatedly.

This was true on the ground, but of course up higher it was not so sheltered. Trying to point this out Harry went to move and cried out in pain as his arm complained.

"Harry, you're hurt, why didn't you tell me?"

The agony in his arm almost seemed to vanish as he looked up into a face that cared. Deep inside Harry something that had almost extinguished completely burst into life again as hope burned in his soul. Draco had called him Harry; albeit in a moment of shock, but the Slytherin had used his first name.

"How did you find me?" Harry asked, needing to know more than anything in the world.

"I was on rounds," the answer came too quickly and Harry knew a lie when he saw one.

"Liar," he said vehemently, forgetting his injuries and everything else as he stared into Draco's grey eyes.

For a moment the Slytherin looked as if he was going to pull away, and then for a second the mask broke.

"I felt your magic," Draco said quietly, and Harry might have laughed, but he moved again first and unceremoniously fainted.

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Harry woke slowly with the worst headache he could remember since killing the Dark Lord. No hangover, not even his seventeenth birthday celebrations courtesy of the Twins smuggling in firewhiskey, could compare to the pounding in his head, or the needles in his eyes as morning light stabbed at him mercilessly.

"Drink this," a very stern voice said and he knew he was in trouble.

When Poppy used that tone she was very upset, but he had no brain power to dwell on it as gentle hands lifted his head and helped him drink some foul smelling concoction. It might have smelt and tasted terrible, but the moment it hit his stomach Harry felt some relief.

"Dragon's Breath Angel Trumpets, Mr Potter!" Poppy scolded as he finally took a look around. "What were you thinking?"

She was holding the test tube with the other stamen. Harry felt suddenly very ashamed, but he clawed onto all his courage to meet his healer's eyes. Something had shifted in him last night, and he felt the new spirit burning within him, but first he had to face up to what he had done.

"I wasn't thinking," he admitted quietly, knowing that he had been an idiot, "I just wanted the pain to go away."

Poppy looked shocked and then very worried. She sat down on the edge of his bed, something she never did except in the most unusual circumstances.

"Harry," she said quietly, placing a hand over his, "were you trying to kill yourself?"

"Oh no," he promised quickly, seeing the anguish in her eyes, "I jumped off the Astronomy tower, but I didn't want to die."

"The Astronomy tower?" Poppy sounded shocked. "Oh good god, we thought you had just been flying under the influence."

She looked so upset that Harry pulled himself into a sitting position and reach out a hand onto her shoulder. His head pounded some more for his trouble, but Poppy was far more important than his comfort.

"I didn't mean to," he told her earnestly, "it just sort of happened. Flying is the only thing that makes me forget; I didn't mean to hurt myself."

"Oh Harry," Poppy said and dragged him into a hug, "why?"

The lump that appeared in Harry's throat from seemingly nowhere was mightily hard to talk around and he found himself swallowing several times before he could reply.

"I thought he didn't care at all," he said quietly, "that he didn't feel anything, but he does, Poppy, he does. He came for me. All I have to do is make him see."

For a while Poppy did not reply, but then her hug tightened slightly.

"Oh, my dear child," she said as she held him close, "I hope you are right."

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If anyone in Gryffindor noticed the sudden change in Harry they did not comment, but he doubted they had missed it. He had taken Ron and Hermione aside and explained everything that he was able to about what had happened, and told them that he wanted to try and at least be friends with Draco. He could not tell them exactly why and he had no idea how he was going to do this since the Slytherin had gone back to ignoring him, but Harry knew now that Draco was hiding what he was really feeling. The true complexities of what he felt for Draco were confusing and he could not explain them to himself, let alone anyone else, but he told his friends a little of it. They were still unaware how deep his feelings were and where he saw them going, but Ron and Hermione now understood some of it.

Since he had admitted to taking what was for Seraphim a controlled substance and jumping off the Astronomy Tower, Hermione and Ron had barely let him out of their sight. He was sure Hermione had a charmed watch on him at meal times since he had also confessed his not eating, and at one time he might have resented it, but now he figured he deserved it. He only eventually complained when Ron formed a habit of following him to the loo.

The last Wednesday of term was Gryffindor's second match of the Quidditch season, and as luck would have it they were facing Slytherin. For once Harry did not dread going up against Draco; he relished it.

The day dawned bright and clear and from the moment he climbed out of bed, Harry was almost buzzing with excited anticipation. Over the few days since his brush with a drugged out haze Harry's display instincts had come back. They were no where near as strong as before, but his mate was not playing the game properly and he felt as if he needed to prove himself to Draco somehow. His marks, which had sunk the previous week, were back to top form, and he had been flying like his life depended on it in the last couple of practices. He was determined to impress Draco, no matter what it took.

The game started as usual and Harry hovered over the pitch, keeping himself in Draco's eye-line. The Slytherin Seeker was obviously still trying to ignore him, but unless Draco wanted to lose the game because of not paying attention he had no choice but to look. Harry took to weaving across the sky, doing little test dives and simply showing off his turning skills. His eyes were darting all over the pitch for the Snitch, but he knew where Draco was at all times as well.

When the Snitch finally showed itself it was up by the Slytherin goal and Harry set off as if he was being chased by a dragon. Draco was after him in a second and Harry had to hold back his shout of delight at the thrill of the chase. Flying he was free, and his wing nubs twitched, wanting to be part of this, but he held the Seraphim in check. He would display for Draco, but he would not use his alternate nature directly.

He let Draco catch up until they were broom to broom and then Harry surged into a roll to bring himself up and under the goal. He barely missed a bludger as it powered towards him from one of the Slytherin beaters, but an inch was as good as a mile when it came to Quidditch. Then he was almost on it; the snitch was in front of him, but so was Draco, coming from the side. They almost collided,

pulling up at the last moment, losing the Snitch but both moving fast back into the sky.

Harry could not help himself as he grinned at Draco, the excitement of the game and the excitement of pursuing his mate mixing in his blood to make him feel completely alive. Draco appeared perturbed for a moment and then as they levelled out once more, inclined his head. It seemed they understood each other, at least partially.

The Snitch kept itself hidden for another half an hour, over which time both teams scored several times, and Goyle was almost sent off for fouling Harry. If Harry had not been so fast the bat would have hit him, but he rather enjoyed the vaguely impressed look that passed over Draco's face just after the incident so he was not too fazed.

The small golden ball was fluttering near to the ground in the middle of the pitch when Harry saw it again and he did not hesitate. Without thinking he dropped towards it like a giant bird on its prey. He was strong, he was worthy, he had to win to prove his worth to his mate, and his world narrowed to the Snitch. There was a collective gasp from the crowd as he plummeted towards his prize and it never even occurred to him that if he did this wrong he could end up seriously hurt.

For the first time in the game he lost track of Draco, but he knew all eyes would be on him. It was almost as if he had startled the Snitch, like a hawk coming out of the sun and the little ball had frozen in fright. It never even moved as he reached out and grabbed it before swooping along the ground with millimetres to spare.

The Gryffindor stands went crazy and Harry looked up, holding the Snitch aloft, to find that Draco was only a few feet away from him. There was a vaguely confused look of shock on the Slytherin's face, and an almost completely hidden admiration in Draco's eyes. Harry knew he had done what he set out to do and he was pretty sure Draco had received the message. He did not try and stop the wide smile he showed the crowd.

End of Chapter 8

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## Chapter 9 Christmas

It was the first year that Harry was truly free for Christmas; there were still Death Eaters out there, but precautions could be taken to keep them away which would have been ineffective against Voldemort. Hence, for the first time Harry was being allowed to go to the Burrow for Christmas; he only wished that the idea did not fill him with such panic every time he thought about it.

He smiled and tried to lose himself in celebration excitement each time Ron mentioned it in the last couple of days of term, but he could not completely shake the panicky depression that threatened at the idea of separation. When the day finally came to climb onto the train to return to London, Harry felt more like he was being ripped away from where he needed to be rather than going to his best friend's home for some holiday fun. He was so agitated that he only managed to sit with Ron, Hermione and Ginny for a few minutes before he needed to move.

"I'm going for a walk," he said, standing quickly as the desire to leave the compartment became too much. "I'll be back in a bit."

He didn't give any of his companions time to offer to come with him and disappeared into the corridor quickly. At this time in the journey when everyone had just found their seats, the hallways were empty and Harry began to make his way to the back of the train, trying to focus on the simple act of walking rather than the thoughts that were flying around his head. So caught up with not thinking was he, that until the door to the last carriage opened he had not even noticed the slight shift in his magic that always occurred in one person's presence. Draco froze in the doorway and Harry could only stare.

"Looking for something, Potter?" the Slytherin asked in what was almost a perfect impression of his usual tone, although Harry could hear the tension below it.

"Trying not to, actually," he replied quietly; "I thought you and the Slytherins were at the other end of the train."

"Not that I have any need to explain myself to you," Draco drawled in a superior manner, "but I needed something from the luggage car. What's your excuse?"

"I don't have one," Harry said pointedly.

That rather took the wind out of his companion's sails. As Harry had discovered over the last two weeks, sniping and yelling were mainstays of their adversarial relationship, but stark honesty was not something Draco was equipped to deal with. When Harry chose not to hide behind bravado and insults, the Slytherin didn't seem to quite know how to deal with him.

"Still pining over me, then?" Draco asked coldly, as if he didn't know.

Harry knew that the Slytherin was feeling at least some of what he was going through, but Draco had such a good mask that it was impossible to tell how much. Taking his Gryffindor courage firmly in both hands, he did the only thing that he could think about and stepping up to Draco he pushed the Slytherin against the side of the corridor, covering Draco's mouth with his own.

At first his companion froze, but as Harry flicked his tongue over closed lips, Draco's mouth opened allowing him access as the Slytherin melted into the kiss. It was the most wonderful feeling; the human part of Harry revelled in the feeling of acceptance and the Seraphim part basked in the touch of his mate. It was



perfect, it was right, as tongues explored mouths and hard needy body pushed against hard needy body, but it did not last.

Almost as quickly as he had acquiesced to the tryst, Draco changed his mind and rejected it. Harry found himself shoved onto the opposite wall with the Slytherin leaning against the other, looking scared and confused. Draco was flushed and breathing hard; his clothes were mussed and his hair was no longer neatly brushed, but it was the fear in his eyes that pierced Harry's soul.

"No," Draco said, as if he was talking to himself more than Harry.

Then his mate was gone, almost running down the train away from Harry and the most desolate feeling welled up in Harry's chest. Slowly he let himself slide down the side of the train and he sat there staring at his hands, trying to contain the despair that flooded over him in waves.

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Arthur had been at the station to meet them and Harry had just about managed to climb into the car as Draco was climbing in to a fancy-looking Rolls. The part of him that was Seraphim had screamed at him that he was letting his mate leave and it had not cared that it would only be for the holiday. Turning his back and slipping into the seat next to Ron had been harder than he had ever thought possible. He had spent the journey to the Burrow the same way he had spent most of the train journey; staring out of the window, answering any direct questions, but mostly remaining silent.

Waiting for them on the doorstep was Molly, who swept Ginny into a hug as soon as the girl was out of the car then moved on to Ron and finally came to Harry. He found himself wrapped in the woman's arms in a bone crushing embrace before being held back and examined.

"My, my, Harry," Molly said brightly, "when Ron said you had grown I had no idea how much. Those pictures in the Prophet did not do you justice."

He managed to smile at her and accept the scrutiny in good spirits, even if he had to try very hard to maintain the act.

"I can't get used to not being shorter than everyone else," he replied as cheerfully as he could, "and I keep forgetting to duck."

Molly smiled.

"I can imagine," she said, obviously pleased by his response. "Well supper's almost ready and I'm sure you must all be hungry."

There were murmurs of consent from all around and, as a group, they set about pulling their things from the car. Harry had just leant in to the seemingly never ending boot to pull out Ginny's holiday bag when two loud cracks sounded.

"Trouble has arrived," Ginny said cheerfully, but she was already running to greet the newly arrived Fred and George.

Harry continued emptying the boot, keeping his head down and knowing that sooner or later the comments would start. It wasn't that he minded the twins joking around, it was that he wasn't sure how much of it he could take at the

moment, and he knew for a fact they would find his new appearance an irresistible source of amusement.

"Just look at you ..." Harry couldn't tell if it was Fred or George who spoke first, mainly because he still had his head in the car.

"Our Harry's turned into a stud," the other finished and as Harry fished the last item of luggage out of the boot he straightened and turned to face the twins.

"Voldemort was good for something," he said, actually managing a genuine smile.

"There are easier ways to get a makeover, mate," Harry thought it was George said cheerfully and slapped him on the shoulder.

"There are," Harry asked with a good impression of wide eyed innocence. "Why didn't anyone tell me?"

Even Ron snorted a laugh at that, which wiped away the worried little frown with which his friend had been watching Harry through the whole exchange. Ron had been shooting looks like that at him all day, if he was honest with himself, for weeks, and taking a deep breath Harry decided that above all else he was not going to ruin Christmas for anyone. Part of him felt as if the end of the world had come and gone, merely neglecting to inform the rest of him, but pulling together every scrap of will he had he pushed those feelings to the back of his mind.

"We hear you ..." Fred said, draping his arm over Harry's shoulders.

"...can fly," George finished, walking up on his other side.

That was the point where Harry began to worry.

"And we have this..." Fred continued cheerfully.

"...new product," George elaborated, "only we haven't tested it yet and..."

"...to someone with wings," Harry felt like he was watching tennis, "it poses no..."

"...danger. So we thought we might be able to..."

"...convince you to be our lab..."

"...rat."

Harry looked from one twin to the other one more time and then smiled in a way that they both found disconcerting if the matching moments of worry were anything to go by.

"What's it worth?" he asked.

All through supper the twins continued to try and convince Harry that helping them test their latest invention would be fun, pain free and not in the least bit dangerous. They weathered the looks Molly was sending them the entire time and Harry actually found their antics quite entertaining and he played up to them the whole time. It was a blessed distraction from all the dark thoughts playing through his mind and he jumped into the discourse with both feet.

It was halfway through pudding when the fireplace belched and someone stepped out; at first thanks to the flash of flame Harry couldn't work out who had just arrived.

"Remus," Arthur greeted cheerfully, "we were beginning to think you might not make it."

"Committee meeting ran late," the smartly dressed werewolf said cheerfully; "the Ministry really didn't want to agree to our terms, but we twisted their arms."

No one had told Harry that Remus would be dropping by and he smiled at his friend in genuine joy. Without even thinking Harry climbed out of his seat and moved to hug the werewolf. It still felt very bizarre looking down, all be it only half an inch, at the man who had been one of his mentors for so long.

"How long are you staying?" Harry asked the excitement clear in his voice.

"Until Molly throws me out," Remus said with a laugh.

Harry's heart swelled; Christmas without Draco close was going to be difficult, but he hoped it had just become that much easier.

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It had been getting worse every day; the feeling that he was not where he was supposed to be, and he knew he was becoming less and less able to hide it. Yesterday, amongst all the presents and food and general good cheer he had caught Remus and Molly looking at him with frowns of worry on their faces. Every time he had tried to make an effort, to pretend that he was enjoying himself so that he didn't detract from everyone else's festivities, but he knew, at least in part, he had failed.

He had managed to put Remus off, telling him that he would speak to him today and trying to make the werewolf understand that anything else would upset the Christmas cheer, but Harry had no idea what to tell his friend. He hadn't slept a wink all night as vivid, nightmarish dreams of being torn from his mate woke him and eventually he had left Ron's room and wandered downstairs.

Sitting in the dark by the embers of the fire he let the thoughts tumble around in his mind, churning over and over in endless loops. The weather suited his mood as a snow storm settled in at about 3am, and he wrapped his arms around his legs, resting his head on his knees as the despair twisted in his chest.

He needed Draco; at school when he could see him every day he had held the urge at bay, but here, separated from his mate by miles and miles, he was becoming more and more desperate. He had been rejected, forcefully, and a very primeval part of him needed to fight back. To the non-human part of him Draco had accepted him as his mate, and trying to break that affiliation was just not possible. There were only two possibilities; reconciliation or death. It was all too much and he had to do something.

With a growl he launched himself into a standing position and dragged the T-shirt he had been sleeping in over his head. Logic had very little to do with his reasoning as the primitive, magical part of his nature spoke to him far louder than the higher, intellectual part. He had to find Draco; it was that or die trying, and he stalked to the door.

As he opened it a blast of icy cold air whipped over his bared chest, but he didn't care and his wings flared into a shield against the storm. There was the noise of feet on the stairs, but he took no notice, stepping out into the blizzard.

"Harry, what are you doing?" he heard the words, he even recognised Remus, but it made little difference, and, walking into the snow, he looked up.

The sky was deep black where it was covered with clouds and the snowflakes were falling thick and fast, but it did not deter him. Drawing his wings back he gathered his strength and just as Remus came running out of the door he took off.

The wind was very strong, but Harry was very determined and he was after all a magical creature. He did not think about how the icy wind took all feeling from his body, or how he could not see where he was going, all that mattered was reaching Draco as fast as possible. He was focussed on only one thing and nothing else made it into his mind. He was seeking his mate and that was his only thought.

He flew for what seemed like an endless time, cloaked in the storm as if it was taking him where he needed to go. Instincts led him and he did not waver from his course, only coming back down towards the ground well after the sun had crept over the horizon onto the white landscape. Below him was a huge house with large, colourful grounds. Parts must have been enchanted to reject the snow and show their variegated foliage. If Harry had not been so focused he might have enjoyed the sight, but he only had just about enough sense to head for the front door.

Draco was somewhere in that building, Harry could feel it and he wanted him more than life itself. His hands were so cold that he could not lift the large brass knocker to announce his presence, so he banged on the door with his clenched fists. He was frozen and most of his body was numb, but he didn't care; Draco was close and that was the only reason to be.

The door was opened by a house elf that looked at Harry as if he was the strangest thing it had ever seen.

"Who is it, Fussy?" a very familiar voice asked from inside.

"Fussy is not knowing, Master Draco, Sir," the house elf replied as Harry stood there and shivered.

He could hear footsteps coming towards the door, but Draco's voice had had a pronounced effect on Harry; suddenly he had found his mate and the impetus which had led him vanished. Rational thought tried to make itself known, and the fact that he was well on his way to frozen to death made it into Harry's muddled brain. Before he ever managed to lay eyes on Draco he felt his body giving up and without being able to do anything about it he began to pitch forward. Briefly he felt sorry for the elf he was bound to hit on the way down, but then his ability to think shut down and the world vanished into darkness.

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Harry opened his eyes as the feeling of fingers tracing his scar made it into his subconscious, and he was just in time to see a hand snatched away. For a moment he saw a look of horror cross Draco's face at being caught, but the expression soon hardened into a glare.

"You finally deigned to join us then," the Slytherin said coldly. "What is it with Gryffindors and dramatic entrances? You're lucky Mother knows something about healing, or bits would have dropped off by now."

At school Harry might have turned away and ignored the jibe, or risen to it and argued back, but he had been through too much over their separation and he could not cope with Draco being hateful now.

"Please don't," he said quietly.

Those two words had a dramatic effect on his companion and Draco froze mid sneer. It was as if that simple admission of weakness was enough to shatter the adversarial attitude holding the Slytherin's act together. Suddenly Draco appeared confused and afraid and he stood back from the bed, turning to leave.

"We can't run away from this," Harry tried desperately, sitting up and reaching for Draco.

His fingers brushed against cloth, but his companion was too far away for anything more. His words had, however, halted Draco's retreat.

"You feel it too," Harry did not need to ask, he merely stated a fact.

It was not an easy thing to admit, but he had had to come to terms with the fact that he was connected to someone who was not even his friend, and he knew Draco had to do the same thing. That they were enemies no longer mattered because this was not a choice they could make; they had already made it when their non-human natures had taken over their bodies.

"Every second of every day," Draco said eventually in a slightly afraid tone.

At last he turned and Harry looked deep into the steel grey eyes that observed him right back. There was a hunger there and a need, as well as confusion and fear. He saw everything he was feeling reflected in Draco's gaze and it was frightening; they were both so lost.

"It was never really about sex," Harry said quietly, voicing what he knew they both understood now, "that was just a means to an end. We can't go back."

Draco said nothing, just continued looking into his face. The Slytherin was like an alabaster statue, only the shallow movement of his chest giving away that he was actually alive.

"Malfoy," Harry began, "D...Draco," he corrected hesitantly, finally using the name that was always in his mind, but had never crossed his lips, "I know you don't like me and I don't like you, but I don't think we really know each other. I can't live like this: I'll go mad. I want to know the real you, at least to try for something that might save us both."

It was too late to change this, there was nothing they could do and Harry was not above begging if he had too. He pleaded with his companion, desperate for some acknowledgment, something that would drag him out of the nightmare he was living.

"A Slytherin and a Gryffindor," Draco said after a few moments, "how insanely us; our friends won't like it."

It was so typically Slytherin, considering the outward image rather than the internal need and it annoyed Harry.

"Stuff our friends," he said vehemently, not willing to allow Draco to hide behind rationalities, "they don't have to live with the longing and the knowledge that they aren't whole. Every time you cast a spell I feel it; every night I go to sleep knowing that I'm going to dream about you; every day at school I sit on the other side of the hall dying to walk over to you. My whole bloody house knows I'd rather be sitting with you. Over this entire holiday, the fact you weren't there has been killing me. I didn't take off in the middle of a snow storm because I'm a complete idiot; I did it because I had to. My body wants you, my mind wants you and my magic wants you; I can't fight it anymore. I want to love you, but to do that I have to know you."

The Slytherin looked rather shocked at his outburst, but Draco's face also held a silent agreement; Harry knew his companion was feeling exactly the same way he was. If nothing else, the touch of those fingers just as he woke up had told Harry everything he needed to know.

"Do you dream of flying," Draco asked quietly, "soaring into the sky together with nothing but our wings as shelter?"

"Oh god, yes," Harry replied, unable to keep the longing out of his voice. "It's like a dance and you and I come together and fall because we can't fly and make love at the same time, but before we hit the ground we break apart and soar upwards again."

A small choking sound was Draco's only reply and the Slytherin looked away again. This was so hard and yet Harry would walk through fire if it could make something of the mess they were in.

"It's going to be difficult," Draco said slowly, "they really won't like it as all."

Harry's heart leapt at the acquiescence; finally he had hope. The statement struck him as funny and he couldn't help himself, he laughed and caused Draco to look him in the eye again. There was a spark in his companion's gaze and Harry knew Draco feared being mocked.

"When have we ever had anything easy?" he asked, feeling bizarrely happy even though life had just thrown him another wall to climb. "I've had a psycho trying to kill me since I was eleven and you led a revolt against the dark from the one house in Hogwarts everyone thought was a Death Eater stronghold. We're not destined for anything mundane, Draco; the universe would come to an end."

For a moment Draco stared at him, apparently caught between suspicion and something else. Eventually the Slytherin grinned and a wicked gleam appeared in his eye.

"But what happens if we get to know each other and we still hate each other's guts?" he asked with one raised eyebrow.

"Then we'll shack up together," Harry replied with an irrational certainty that he was far beyond that, "fuck like bunnies whenever we feel like it to get rid of this irritating itch, and scandalise the world with how bad two playboys can be when they need to distract themselves from the screwed up relationship they're in."

That actually drew a laugh from the Slytherin and it suddenly occurred to Harry that Draco rarely laughed because he was genuinely amused. Dismissive, superior, malicious and manic were all types of laugh he heard regularly from his object of desire, but rarely simply amused.

"I thought you wanted to be an Auror and go out and fight the big bad," Draco commented lightly.

"That was before I shagged my way into the arms of the devil," Harry replied in kind, "now I'll just write my memoirs, sit back and watch the money roll in."

"Yeah, I'll believe that when I see it," Draco said and rolled his eyes.

The humour disappeared from the Slytherin's features slowly and Harry found himself the centre of his companion's attention. Intense grey eyes bored into his soul and he could feel an echo of the connection they had made over a month ago. This man was his, their magic had joined and changed and now knew the other better than any other living thing. They were two people, but without the other something would always be missing.

Harry held his breath as Draco moved slightly towards him. It was obvious that the Slytherin was still torn, and Harry dared not even blink lest he break the spell. Slowly his companion took one step towards the bed, and then another, bringing up long aristocratic fingers and running them slowly down the side of Harry's face.

"You are my enemy," Draco said quietly, "you are part of what defines me. What am I if the enmity dies?"

"Whatever you want to be," Harry replied in an equally hushed voice.

Almost as if he was under a spell, Draco leant forward and Harry felt soft, warm lips pressed against his own. It was the most wonderful feeling he had ever experienced as the pain and anxiety of the separation flowed out of him at that one touch.

Before Draco could decide this was not what he wanted, as the Slytherin had done on the train, Harry moved into the kiss, bringing his arms round his mate and pushing Draco back and up so that he could shift his legs underneath him and kneel up. This one kiss was like food to a starving man and Harry devoured all he could take of Draco. When arms wound around him, the last tension disappeared from his body as he knew his mate had finally accepted him.

When he eventually drew back and looked at Draco, the Slytherin's eyes were almost shining with intensity. It was as if he was looking into a mirror of his own needs, desires and wants, and it was breathtaking.

"I..." Harry tried to express what he was feeling, but Draco placed a finger on his lips.

"Talk later," his mate said and Harry recognised the hunger in his companion's gaze.

He felt it too; the need to reaffirm the bond that had been wrenched to almost breaking point, mixed with the smouldering libido of a seventeen year old human male. It was a heady mixture. Harry let the corners of his mouth turn upwards in a small smile, and before he could do anything else there were hands running up

under the silk pyjamas someone had dressed him in. When those hands pushed him backwards towards the bed again, Harry did not try and resist. He purred when trimmed, talon like nails were drawn across his torso.

"Like that, Potter?" Draco asked with a wicked grin.

"Harry," he replied automatically and then grinned back; "when you say 'Potter' it sounds like you're about to take house points; which is a whole different game."

For a moment the hands stilled and Draco looked a little shocked, but then the Slytherin's previous expression returned, as did the maddening stroking. If his lover kept this up Harry was sure he would go insane with desire.

"My, my, Harry," Draco said, and Harry's smile became rather silly as he enjoyed his name on his mate's lips, "I never knew you were kinky. We'll have to explore that some time."

The hands were moving again, pushing up the silk so that it bunched around his chest. Harry could feel his whole body reacting under his mate's touch, and his magic was moving as well. When Draco's blond head went down, so the Slytherin could kiss and lick the revealed skin, Harry arched into the touch, needing and wanting every moment.

"Responsive, aren't we, Harry," Draco said with a chuckle that was most unlike the Draco Harry usually saw. "Tell me what you want me to do, Harry. What do you like?"

"I..." Harry tried to reply, but his mate kissed him again and the pulse of arousal and the shift in his magic took his voice away for a moment.

Draco looked up at him through white blond strands of hair with a very amused expression on his face. Harry knew he was being teased, but he really did not care.

"You should know," he said before Draco could distract him again, "you were there."

A small frown appeared on his mate's face at that reply and then it cleared with an expression of surprise.

"You mean that that was ... and I ..." Draco seemed rather shocked. "I mean I knew you weren't that experienced, but I never..."

The Slytherin appeared totally taken aback by the news, but what Harry was really interested in was that the touching had stopped, and that was bad.

"Yes, Draco," he said, placing his hands either side of his lover's face so that Draco could not look away, "you took my virginity. Now could we get back to the sex please?"

That had the desired effect and Draco seemed to snap out of his momentary surprise.

"Well if you insist," his mate said nonchalantly and quite deliberately ran a finger under the waistband of Harry's pyjama trousers.



Playing with Harry seemed to be a game Draco enjoyed and much to Harry's chagrin there was no more below the waistband touching for quite some time. His mate chose to drive him to distraction by stroking and kissing him everywhere else, which included very sensitive nipples that disappeared into white heat when lapped at. Every time Harry tried to reciprocate Draco would do something that turned him into putty and he would drop back to the bed. It was maddening and wonderful at the same time.

When Draco finally came nose to nose with him once more he was literally humming with desire. His erection felt like it was made of cast iron filled with raw heat and the fact that Draco was leaning into him and an equally hard cock was pressed into his leg did not help.

Harry wanted Draco as if his life depended on it and he wanted him more than just because he felt like he might explode at any minute. The magical creature inside his skin knew what he needed to be whole again; what he required for the ache inside him to go away.

"I need to know that I'm yours," Harry said quietly as he felt their bodies pressed together, "that you accept me. Please show me, Draco."

Draco was his mate, Harry knew this in his heart and had tried to make that very clear to the Slytherin on several occasions, but part of him that was instinct needed to experience that acceptance from the other side. There was only one way to satisfy the part of him that was not intellect and so he asked.

Grey eyes looked deep into his own before Draco slowly nodded. There was no mating frenzy here, no overwhelming need to join together and Harry knew that this time it would be their human-selves as well as their other-selves doing this.

Sitting up and away from him, Draco undid the top two buttons of his shirt and the cuffs, before pulling it from his trousers and then up over his head. All Harry could do was lay there and watch as perfect, pale skin was revealed. He had been dying to touch what had been hidden ever since Draco had started caressing him and now his lover leaned down and let him do just that. He remembered the soft feel of that skin and as he let his fingers dance over Draco's chest his mind filled with the memory of learning every inch of that body.

Draco let him explore for a few minutes, as the Slytherin held himself over Harry so that he could reach anywhere he wanted. Then Draco pulled the silk of the pyjama top back down over Harry's chest and began to undo the buttons. Sitting back his lover urged him to come with him and Harry found himself being undressed in a seductive, leisurely manner. Draco's hand seemed to be everywhere at once, caressing his shoulders and his back, his chest and his front until his lover lowered him back to the bed.

It was almost like a dance and Harry felt as if Draco needed this slow discovery as much as he did. They had known each other intimately time and again over three days, and yet this was different. Then they had been magical creatures called together by power, now they were men trying to establish a relationship based on what they had done before.

Leaving Harry on the bed Draco stepped off of the mattress for a moment, looking down at him with heat in his eyes. As if every move was for Harry, his lover slowly released the fastening on his trousers and with a small push let them, and whatever he was wearing underneath, fall to the ground. When Draco

lost his shoes and socks, Harry didn't care, because when his lover climbed back onto the bed he was naked and very much aroused.

Kneeling next to him, Draco took hold of the top of Harry's pyjama trousers and dragged them off him in a very slow and deliberate manner. The sensation of silk sliding across his erection caused Harry to curl his hands in the sheets on the bed until it came free and released him from the torment.

The pyjamas were tossed over Draco's shoulder with careless ease before the Slytherin reached out to gently ease Harry's knees apart. All the time grey eyes were moving all over his body, and it was almost as if Harry could feel their heat. As Draco nudged one leg and then the other between his, he surrendered gladly to everything his lover wanted. Hands pushed his knees up and apart and held him, vulnerable and open to Draco's gaze.

"And I shall have you," his mate said in little more than a whisper, causing Harry's erection to jump with anticipation.

When his knees were released Harry let his legs fall wherever they happened to be; he did not want to control this.

Draco reached over to the bedside table and opened the small drawer closest to the bed. When he sat back Harry could see that his lover was holding a small pot of what Harry had to assume was lubricant. It occurred to him that this was not Draco's room, at least it did not appear to be a lived in room, and he doubted the Malfoys would have put him anywhere but a guest room. He made a mental note to ask later, but for now he was far too busy.

For a moment his lover looked at him and Harry thought Draco might ask if this was what he really wanted, but when he looked into his mate's eyes Draco closed his mouth again. Harry had never been good at hiding what he was feeling and right then he had no desire to, so his needs were written all over his face.

Harry's legs were already spread thanks to Draco's previous play, but to Harry's surprise his mate did not go straight for his goal. In fact Draco placed the small pot he had retrieved down on the bed and began to run his hands slowly up and down the inside and back of Harry's thighs. Before he realised it, Harry's head lolled back as he closed his eyes and relaxed into what was turning into a massage.

He moaned appreciatively when firm fingers began to remove all tension from his muscles and moved tantalisingly close to his throbbing erection. When those same fingers moved on to kneading his buttocks he barely registered the change in his haze of pleasure. Only when he felt himself being gently spread and one lubricated finger began to nudge at his entrance did he fully notice where Draco had turned his attention.

Keeping his eyes closed seemed like a good idea as every touch was enhanced by the lack of sight. Slowly the finger teased him, much more gentle than when under the influence of the mating frenzy, and eventually pushed past his resisting muscle.

"That's right, Harry," Draco's voice was soft and deep with desire, "just relax."

It was almost as if his mate was trying to ease him through his first time, and in a way it was for his human side. He'd never done this before while in his right mind and it was a different experience to the fury of sex between magical

creatures. He remembered the feelings and sensation from then, but now his body did not automatically do what it needed to and he was far more in control.

Draco worked the one finger in and out slowly, loosening Harry with small twists and turns. Then his mate pushed in a second intrusion, which was harder to take and burned slightly, but Harry willed his body to relax. His muscles remembered this type of breach and acquiesced to it with little resistance, but what he really wanted was more than fingers. As his mate worked him he found that the Seraphim part of his nature was far from asleep and was growing impatient. He allowed the slow stretching to go on for a little while longer, but he could only hold off his instincts for so long. Opening his eyes he found Draco looking at him and for an instant he saw the same eagerness reflected in his lover's eyes.

"Now," he said and pushed into Draco's hand, impaling himself as much as possible.

The fingers were withdrawn and Harry allowed his legs to be lifted onto Draco's shoulders. This was what he wanted and what he needed and his heart pounded in his chest as Draco carefully covered himself in lubricant and lined his body up with Harry's.

"If I hurt you," his mate said breathlessly, "tell me to stop."

Harry nodded and tried to remain absolutely relaxed. The first push hurt more than he remembered and he put his hand on Draco's arm to get him to pause. The head of his mate's cock had him impaled and he needed to ease into the intrusion. Sex from before was almost a dreamlike memory, hidden behind a haze of hormones and magic, but this was very real. It took a good few seconds before he felt ready to continue and then he nodded at his lover.

Draco pushed in further and the burning continued, but it was countered by the heady mix of arousal and magic swirling through his body. He wanted his mate; he wanted him so much. Draco went to pull out again before he was fully sheathed in Harry, but Harry squeezed his lover's arm to stop him, shaking his head. He needed Draco fully inside him, an urgent and begging ache in the pit of his stomach demanding this now. His lover seemed unsure but did as he was asked, and, the moment Draco was fully seated in him, Harry felt everything click into place. His magical core leapt to find his lover's and they joined in more ways than one.

The gasp that came from his own mouth was mirrored by one from Draco's and they remained locked in position for several seconds before Draco slowly began to move. It was the most wonderful feeling and Harry let himself sprawl back onto the bed as his mate claimed him as his own. This was what it meant to have and have been found and he revelled in it.

The delicious feeling of being filled drove him insane and he could not hold back the moans and cries that the sensations drew from him. He needed everything Draco could give, needed to be had and have what he offered received in its entirety. As Draco moved inside him he felt the mental pain let go and he understood how far it had reached into his soul. When a hand took hold of his cock and began to pump firmly it was more than he could take and he exploded with a heartfelt cry, shuddering and moving in the complete surrender of orgasm.

So many thoughts and emotions crashed through his head at the same moment that he could not hold onto any of them. They were together, they were one and that was all he knew. His occupied mind could barely tell him anything, but he felt

Draco's magic pulse as his lover also reached completion and then fell on top of him, spent. Magic swirled around his body and he felt whole on both human and Seraphim levels. His mate had accepted him, and it was a euphoric feeling. This was where he was supposed to be.

End of Chapter 9

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## Chapter 10 Questions and Answers

Harry had never been held as a child and he liked the feeling of arms around him. At first Draco had seemed slightly perturbed when he had not pulled away after they had satisfied their mutual desire, but the Slytherin seemed to have warmed to the idea. They were lying on the bed, half propped up on pillows, with Harry draped across Draco's chest in a very decadent fashion. Draco's arms were wound loosely around Harry's shoulders and they had lain there for a good few minutes in companionable silence.

"Draco," Harry asked eventually as his curiosity from earlier made it back into his mind, "how come there are sex supplies in the bedside table?"

"What else would go in the little drawer?" Draco asked as if it was a very strange question.

"Tissues, soap, writing paper, pens?" Harry offered with a small shrug.

"But what happens if your guests choose to have sex and they require some assistance?" Draco countered in a very reasonable tone. "It would be terribly impolite to leave them in the lurch like that."

The idea of supplying your guest with sexual aids rather scandalised the Muggle raised part of Harry's brain, but he had to admit that he rather liked the more practical approach to sex. It occurred to him that the fact that the Wizarding world had never had a Dark Ages was a good thing.

"You may have a point," he agreed and snuggled closer to his lover once more.

Draco seemed content to leave the conversation there, which was fine by Harry and he settled down to enjoy the silence again.

"Will you teach me to use these wings properly?" Draco suddenly asked. "I tried, but I didn't get very far."

"It's tricky to begin with isn't it," Harry replied with a small laugh. "I use the room of requirement; we can go there when we get back to school if you like. It's not very nice for flying outside at the moment so it might be an idea to wait."

Draco responded with a noise that could have been a yes, or a maybe, but Harry was enjoying their current position too much to worry. For all he knew Malfoy Manor had its own room of requirement and his lover was thinking about using that.

The silence embraced them again, but it was a warm lapse in conversation rather than the angry coldness that had been between them since their first coupling.

"How long did it take you to figure it out?" Draco asked a few moments later.

"About a week for the basics, but I was practising every day for a couple of hours," he replied honestly. "It takes a while to figure out how they feel, but once you have it, everything else is second nature. It's not really like learning to use another part of your body, more a way of thinking."

Draco made another unintelligible noise that Harry did not try too hard to decipher and they lapsed back into not talking. Almost without his volition Harry found himself stroking his fingers up and down his lover's side. Draco had a very

nice body; fine muscle tone and a strong frame, especially since his rather abrupt change thanks to their tryst. Harry found he liked to touch and he couldn't help smiling when he found a spot that made Draco shift somewhat. Filing the knowledge away for another time he noted that his lover was ticklish. He felt as if he could stay this way forever.

"Do you mind if I ask you something?" Harry finally voiced what he needed from their meeting.

Sex was good and definitely important to the Seraphim part of him as well as his teenage libido, but what he really wanted was to know his lover. There was a very large knowledge gap in his head with the label 'Draco' and he desperately needed to fill it.

"Okay," the Slytherin replied after a moment's pause and he sounded vaguely nervous.

This was strange for both of them, Harry realised that. They had been enemies so long that opening up to each other was not going to be easy. They were physically intimate, but they were far from intimate on an intellectual level. Running through all his possible questions he realised there was one that was more important than anything else; it was part of what defined them both and it needed to be asked.

"Why did you do it?" Harry asked evenly. "Why did you turn your back on Voldemort?"

The enquiry drew a sharp laugh from Draco and Harry shifted slightly in his lover's arms to look up at the Slytherin's face.

"Merlin's beard," his companion said and shook his head, "you don't believe in asking the little questions first do you."

For a while Harry was worried he had pushed too hard and that Draco would not answer, but the Slytherin did not change the way he was holding him and he sobered quickly.

"I'm sorry, if you don't want to answer..." Harry apologised when they fell into silence.

"No," Draco interrupted him, "don't be sorry; your direct approach is so thoroughly you I'd be worried if you tried something else. It makes a change from what I'm used to if nothing else."

He still didn't have an answer, but at least Harry knew his lover was not offended.

"I'll make a deal with you," Draco said eventually in a very Slytherin like way, "I will tell you why I did what I did and then you will answer one question of mine: anything I want to know."

It was so typical of Draco not to specify what he would ask and Harry knew it was his companion's way of regaining control. He did not believe that the Slytherin realised that his request was not as frightening as it once would have been; Harry wanted to tell his lover everything. With a nod he agreed and Draco relaxed back with a concentrated expression on his face. Harry did not push and waited for the youth to begin.

"It was the Avesbury massacre," Draco started eventually in a rather distant tone, "you know it was Voldemort's way of testing those he broke out of Azkaban?"

Harry nodded again to show that he was aware of that. The Dark Lord had freed his supporters from Azkaban and then sent them to kill a coach load of school children who were visiting Avesbury, on a holiday just before Christmas. The Muggle news had reported a terrible coach crash, but that had been the Ministry cover up.

"My father came home afterwards," Draco continued quietly, "still covered in blood, and I ran to see him like a dutiful Death Eater's son, only Azkaban changed him. I think it gave him time to think and he had to face things that had never occurred to him before. He went to my mother and fell apart. I don't think he even knew I was there. My dad fell to his knees in front of my mum and cried into her skirt, telling her everything about the massacre."

Draco paused as if the words were difficult and took a deep breath, Harry tightened his embrace slightly.

"I had never seen my father cry before, and I hadn't faced the horrors of war," his lover said eventually. "He told my mother that Voldemort was not the man he used to be and that he regretted how deeply he was involved. It was not a war about purebloods anymore, it was about vengeance and it was wrong. My father actually said what he was doing was wrong, but he couldn't stop. It rather blew my mind. I left then and I never saw him again. It took me days to get past the shock, but when I did I realised that I could not end up like him. I began to plan and when I returned to school I started the coup."

Harry had not known what to expect, but he had not considered that Lucius Malfoy would have had anything to do with his son's change of heart. Suddenly he realised that the Death Eaters were human as well and it was a startling revelation.

"It must have been very difficult," Harry responded quietly; he remembered all too well what it was like to have your belief system completely uprooted.

"What, my father turning out to be fallible, or the coup?" Draco asked a little derisively.

"Both," Harry said honestly.

"The coup was easy," Draco said and Harry did not miss that his lover totally failed to mention his father, "it's in my blood. I've ruled my year for a long time and manipulating them was no trouble. To some of them I think it was a relief."

"It still took incredible courage and resourcefulness," Harry pointed out, unwilling to let Draco play down his contribution to the war

Draco snorted, but did not reply. Harry assumed the Slytherin was thinking, but he did not look up to try and read his lover's features. There was tension in Draco's body that had not been there before and it took a long time to flow away as Harry stroked his fingers along his lover's side.

"My turn," Draco eventually said in a falsely bright tone.

Now Harry did look up and there was definitely a hint of glee in his lover's eyes.

"Okay," he said in acceptance, "you earned it."

"Why did you go after Voldemort by yourself?" Draco's question was simple, but it lanced at a very private part of Harry's psyche.

The only people he had ever spoken to about his reasoning were Hermione, Ron and Poppy; not even Dumbledore knew why. By now the tale of how the Boy Who Lived had apparated alone into the presence of Voldemort and vanquished the dark wizard with one spell was legendary, but few knew exactly how or why he had done it.

"I flipped," Harry said with a stark honesty that surprised him. "I hadn't been very stable since my godfather was killed and Voldemort pushed me over the edge. You probably didn't know him, but Colin Creevey, the boy who used to follow me around with a camera all the time had a brother, his name was Denis. He never came back after Christmas that year, he was killed in the Leeds bombing. That was when I realised that I was going to end up watching everyone die if I didn't do something."

He paused to gather his thoughts.

"The prophecy said one of us would die by the other's hand and we couldn't live while the other was alive. Without the worry of being sane I had a revelation," Harry continued slowly. "Voldemort and I were connected from the moment I survived as a baby and it occurred to me that we were two halves of the same magical entity, so I looked up spells for transferring magic from one half of something broken into the other half. There're several of them in '100 housekeeping spells for the magical family'."

Draco took hold of his chin and made him look at his face, the Slytherin appeared shocked.

"Are you telling me you defeated the Dark Lord with a housekeeping spell?" Draco sounded amazed, offended and incredulous all at the same time.

Harry gave a little shrug.

"Um, yeah I suppose I did," he replied, although he hadn't actually ever thought of it like that. "I had to adapt it, but that was basically what it was. Anyway, do you want to hear this or not?"

Draco nodded and let him go so he relaxed back into his original position. Now that he was speaking he found he did not want to stop.

"I asked Hermione to teach me to Apparate since she was the only one who I thought could manage it," Harry returned to his story. "I told her it was because I was having nightmares about being chased and not being able to escape. I don't think she's ever forgiven me for that. No one seemed to notice I'd gone off the deep end, which probably doesn't say a lot for my mental state before that. When I had learned how to Apparate and knew my power moving spell I walked to Hogsmeade and used my connection to Voldemort and Legilimency to focus on him. It was easier than I expected and I Apparated straight to him. He was so surprised that he never even tried to defend himself; I grabbed him, cast my spell and sucked him dry. I don't remember anything after that until I woke up two months later."



Draco did not say anything for a very long time and Harry did not feel like reiterating any of his explanation, so he remained silent.

"That is the most foolhardy, ridiculously brave, completely Gryffindor thing I have ever heard," the Slytherin said eventually. "You had no idea if it would work; you did something I can barely comprehend when you Apparated; and it could have killed you anyway. What were you thinking?"

"That if I won no one else would have to die," Harry replied quietly, "and if I lost I wouldn't have to watch all of my friends being killed."

The words slipped out with brutal honesty and caused silence again.

"What was it like," Draco asked after a few moments, "killing him I mean?"

"Horrible," Harry replied openly. "I've told the others that I don't remember much after I cast the spell, but it's not true; I remember every second 'til the moment he died. Only Poppy knows that and you now of course. He tried to fight me, but the power he transferred to me as a baby called to his power and he couldn't stop it. It hurt and I thought I might explode. Poppy says in a way I almost did, but when he died everything just stopped. I wish I could forget it, but I can't, so I keep it locked away and I dream of it sometimes. Is there anything else you want to know?"

When Harry had first explained what he had done to Poppy a few days after he had first woken up, he had cried and sobbed, but now he spoke calmly, keeping the memories distant with practice efficiency. Occlumency was a useful talent to have learned.

"I think I've heard enough for now," Draco said after a moment and he sounded a little shocked.

They lapsed into a rather awkward silence and Harry did not know what to say to break it. Maybe it had been rather a heavy conversation for their first real exchange.

"Oh, bloody hell," Draco said suddenly, "I refuse to lie here with a completely naked Gryffindor and get depressed. There are better things to do."

And with that Harry found himself rolled onto his back and pinned to the bed by Draco's body. He just about had enough time to breathe before his lover covered his mouth and began to kiss him passionately. He gave in easily and wound his arms around Draco, very willing to surrender to desire rather than having to think.

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It was not until a good few hours later that Draco dragged Harry out of bed and showed him to an en suite bathroom that was bigger than the prefects' bathroom at Hogwarts. Here he left him, telling him that he'd be back with some clothes once he'd cleaned up himself. Draco had also mentioned something about meeting his mother, which had sent Harry into nervous fits, making the whole process of bathing that much more important.

Somehow in his mind Harry had never factored Narcissa into the equation of himself and Draco, and he really did not know what to think. The only memory of

the woman he had was of the Quidditch World Cup where she had been cold, not very nice, and a little scary. That he had fundamentally altered her son and single-handedly destroyed any marriage plans Draco's family may have had for him, was at the forefront of his mind as he walked back into the bedroom in nothing but a towel. He found Narcissa Malfoy sitting on the end of the bed in the one spot where the covers had not been rucked up by what he and Draco had been up to, and he thought his heart might stop.

His hand automatically went to his waist to check that the towel was completely secure and then he just stared because he had no idea what to say.

"Good afternoon," Draco's mother greeted evenly, "I apologise for intruding, but I wished to speak with you without my son, and Draco would be unlikely to leave you alone in my presence given a choice."

That begged the question 'why?', but Harry didn't want to think about that too closely.

"Hello," he returned politely, wondering if there was any way to escape.

"Draco probably believes I wish to curse you from the manor," the regal-looking woman continued calmly, "and although earlier today he may have been correct, I have decided to reserve judgement. He is remarkably protective of you given that he professes not to even like you; however, I believe that has changed as well."

The woman looked at him with the same steel grey eyes Draco possessed and they pinned him down just as well, although with Narcissa it was for an entirely different reason. Harry tried very hard not to squirm.

"Before today I was willing to make you pay dearly for what you have done to my son," Narcissa said openly, "he has been miserable from the moment he came home, but I believe I understand at least part of that now. I have not seen the look of joy on Draco's face which graced his features as you collapsed on our doorstep, since before his father was killed. For that I am willing to forgive a great deal. I also took it upon myself to listen to your conversations today."

The heat filled Harry's face instantly as he realised what Draco's mother must have also heard, but Narcissa appeared to be tactfully ignoring that for now.

"I have one question and one question only," she said pointedly: "Did you mean it when you told him you wished to learn to love him?"

In that moment, in Harry's mind, Narcissa went from the wife of Voldemort's right hand man, to a mother worried about her child, and it had the most remarkable effect on his psyche. He walked forward and looked the mother of his mate straight in the eye.

"Mrs Malfoy," he said slowly and firmly, "I would do anything."

Narcissa stood up and crossed what was left of the distance between them. She was a tall woman not that much shorter than Harry and at that moment he felt something akin to what he always felt around Molly Weasley; although he was the bigger in stature he felt the smaller presence.

"In that case, Mr Potter," she said, never letting his gaze go, "please call me Narcissa."

Harry was, quite frankly, stunned and it must have shown on his face because Narcissa smiled slightly before turning to leave.

"Harry," he managed to stutter, just as she reached the door.

Turning back, the poised woman inclined her head in a slight nod.

"Harry," she said and walked through the door.

For a long moment Harry was not sure if he was going to ever recover from the trauma of meeting Draco's mother wearing only a towel and he just stood there. In fact he was still standing there when Draco came charging through the door looking very worried.

"Harry?" the Slytherin asked somewhat hesitantly.

He turned and blinked at Draco, trying to sort out in his brain what exactly had just happened.

"Mum didn't hex you or anything did she?" Draco actually looked as if he thought this was a real possibility.

Harry opened his mouth, not sure what to say and closed it again.

"Harry?" moving a little closer the Slytherin now appeared very concerned.

"She told me to call her Narcissa," Harry eventually found his voice.

Draco went from worried to dumb-founded in under a second and dropped the clothes he was holding over one arm.

"Bloody hell," was the Slytherin's distinct opinion and then he smiled. "Mum's known people for twenty years who still call her Mrs Malfoy."

Then his expression became worried again.

"What?" Harry asked, not liking the look on his lover's face.

"She's probably planning the engagement party," Draco said and Harry went white.

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By the time Harry had pulled himself into the very nice clothes Draco had appeared with, and his lover had straightened him out to a point where the Slytherin would be seen anywhere but the bedroom with him, Narcissa was nowhere to be found. Draco mentioned something about his mother being in her private quarters and since the doors were closed visitors were likely to find themselves in the lake behind the house, and so dragged Harry into the dining room. There Draco called up a pleased looking house elf and ordered more food than Harry thought they could possibly eat.

Two slices of game pie, a huge mountain of bubble-and-squeak\*, a selection of pickles, four slices of turkey and three cups of tea later and Harry still wasn't

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\* left over vegetables mashed with potato and fried

finished. It seems that flying in a thunderstorm took a lot out of a Seraphim and he needed to replace the energy. Draco had been sitting watching him with what appeared to be interest since the Slytherin had finished a more normal amount of food.

Luckily Harry had not learned his table manners from Ron, so even requiring the calories did not lead him to shovel mode. Draco seemed quite happy to just look and the Slytherin smiled slightly every time Harry glanced up, but he couldn't quite tell if his lover was amused at him or simply enjoying the moment. He'd never seen Draco this relaxed and it was a little odd.

It was thoughts about exactly what he was going to say once his mouth wasn't full anymore, which kept his mind distracted and caused him to almost fall out of his chair when he heard a familiar voice.

"Oi, Harry," Ron was the last person he expected to encounter in Malfoy Mansion, "what were you thinking disappearing into a bloody storm?"

"Ron!" was about the most sensible thing Harry could find to say.

"I would have asked the same question, Weasley," Draco said, his usual disdainful tones back in place, "but we've been rather busy."

"Draco," Narcissa's calm tones came through the door, closely followed by the woman herself and the rest of those who had been at the Burrow, "please be polite to our guests."

Draco appeared shocked for just a second and then his mask was firmly in place; Harry did not like the separation he suddenly felt. Without thinking about what he was doing he scooted out of his chair and walked around to beside his lover. Having Ron and Draco in the same room was never a good thing and Harry was feeling strangely protective.

"Harry, Love," Molly Weasley came bustling over as if everything was perfectly normal and virtually the whole Weasley clan and a werewolf were not standing in the Malfoy dining room, "at least you look like you're in one piece."

Then she wrapped him in a hug before he could do anything about it and he found the breath being squeezed out of him.

"Don't you ever do that again, young man," Molly said sternly as she finally pulled back. "Twice in a mother's life is quite enough to see one of her children disappear into danger."

If he had been anywhere but where he was, Harry might have burst into tears at the emotion that welled up in his heart at Molly's words. He knew the woman looked on him as almost one of the family, but she had never said it quite like that before. Even after his brush with Voldemort she had had time to calm down by the time he woke up, and although she had given him a stern talking to Molly had not quite used those terms. As it was he managed to grapple with his feelings and kept some semblance of calm.

"Okay," he said in a rather tight voice, "I promise."

"You look like a right ponce, mate," Ron broke the mood completely with his forthright opinion.

It was the wrong thing to say and Molly spun on the spot.

"Ronald Weasley," the woman said in a tone that would have frightened Voldemort himself had the man not been six feet under, "how dare you. Harry looks lovely, and you will be polite while we are under this roof."

Ron went rather pale.

"Yes Mum," he said in a sheepish tone.

Draco could not keep the smirk off his face, but Harry didn't really blame his lover since Ron did deserve it.

"Harry," Remus said, walking into the room properly, "I was so worried. Are you okay?"

Now the guilt started inside him and Harry had to admit that he had done something very stupid by taking off into the storm. Rational thought had not had a lot to do with his actions, but now that logic was back in play he could not help but feel dreadful about putting everyone through so much worry.

"At least you weren't unconscious for two months this time, Harry," either Fred or George tried to lighten the mood.

"I'm sorry," Harry said quietly, "I had to do something. Thanks to Narcissa I'm fine."

Surprisingly he felt a hand on his arm and he looked up to find Draco observing him calmly and giving him support in a very Slytherin like way.

"My mother is a fair healer," Draco said politely and turned towards those in the room as if they were now worth his interest.

As several eyes turned to Narcissa she smiled modestly and moved to the table.

"Now that everyone is here," she said pleasantly, "why don't we have something light to eat."

With a clap of her hands everything on the table disappeared and the same house elf who had served Harry and Draco appeared. Narcissa bent down and talked quietly to the small creature that bobbed up and down excitedly before disappearing again. It was not long before the table was covered in even more food with settings for every person in the room. Everyone sat down eyeing each other awkwardly and Harry tried very hard not to squirm every time someone looked at him.

Quite frankly Ginny was the scariest since each time he caught her gaze she went misty eyed and smiled at him. It was most disconcerting to have one of the most feared chasers in the school Quidditch cup going all girly on him.

"Please, help yourselves," Narcissa invited them all, "the house elves will be most upset if we don't at least eat something."

You did not have to tell a Weasley male twice and all the red heads dived in, although under their mother's watchful eye their table manners were impeccable.

"This is a wonderful spread, Narcissa," Molly said cheerfully, "it was awfully nice of you to invite us to lunch."

Draco looked even more stunned than he had when the Weasleys had appeared as Molly used his mother's first name. The Slytherin almost dropped the slice of meat he was putting on his plate and Harry reached over to him and squeezed his lover's knee in what he hoped was a supportive gesture. Too much culture shock in one day was getting to Draco.

"Not at all," Narcissa replied with a smile, and Harry would have sworn she and Molly had been friends for years if he had not known better. "Admittedly I was a little surprised to find Harry on our doorstep, but once the situation became clear I could not leave you all wondering about him. There is always so much food in the house at Christmas time that I thought a luncheon would be the perfect opportunity to meet everyone properly."

"Absolutely lovely," was Arthur's comment on the matter.

It was so difficult to tell what was the mask and what was genuine sentiment when it came to a Malfoy, and Harry knew so little about Narcissa that he simply gave up trying to read her at all. He was sure she would do anything for her son, and this seemed to be part of that.

"Mrs Malfoy," Remus said in his quiet, unassuming tone.

"Now, Mr Lupin," Narcissa replied, "I thought I asked you to call me Narcissa."

"Narcissa," Remus acquiesced politely, "and please call me Remus. If I do not appear too rude, I must say you are taking this remarkably calmly."

Narcissa smiled and nodded her head once.

"I will admit that when my son returned to me thoroughly depressed I had thoughts of keeping him here with me until he was recovered," the regal woman said, causing Draco to put down his fork and stare at his mother. This was obviously not something a Malfoy usually talked about. "However, then Harry arrived and it became quite obvious why Draco was so cowed. They simply cannot be apart."

As Harry watched, Narcissa's eyes glanced around the table before she looked back at Remus.

"I had a choice," she continued calmly; "reject any notion of Harry having anything to do with my family and see my son descend into misery, or accept Harry and all that this entails and allow the future to find its own course. I am finding this course of action to be far more pleasant than I was ever led to believe."

Harry let a smile slowly spread on his face. It took a lot to stun the Weasley clan into silence, but Narcissa had done so triumphantly. In truth she had done so to the whole table, including Draco, but Harry definitely gave her more points for his surrogate family. There was just a possibility that this madness might work.

"So, Draco," Ginny launched into the silence much to everyone's relief, "that last Quidditch game was incredible; so close, don't you agree?"

A Quidditch discussion between Gryffindors and a Slytherin; now this was going to be interesting and Harry felt his own darker side coming to the forefront as he sat back to watch them all try and be polite about it.

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It was decided that Harry should spend the rest of the holiday at Malfoy Manor, to which news Ron has reacted rather badly. However, after Remus had taken Harry's best friend aside and had an undisclosed little chat, Ron had seemed much calmer about the idea. Harry could not say he thought Ron liked the idea, but his best friend did seem to support it. There were bound to be many conversations once they were back at school, but hopefully they would not be shouting matches.

So it was that Harry spent the next week with Draco trying to get to know the somewhat difficult Slytherin. What really surprised him was that under the cold exterior, which Harry was beginning to realise more and more was a mask of necessity, Draco was quite a normal human being. The blond Seraphim had some unusual habits, like colour coordinating his wardrobe, and spending twenty minutes each morning straightening out Harry's clothes before he would let him out of his room, but Harry could live with those.

It was not all sweetness and light of course; they had been rubbing each other up the wrong way for so long that they were bound to keep doing it every now and then. They had a huge, screaming row before the first day was out and stopped speaking to each other for three hours until Harry had searched out Draco, pounced on him, kissed him senseless and then said sorry, since in that instance it had been his fault. Extracting an apology out of Draco was like drawing blood from a stone, as Harry had found the next day when the shouting had been all Draco's fault, but then he didn't expect miracles. Draco seemed to express more by action than words at such times, and Harry chose to accept that as well as the mind blowing sex.

Harry learned a great deal about his mate in that week. He learned that Draco liked his tea dark with only a dash of milk in the mornings, and dark with a lot of milk later in the day; he learned that they would never agree on the pureblood vs Muggle-born issue even if Draco did not hold with his father's extreme beliefs; he learned that laughing at Draco's bed hair resulted in a tantrum on the part of his mate (they had given up the whole separate rooms idea on the second night); he learned that Draco had the most adorable pout when he wanted something from someone he did not consider an enemy; he learned that he was not the only one scarred by a childhood over-shadowed by Voldemort; he learned that Draco's extreme dislike of werewolves came from a violent near-miss when he was only five and it would take a long time for his lover to accept Remus; he learned that his mate was far more complex than he had ever given him credit for; and most importantly he learned that the need to be close to Draco was not the only motivating factor in his heart.

Harry was not well experienced with love; he had had little as a young child and his teenage years had not been easy either. He had loved Sirius in an instant when he had understood what his godfather had done for him, he had no doubt he loved Hermione and all the Weasleys, and he knew he loved Remus, but with Draco it was different. This would not be a love of brothers, or family, or friends; this would be a fiery love of passion, and a love that would shape every moment of every day. In a way it was a frightening love, but he could feel its beginning around his heart.

Harry had told Draco he needed to know him to love him, and he did not know everything yet, but he knew enough to understand that it would not be long before he did.

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Epilogue

Draco had made a couple of rules the moment they had talked about going back to school. The Slytherin did not care what Harry wore when they were alone, or apart, but Harry was going to have to wear proper Wizarding clothes when they were to be seen together. This had resulted in a shopping trip two days before going back since Harry had plenty of Muggle clothes and school robes after having to re-kit himself from the growth spurt, but he owned very little to do with Wizarding attire.

In some way the clothes were not that different, but it seemed to be important to Draco, and the Slytherin did have a point that Harry wanted to be taken seriously by the rest of Slytherin house. Harry had countered that Draco would need to at least make an effort with the Gryffindors and had bought his lover a pair of jeans and a silk shirt for occasions where Draco was the one that needed to blend.

They were, however, very much in Wizarding attire when they were dropped off at King's Cross. Muggles might have thought they appeared a little old fashioned, but Harry knew, thanks to Draco's coaching that he was wearing an outfit that was all the rage in Wizarding circles. Harry felt a little over dressed, but Draco had assured him that that was impossible; underdressed, yes, but overdressed was simply a matter of attitude.

"I'll push our trolley," Harry said after one of the Malfoy house elves had stacked it for them.

They had nowhere near as much luggage as at the beginning and end of the year, but there was still a significant amount, especially with Harry's new wardrobe.

"Don't be silly," Draco said dismissively, "Fussy with deal with that."

That explained why the elf had been looking at him worriedly then; it was the one he had fallen on only a week ago.

"Draco," Harry said patiently, "remember the talk we had about Hermione, and house elves, and not being entirely rational on the subject?"

Draco lifted one eyebrow and just looked at him.

"Well Hermione will be on the station," sometimes he thought Draco did it deliberately, actually on reflection; he knew Draco did it deliberately. "Now I wore the clothes, but I will not risk a row with Hermione on the first day."

For a moment his mate appeared undecided and Harry thought they might be headed for a shouting match, which would be a great start, but eventually Draco nodded.

"Just don't expect me to lug anything around," the Slytherin said and turned towards the entrance.

"Wouldn't dream of it," Harry said and couldn't help but smile.



It was then that Narcissa chose to climb out of the luxury car. Draco's mother was still a bit of a mystery to Harry, since she was a surprisingly busy woman and had been engaged in social events most of the week. It seemed to be a Malfoy tradition to have a meal together in the evenings, which Harry had become part of, but the conversation was never particularly deep or personal.

"Well, my darling boy," Narcissa said, taking her son by the shoulders, "I am glad to be sending you off to school in better spirits than you arrived home. Make me proud, Draco."

As Harry watched, she pulled Draco towards her and kissed him gently on the forehead. It was the most emotive Harry had ever seen the two and he could not help feeling a warm glow at how deeply Draco was loved. He had also come to realise that Malfoys were not expressive people when it came to the softer emotions, but they were there.

It was when Narcissa turned to Harry that he was rather shocked. She walked over to him, took his shoulders in exactly the same manner as she had done with Draco and kissed him on the forehead.

"Look after him, Harry," she said very quietly and before he could gather his stunned mind she turned and climbed back into the car.

When Harry looked at Draco his mate was looking thoroughly pleased with the whole situation. Harry still didn't really know how to react and took hold of the trolley in an attempt to ground himself.

The wizard's entrance to King's Cross was much closer to platform 9 3/4 than the Muggle one and they bumped into very few people on the way. Since Narcissa had said her goodbyes at the car it was just the two of them as they walked through the barrier. Harry pushed the trolley into line to be loaded onto the train and then walked back to Draco.

By the time he had completed this simple task something very odd had begun to happen on the platform. The usual bustle was coming to a grinding halt and every eye, parent and pupil was firmly on both of them. It seemed that Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy standing together could bring Platform 9 3/4 to a complete stop.

"I didn't quite expect this," Harry said very quietly, not sure exactly what to do.

He had dealt with silences when he walked into a room before, but this was on an entirely different scale. The story of Harry's heritage and his assignation with Draco had been all over the Prophet, but it seemed that no one had expected to see them standing side by side ever again.

"I believe," Draco said as his eyes wandered over the crowd, "it may be time to make a statement."

"Statement?" Harry wasn't sure that was a good idea; he really wasn't good with words off the cuff. "You'll have to do it," he added quickly; "I'd probably mess it up."

When his eyes darted back to Draco from where they had been nervously dancing across the crowd there was a dangerous looking smile on his mate's face.

"If you insist," the Slytherin said and then Harry found himself dragged toward Draco by the front of his robes.

It took him a moment or two to realise that his lover had in fact just smothered his mouth with hot, needy lips, and then he acquiesced to the kiss and forgot everything as his hormones rose to the occasion.

The way Ron described later what the crowd saw on that platform was "The hottest, most bone melting kiss known to Wizarding kind. You could have been doing it beside the train as far as anyone with a sex drive was concerned." Harry spent the entire journey with a smile on his face, even when he had to go and sit with the Slytherins. That kiss was one thing he did not mind going down for in 'Hogwarts A History'.

**The End**