

It Was Christmas Eve

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Pairing: Harry/Draco

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Warnings: This story is set post OOTP and therefore has SPOILERS.

Summary: Draco has changed sides and someone really doesn't like that.

Author's Notes: This is a little bunny that jumped into my head for Christmas. Thanks to Soph for the beta. I hope you enjoy. pollyjuiceboy drew the most adorable fanart for this fic (scroll down to see it in the correct place in the fic)

It was Christmas Eve, and Harry sat on his bed, cross legged, wrapping the last present he had bought. This was a special present, a secret one that no one but the recipient would know about; at least not until Voldemort was dead. Placing the small silver cloak pin in the centre of a piece of green paper he carefully pulled the edges of the wrapping together to hide the ornate little snake with green eyes.

Harry wished fervently that he could show this small object to Ron or Hermione and share how perfect he thought it was for his boyfriend, but they could not know either fact. Draco Malfoy was on their side now, having turned his back on Voldemort very publicly when had turned seventeen and refused the Dark Mark, but he was never seen consorting with Gryffindors. There was too much bad feeling between the houses to be openly friendly, and Draco was working on bringing as many of his fellow Slytherins over to the side of light as possible; a task that would have been almost unworkable if he was openly attached to Harry Potter.

So it was that their relationship had started in secret and had grown in secret. No one knew about them, and sometimes Harry wondered if it was all some marvellous dream. He loved Draco with all his heart, and if the kisses and touches his boyfriend gave back were real then Draco felt the same way. They had never spoken the words aloud or even talked about how they actually felt, but for Harry something was so perfect when they were together, that he did not try and deny what he was really experiencing.

Sealing the parcel with tape, Harry pulled out his wand and cast a charm on the package so that only the intended recipient could open it. A silver ribbon appeared as he completed the spell and he smiled at his own handiwork. Slipping the present into his pocket he turned to the pile he had wrapped earlier and scooped them into his arms. This year there were four of his close friends staying along with several others from the house, and they had decided to use the Christmas tree in the common room for their presents.

He had carefully thought out gifts for his friends and small things like chocolate frogs for the others who were here over Christmas. The memory of his first Christmas presents was still clear in his mind, even after six years, and he did not want to leave anyone out.

Navigating the door to the dorm was a little difficult, but with some tricky balancing on one foot and hooking at it with the other, he was soon on his way down to where he knew the others had already placed their presents. He could hear happy voices chatting as he walked towards them and he felt himself grinning. They may have been little more than children, caught in a war left over by their parents, but at least they still had times like this.

He was halfway to the bottom when his mood was shattered completely. It felt like his heart was being squeezed in his chest, as if a large hand had closed around it and was trying to force the life from him. For a moment he thought he had been hexed, but he had felt no spell hit him and his scattered thoughts soon screamed at him one thing. The distress did not originate from him; the source of the agony which ran through every nerve was Draco.

Parcels went tumbling to the floor as his world narrowed to the feeling of his magic being ripped from his body. It hurt more than he could express and all he could do was cry his pain to his surroundings as he lost his footing and began to fall. The real world was vague and unimportant as something inside him leapt to help his boyfriend; the man he loved with all his heart. Something snapped as he ineffectively tried to cushion his fall and then his head hit the stone of the steps. After that his universe went black.

Harry drifted back to consciousness to the sound of worried voices. His whole body was aching and there was a pounding in his head, but he still tried to open his eyes. Barely a glimmer of light made it through the half open lids before they fell closed again and the attempt took so much strength he had no choice but to lay there and rely on his other senses.

There was a mattress below him, and a funny taste in his mouth which suggested he had been fed a potion of some kind. If nothing else his confused brain recognised the signs of being in the hospital wing.

"But will he be alright?" it was Hermione's voice, or at least Harry thought that was the most likely, since his dazed thoughts were having trouble being sure of anything.

"He will be fine, Miss Granger," Madame Pomfrey's calm tones responded to the question. "I have mended his wrist and the potion will make sure there are no side effects from the nasty bump on the head. I am sure Mr Potter will be back with us in an hour or so."

Somewhere in the back of his mind Harry realised why there seemed to be a concentration of ache in his left wrist, but he still did not understand why he could not quite wake up. It was like there was a blanket over him that he could not push away and it was keeping him from the world.

"He's so pale," Ron sounded very worried.

"He's had a nasty fall and a shock to his system," Madame Pomfrey did not sound as if she was in the mood to coddle his friends, "of course he's pale. Now you may stay and wait for Mr Potter to wake up if you promise to remain quiet and out from under my feet."

"Yes, Madame Pomfrey," his friends said in perfect unison.

It was then that a feeling of distress took Harry's attention away from anything that was happening close to him. Something pulled at him, something that caused the ache to intensify and he wanted desperately to move, but his body felt just beyond his control.

"Madame Pomfrey," he had not expected to hear Snape's voice, and the head of Slytherin sounded more anxious than he had ever heard him before, "quickly, Draco Malfoy has been cursed."

There was the sound of people and things moving and Harry tried desperately to understand what was happening. In his need he managed to open his eyes for just a moment and was rewarded with a blurred image of Snape placing a blond form on the bed next to him as Madame Pomfrey moved to assist.

"What was used?" the Healer asked quickly as Harry felt himself losing the battle again and his body rejecting his contact with the world.

"I cannot be sure," Snape replied in his usual efficient tones, "but I would hazard a guess at Putrefacio."

Harry had never heard of it and his muddled mind could not extrapolate any meaning from the Latin, but from Hermione's gasp he had no doubt it was bad.

"How long ago?" Madame Pomfrey asked professionally.

"He was found five minutes ago," Snape replied, "but there is no telling how long he was lying in the dungeon before that."

There were more sounds Harry could not identify and at least one spell was performed. He felt the pull on his magic again as if Draco needed his strength and he felt the world fading again. Knowing where his stubbornness and power were needed the most he gave up his fight with consciousness; when this was over he would find out what was going on.

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"How is Mr Malfoy, Poppy?" the sound of the headmaster talking dragged Harry back from oblivion again.

"Alive," Madame Pomfrey replied, and she sounded tired, "which in itself is amazing. There is no doubt he was cursed with Putrefacio, the signs are all over him, and he should by all rights be dead. He must be magically bound to another."

That made a strange kind of sense to Harry's mind, even in his altered state and it suddenly seemed so obvious. He was not sure when, why or how he had been bound to Draco, but he had no doubt that he was.

"How so?" Dumbledore asked with just a hint of pain in his voice.

"We all know that Putrefacio was only left off the list of Unforgivables because it has utilitarian uses," Madame Pomfrey said as if she thought this was a great wrong. "There is no counter for it, and only two people have ever survived it's use on human beings. Both were magically bound to another person. Hough Redwing was party to a Master/Journeyman bond when he was hit and the strength of his Master allowed him to survive until the curse ran out of magical power. Godreth Maxim was bound to her husband and their combined strength

burnt away the curse in two days. Having assessed Mr Malfoy I can only say for sure that he must be bound to a very strong individual, but there are no bond runes to indicate who. The bond appears to be natural and accidental since there are no signs that it was created artificially. The most likely would be a bond between father and son."

There was what Harry took to be a non-committal sound from the headmaster and more movement. Desperate to know what was going on he tried to open his eyes, but it was almost as if they were glued shut.

"If it is Lucius sustaining his son, he must be removed from Azkaban at once," Dumbledore said eventually. "I assume there would be physical signs if Lucius is the one, Poppy?"

"Depending on the strength of the connection the symptoms could range from mild weakness to unconsciousness and convulsions," Madame Pomfrey replied firmly.

"I will send word," the headmaster decided with his usual conviction. "We must be sure. Let me know if there is any change, Poppy."

Harry lay in the quiet ward, drifting below true wakefulness for what seemed like a long time after the voices stopped. All he could hear was laboured breathing and he had to assume that this was coming from Draco. He wanted to open his eyes; he wanted to move and go to his boyfriend, but his body would not do his bidding. Eventually he felt the darkness reaching up for him again and he let it take him.

There were other moments of semi-consciousness and he knew that sometimes Ron and Hermione were with him, but he had no way to know how much time was passing. It could have been minutes or it could have been days, but eventually he heard Professor Dumbledore's voice again.

"Good evening, Poppy," the headmaster greeted, "you asked to see me."

"Yes, Headmaster," the healer replied and she sounded far more agitated than usual, "I believe there may have been two attacks today, not one."

"Harry?" Dumbledore asked plainly.

There was a pause and Harry assumed Madame Pomfrey was nodding.

"He should be awake and demanding to leave by now," the healer explained. "A bump on the head and a broken wrist are nothing compared to what Mr Potter has been through before, and yet he drifts just under consciousness. I can find no trace of a curse or a hex on him, but he will not wake up."

"Mr Malfoy's attacker has yet to be determined," the headmaster said evenly. "That there may be two followers of the dark staying for the holidays does not bare thinking about."

"I pray it is not so," Madame Pomfrey replied. "They are both the leaders of their houses; we cannot afford to lose either of them."

"And we shall not, Poppy, we shall not," Dumbledore said in a most resolute manner. "I have received a reply from Azkaban and it appears that Lucius Malfoy

is in no way connected to his son, but I have sent word to Narcissa in hopes of finding out more. If there is a change in either Harry or Draco, please let me know."

"Of course, Headmaster," was the efficient reply. "Any bond, no matter how tenuous would be causing some signs of distress by now," the healer continued after a moment, "and..."

Madame Pomfrey stopped mid sentence and Harry could almost hear the cogs turning in her mind.

"Oh," she said and if he had been able to Harry would have laughed at her shocked tone.

"What is it, Poppy?" Dumbledore sounded concerned.

More silence and all Harry could do was lie there and wait.

"Headmaster," Madame Pomfrey said eventually, "we may have missed the obvious."

"I am not sure I follo... Oh," it seemed that the knut had dropped for Dumbledore as well. "And how do we test this hypothesis, Poppy?" the headmaster asked after a rather stunned silence.

"Mr Potter has been moving in his sleep," the healer said with her professional tone firmly back in place, "so much so that I was forced to charm him to the bed to prevent him falling out. I believe that at some level he may have been trying to reach Mr Malfoy. I suggest we put the beds together and observe what happens."

The next thing Harry felt was his bed glide into movement in only the way something charmed could do, then the covers which were almost tying him to the bed loosened and his body moved without any conscious thought from him at all. His arm felt like it was made of lead, and he was not sure he would have been able to summon up enough will power to move had he been truly in control, but his right limb seemed to know where it wanted to go and was going to move no matter what the rest of his body thought about the matter.

"It appears you are correct, Poppy," Professor Dumbledore said in a hushed voice.

Harry really did not care what his two observers thought as every magical sense in his body told him that he almost had Draco in his grasp. When his fingers finally found what they were searching for they closed on his boyfriend's wrist as if they would never let go. The magic he had thought had been draining out of him before became a raging torrent as his innate power objected to everything that was happening to Draco and he was completely lost as his body convulsed and the world vanished yet again, but this time in a haze of light.

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Comfortable, content and exactly where he was supposed to be were the first impressions that made it into Harry's mind when the world returned the next time. He was curled on his side, pressed up against another warm body and he almost smiled. What stopped him was the warning of danger that finally made it

past the other feelings and was what had actually woken him. Something was not right and he lay still, trying to figure out what it was.

"You couldn't even die like a Slytherin," a familiar and yet horribly distorted female voice said. "You've betrayed me and the Dark Lord, Draco, and for that you must die."

Harry recognised Pansy, but he had never heard such hatred in a human being before; not even Voldemort.

"This time I'll take both of you," the Slytherin said coldly, "and when I return to the Dark Lord with the news of your deaths he will welcome me home. Ava..."

There was no pause between thought and action as Harry reacted to the danger at the same base level he had reacted before. His body and magic responded as one, and he turned, shape shifting into that of his Animagus form with only the slightest thought. Pansy's spell died on her lips and she screamed, only to be cut off by sharp claws as the huge black beast Harry had become launched himself at her. She went down as his blow left three deep gouges on her face and he landed over her on the floor even as her head connected with the stone and Pansy lost the fight with consciousness.

Harry's Animagus form was not a Black Panther, although a Muggle may have taken him for one, but any wizard would know better. The two tiny wing shapes on his back would have told them that; two knobs of bone that could expand and become huge, feathery wings at a second's notice. In this form Harry was a Feles Nocturnus, more commonly known as a Midnight cat; a magical beast known to be very dangerous and very territorial.

For a few moments he loomed over the unconscious girl, growling the whole time as his tail flicked behind him. Pansy had tried to kill him and Draco, and a very large part of him wanted to finish her for it, but his human mind was stronger than the animal. Picking up her discarded wand between his teeth he swiped at her left wrist with his paw, heedless of the scratches he left as he shredded her sleeve. The magic on her skin rippled and dissolved as his claws left red marks and the Dark Mark appeared from under the spells that had been hiding it.

This done he turned, jumped back up onto the bed, settled down over Draco's legs protectively and fixed his gaze on Pansy while he waited for the cavalry to arrive. He had no doubt that the girl's scream would bring someone running.

Madame Pomfrey ran in first and came to a halt almost as quickly. Harry regarded her steadily, his tail flicking slowly from side to side as he chewed the end of Pansy's wand, destroying its usefulness and absorbing the magical backlash almost absently. He bore no ill will to the healer, but in this form his concern was primarily for Draco and he was in no mood to take chances.



It took several long seconds of tense silence before Madame Pomfrey's training overcame her shock and then she moved slowly over to Pansy, keeping her eyes firmly on Harry as she did so. Only as she knelt down beside the girl did the healer flip completely into her job role, and seemingly forgetting about him entirely, began to examine the fallen Slytherin.

"What the?" Snape's usual sneering tone was tinged with shock, and Harry hissed at him before returning to destroying the wand between his paws.

"Oh dear," Professor Dumbledore's voice joined the conversation.

"Professor Snape, please help me move Miss Parkinson to a bed," Madame Pomfrey let her tone beg no argument.

"Is that Potter?" Snape asked as he edged his way past the bed with as much dignity as he could maintain.

"Yes, Severus," the headmaster said, walking into the room and immediately pinning Harry down with a very dominant stare, "that is Harry. He achieved his Animagus form while studying over the summer holidays."

The feline instincts in Harry recognised the challenge and bowed to the power radiating off of Dumbledore. He narrowed his eyes and looked away in an unconscious gesture of submission. The headmaster must have taken this as leave to come close because the next thing he knew, Harry found the top of his head being scratched and he couldn't help himself; he purred, or at least as close to it as his Animagus form could manage, which was a low rumble of sound.

He watched Snape and Madame Pomfrey moving Pansy to a bed out of the corner of his eye, but his need to protect was muted now that Dumbledore had so calmly taken over.

"If you would be so kind, Harry," the headmaster spoke in his usual even tones, "please may I have Miss Parkinson's wand."

The wand was his prize and the cat part of him wanted to keep it, but the wizard part was far stronger and very carefully he removed the paw that was holding object down.

"Thank you, Harry," Dumbledore said, taking the wand and continuing to scratch Harry's head in a most distracting manner. "How is Miss Parkinson?" the headmaster continued, turning to where Madame Pomfrey was working.

"She has sustained bruising to the head, some very nasty scratches to her face and arm, but I think the most damaging thing is this," the healer replied and Harry growled low in his throat as Madame Pomfrey displayed the Dark mark.

The desire to attack lurked at the back of his mind, but Harry held himself still as the healer went about her work. Pansy was no danger now, yet the cat in him wanted to make sure. It only absently occurred to him to change back to human form and he discarded the idea; his wand was not within reach and he was far more powerful as the Midnight cat if danger occurred again.

"I believe we can safely assume we have found our attacker," Dumbledore said sadly.

"But I checked her arm myself this morning," Snape said hotly, and Harry thought that the head of Slytherin was far more angry with himself than anyone else, "there was no Dark Mark."

"Perhaps Voldemort has become more clever than we have given him credit for," the headmaster offered in a calming manner. "We must be more vigilant in the future, Severus; obviously the mark was hidden in some way."

Harry found himself once more the centre of attention as Dumbledore looked at him again.

"You and Draco are quite safe now, Harry," the headmaster said with the same lilting tone, "if you would be so good as to change back into your human form and explain what happened."

He looked at Draco's still sleeping face and then back up at Dumbledore. He felt far more powerful as the cat; in control and able to defend his recumbent boyfriend, but logic dictated that he do as he was asked. It took him a good few seconds to summon up the will to return to human form, but eventually he willed his magic to jump to his control and he felt himself shift.

Almost as soon as the fur vanished from his body he collapsed forward onto the bed. It seemed that his own arms could not hold him and only the headmaster saved him from taking a nose dive into Draco's feet. He felt as weak as a lamb, all his strength gone with his Animagus form and he could barely keep his eyes open.

"Oh dear," Professor Dumbledore said quickly, "I believe Harry may have overtaxed himself. Severus, if you would be so kind as to assist me in lying him down."

Harry found himself shifted into a lying position next to Draco and he could no more resist than he could stop breathing. The need to snuggle back against his boyfriend and simply go to sleep was almost overwhelming, but he tried to hang on for the headmaster's sake.

"She..." he said, although his tongue was heavy in his mouth and would barely form the word, "tried ... ki ... killing curse."

That was all he could manage and the effort took away the last of his strength. Totally against his will he slipped back into the oblivion from which he had risen, and he knew no more.

"...ot possible. How can they be magically bound?" Ron's voice pulled Harry from sleep, and this time it seemed to be just that as his mind and body responded normally.

There were light fingers on the back of his neck and he was snuggled in to Draco's side, virtually on his front. He lay there, still, wanting to understand what was going on before he woke into it.

"It just happened, Ron," Hermione's patient tones responded to Ron as if she was teaching him about homework. "It's obvious now the bond marks have come out. See, look, there are runes in the pattern; this one is the head; this one heart; this one soul and this one magic. If it was a created bond there would be a maker's rune as well, but this one is natural so there isn't. The head, soul and magical runes are red and black because they are complete; they are of the same mind; they love each other and their magic is joined. The heart rune is pink and grey because they haven't consummated the bond yet."

"Haven't what?" Ron sounded as if he didn't want to understand what his friend was saying.

"They haven't had sex, Ron," Hermione replied, ever the analyst. "They must have been doing something because otherwise it would just be grey, and the pink's quite dark."

Harry felt himself going red, and he could not keep still any longer.

"Hermione," he said, turning over and blinking at his rather startled friend, "I'd rather you didn't dissect my love life, please. Ron might spontaneously combust."

"Harry," Hermione said in a rather delighted squeak, "you're awake."

Then she hugged him before he had the chance to add that Draco was still asleep and it would be better not to disturb him. Before he could do anything about it the body beside him shifted and a sleepy hand rubbed up his side.

"Harry?" Draco sounded confused and still only half with it. "What's going on?"

Harry turned back instantly and gave his boyfriend a quick once over with his eyes. Draco was paler than usual and there were still faint marks along the side of his face where the curse had tried to do something that Harry really didn't want to understand, but his grey eyes were clear and there was a little colour to his cheeks. It made Harry quite glad that he did not remember very clearly how Draco had been when the curse still held him.

"Someone cursed you," he explained gently, hoping that his boyfriend would accept the explanation and go back to sleep; if anyone needed the rest it was the silver haired Slytherin. "We're in the hospital wing. You're going to be fine."

For a moment it appeared that the information might be enough to satisfy Draco's sleepy mind as his eyes fluttered closed, but Harry knew it was too good to last. Suddenly the Slytherin's eyes shot open again and he sat up rapidly as if his thoughts had just caught up.

"Pansy," was the venom filled name that passed Draco's lips, "when I get my hands on that bitch she'll wish she'd done it properly."

"Too late," Hermione sounded almost gleeful as she disclosed this fact, and Harry looked at his friend with wide open eyes, "Harry got there first."

She gave Harry an unrepentant smile and he made a mental note to never, ever get on Hermione's bad side because she obviously took no prisoners. Draco for his part seemed to be torn and not having much luck dealing with what was going on. Harry knew that the fact they were not alone would be playing on his boyfriend's mind, as well as the need to know everything about what had happened. He decided to help out by asking the question that was bothering him.

"Where is she?" he enquired, looking around the room, "last time I saw her she was unconscious, there."

He pointed to the next bed.

"That was two nights ago, Mate," Ron said a little awkwardly; it was obvious to Harry his best friend was not comfortable with the situation. "It's Boxing day."

"They transferred her to St Mungo's," Hermione supplied in a far more helpful manner. "She's under Auror guard, and they'll ship her off the Azkaban as soon as they've treated her face. The scratches you gave her seem to be resistant to magical healing."

"Scratches?" Draco sounded completely bemused, something which Harry was sure his boyfriend never would have allowed had he been fully compos mentis, but given his current mental state was understandable. "Would someone please start at the beginning and tell me what the hell I have missed."

Ron looked shocked at hearing the word 'please' out of a Malfoy's mouth. Hermione looked at Harry and he gave her a small nod; if you wanted something explained it was best to go to the expert.

"Pansy cursed you and Harry fell down the stairs of Gryffindor Tower," his friend began in earnest. "No one connected the two events until a few hours later when it became clear Harry wasn't waking up. Madame Pomfrey knew you had to be bonded to someone magically or Pansy's curse would have killed you in under half an hour. At first they thought it might be your father, or another member of your family, and then they realised it was actually you and Harry."

That caused Draco to look at him as if his boyfriend could not quite believe what he was hearing, and all Harry could do was give a small shrug. He had no idea how it had happened either.

"I'm bonded to you?" Draco sounded so un-Draco like that Harry was worried about him for a second.

"Harry, show him the back of your neck," Hermione encouraged gently.

Without any better solution in mind, he did as he was told and he felt Draco's light touch graze over the skin just at the nape of his neck.

"The marks began to appear yesterday," Hermione continued to explain. "Ron noticed them when we came to see if Harry was awake yet."

When Harry finally turned back around, Draco had the most un-Slytherin look of shock on his face; his silver-haired boyfriend really did not seem to know what to do or say. Draco appeared almost scared. Harry did the only thing he could think of; he took his boyfriend's hand and squeezed it in support.

"Pansy slipped past Snape and Madame Pomfrey the night after she attacked you," Hermione continued her explanation. "From what Professor Dumbledore told us she was about to cast the Killing Curse and run to Voldemort when Harry objected."

"Objected how?" Draco seemed to have latched on to finding out the facts rather than dealing with any emotions if the tone the Slytherin used was anything to go by.

"I flattened her with my Animagus form," Harry replied simply.

A mutter came from Ron's direction and he was pretty sure it had something to do with telling secrets to Slytherins, but Harry ignored it.

"But your Animagus form is a black cat," Draco replied with a frown. "How did you flatten anyone with a cat?"

Now Harry felt a little guilty. He shared many things with his boyfriend, but he was so used to keeping everything quiet that he sometimes skirted around the whole truth.

"Um," he said, trying to think of a good reason why he had told Draco that he was a cat and yet failed to mention that it was not an ordinary cat. "I may have left out a few details."

"Harry's feline form is Feles Nocturnus," Hermione provided for him and he noted the pride in her voice, "he could flatten a troll if he tried hard enough."

Draco really wasn't playing the perfect Slytherin at the moment since Harry could tell he was impressed. Usually these days his boyfriend was a blank slate in anything but the most private of circumstances.

"And there I was going to ask you if you wanted to curl up in my lap so I could scratch you behind the ears," was Draco's eventual comeback.

That made Harry smile if nothing else.

"Ouch, squashed nuts," was Ron's comment and then Harry laughed, especially when Hermione hit his best friend for what he said.

It was nice to hear Ron joking about something since it usually meant the somewhat straightforward Gryffindor was mentally coping with any given situation. In fact Harry thought his best friend was taking everything rather well considering. He had no doubt there would be at least one shouting match in the future where he and Ron had it out, but if his best friend could joke then he did not think it would last much more than that. Ron could be difficult at times, but he was predictable.

Draco was beginning to look confused again as the moment of humour passed and Harry knew that they needed to talk. The problem was his Slytherin would never speak freely with Hermione and Ron in the room. Looking at his female

friend, Harry made a silent request with his eyes, trying to say he was sorry at the same time. Hermione gave him a tiny smile and nodded.

"You both still look tired," she said brightly, "and Madame Pomfrey made us promise not to tire you out if you woke up. You should get some more rest. We'll come back later."

"But..." Ron was about to object when he winced and Harry could only assume that Hermione had kicked him below the level of the bed.

"Come on Ron," the resolute young woman said firmly, "we have to make sure Ginny hasn't caved and dived into the presents under the tree. Can't have Christmas until Harry is back with us, now can we."

And with that she began to drag Ron towards the door. Harry watched them go and gave them a little wave as they finally disappeared. He had the feeling he was going to be doing a lot of explaining in the near future.

"Subtly is really not a Gryffindor strong point is it?" Draco said and brought Harry's attention back to his boyfriend.

There was a false lightness in the Slytherin's tone and Harry could only guess what was going through Draco's mind.

"We're much better at the head on stuff," he agreed in a similar tone which fell just as flat.

They looked at each other for a while and Harry searched Draco's face trying to understand some of what his boyfriend was feeling. Now he knew what the rightness between them was, and his heart was almost bursting with happiness, but he did not understand the connotations of the bond and he was far from calm about the whole thing.

"When did this happen?" Draco sounded as if he was talking as much to himself as Harry.

"I have no idea," he admitted quietly.

They had never been friends, not before the night Harry had cornered Draco and asked why he had refused Voldemort. At first Draco had hexed him and Harry had just taken it without retaliation. That had been the key to showing he was serious, and he had been mildly surprised when it had worked. It had taken a good half hour for the hexes to wear off and then they had talked for hours; literally from dusk 'til dawn, and by dawn there had been some passion involved as well.

Harry had not questioned why he had wanted to kiss Draco, or where the courage had come from to do so; it had just happened. That the Slytherin had not hexed him again at that point had almost been as much of a surprise. Thinking back maybe it had been then when it started. Maybe his Gryffindor bravado had caused all of this. He knew nothing of magical bonds and he did not know what they required to be created.

"We could still hide it..." he said quietly as he realised what this could mean for Draco and his quest to turn the hearts of many of the Slytherins.

"You want to deny it?" Draco sounded suddenly afraid and Harry's eyes shot to his boyfriend's face.

"What?" he knew he had missed something and the Slytherin looked devastated. "No," Harry tried to explain. "It's just I thought, what with me being so disliked in Slytherin, that you'd want to keep it a secret."

For a moment Draco looked at him, expression full of hurt that slowly softened in realisation.

"You don't understand do you?" the Slytherin said slowly. "You have no idea what this means."

Harry shrugged; what he knew about magical bonds would fit on a snake scale.

"But I don't care," he said quickly and meant it. "Whatever it is, if it saved you and I can continue to share it with you then I'll treasure it."

Draco reached out to him and pulled him firmly into an embrace. The grip was firm and refused to let him go, full of passion and need and Harry wound his arms around his boyfriend in return.

"Magical bonds don't just happen to everyone, Harry," Draco said quietly in his ear. "This means our magic joined at a fundamental level and we let it happen. A bond like this can only be denied up until the point where it is complete, after that it is forever. You have no idea what we've done."

"All I know," Harry replied, clinging to Draco just as desperately now, "is that I love you. I will do anything you want me to and I will not deny the bond unless you make me."

There was silence again, but his boyfriend did not let go or loosen his grip so Harry stayed exactly as he was.

"I know, Harry," Draco said eventually, voice no more than a whisper, "it's written on your skin. I ..."

The words seemed caught in the Slytherin's throat and that caused Harry to pull back slightly so he could see Draco's face. There was confusion and conflict in his boyfriend's expression and Harry knew he was not being rejected; it was just that Draco did not know how to deal with this situation.

"Let me see," Harry said quietly, "please."

Draco stared at him with wide grey eyes and then slowly turned. There on the back of the Slytherin's neck was the most beautiful design in black and red. An intricate pattern swirled around the nape of Draco's neck, spreading its tendrils to the side and downwards, disappearing under the Slytherin's pyjama collar. Within the pattern were the shapes Harry knew were the runes Hermione had referred to, and although he did not know which was which he traced each with his finger. The pale, incomplete rune felt hot below his finger.

On instinct he leant forward and laid his lips against the design. The kiss was light and did not last very long, but it said everything he was feeling. Draco relaxed back into the touch.

"Harry," his boyfriend said quietly, "you're the best Christmas present I have ever been given."

The End