

Time out of Place

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Summary: Harry wakes up with a throbbing head, but he soon realizes that a headache is the last thing he has to worry about. Suddenly, he is thrown into a world that is much like his own - yet at the same time very different. Visions, Voldemort, potions, poison, fun, adventure and romance follow. And what part does Draco play in it all?

Warning: Slash

Time out of Place

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By Cosmic

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## Chapter One

### The headache is the least of my problems

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Harry's head throbbed.

He tried stretching, and noticed that his muscles were aching. A small moan escaped from his lips, and suddenly he heard footsteps. Someone came closer to wherever he was lying – a bed? It seemed soft enough – and he heard someone say,

“He’s waking up!”

It was no doubt Madame Pomfrey, the medi-witch in charge at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

He opened his eyes, fully expecting the familiar surroundings of the Hogwarts Infirmary, but was instead greeted with a small, beautifully decorated room. On the walls hung tapestries in dark red and gold, and furniture was scattered tastefully around the room. On the far side of the room was a large window stretching from the floor and almost up to the ceiling, through which he saw dark skies and rain falling heavily upon the glass.

Right next to the bed, on Harry's left side, stood Madame Pomfrey. She was casting a few healing spells on him, if Harry was right. Harry looked at her; there was something different about her. She was wearing the same uniform she always had on while at Hogwarts, but there was just *something*. Harry knew he wouldn't be able to tell what it was at the moment, so he just ignored it for now.

Harry tried sitting up, but a strong hand held him back.

“You should lie still for a while, Harry,” said a voice Harry knew well.

Harry blinked. “Professor Dumbledore?” he squeaked.

Dumbledore smiled at him, his eyes twinkling. “Hello, Harry. Welcome back. I imagine you have something of a headache from the battle?”

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Harry stared at him, not understanding anything. Battle? What battle?

“Now, I suppose I should let you rest a bit, before Poppy has my head. She didn’t want either one of you two to have visitors, but I managed to convince her to let me see you.”

Harry wondered if he meant Ron, or perhaps Hermione.

“But before I leave you, would you like something to drink?” he asked. “Some tea, or milk perhaps. I’m not giving you any of the stronger stuff, just yet.”

Harry stared at him. What was the stronger stuff he was talking about?

“A glass of milk is fine,” Harry replied, then did a double take.

That was definitely *not* his voice.

Luckily, both Madame Pomfrey and Dumbledore had left the room already, so they didn’t see the look of bewilderment on Harry’s face.

He scrambled quickly out of bed as soon as the door had shut behind the two. As he threw his covers off, he caught sight of his hands. Those were *not* his hands. They were bigger, and more masculine than his hands. Again, he wondered what in the wizarding world was going on.

He stumbled over to the mirror on the right side of the room. It was a beautiful mirror with a frame of gold, but Harry hardly noticed. He was staring too hard at the face that seemed to belong to him.

His face flew up to trace his changed features. It was still *him*, he thought, but he looked... older? Yeah, that was it. The childishness of his features had disappeared and been replaced with a harder-looking face. His nose, which had always been small and round, was still fairly small, but now straight and a bit more pointed. His cheekbones looked stronger, his jaw line more defined.

His eyes were still the same emerald green as they’d been his whole life, but they were now framed by a pair of dark, heavy eyebrows and long dark eyelashes.

His hair, while still ebony and completely unruly, was now shoulder length. He found he quite liked that particular change in his appearance. He quickly pulled it back into a small ponytail.

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The thing that assured Harry that the person in the mirror still was him, was the scar on his forehead, a scar the shape of a lightning bolt.

But what in the world had happened?

Harry stared at his reflection, still amazed with the changes in his appearance. He was taller now, almost a foot taller than the sixteen-year-old body he was familiar with. His body was still lean and well muscled, but that was not much of a change from before – Harry had always been toned because of Quidditch.

There was one more difference on his body.

A rather large one, right on his chest.

It was a tattoo, and it gave Harry quite a shock, not just by being there, but also what it illustrated.

A few moments later, he heard Dumbledore return and he hurried back to bed. He threw on the covers and tried to look like he hadn't just received the shock of his life.

The Headmaster of Hogwarts entered the room carrying a glass of milk. He set it on the bedside table for Harry. Silence followed, before Harry had gathered enough courage to ask,

“Where is Draco?”

Dumbledore, who'd been watching him with curious blue eyes, frowned slightly. “I was wondering when you were going to ask,” he said.

Harry wondered, once again, what was going on. He was happy that he'd read the meaning of the tattoo right, but he still wondered what it really *meant*. Him and Malfoy? Why in the world would Harry associate with his archenemy like that? Something definitely wasn't right.

“He's in the room next to this one,” Dumbledore told him. “He hasn't woken up yet.”

Harry wondered what had happened to them, if it had rendered them both unconscious. An accident, or something worse? Battle, the Headmaster had said, but what sort of battle?

“How long was I out?” Harry asked. He figured it would be an all right question to ask, and not one to raise suspicion. He would have to be very careful, though.

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“Five days,” Dumbledore said. “I must say I was worried when you came back...”

So, not an accident then? It didn't sound like it.

“Can I see him?” Harry didn't know why he asked that. Why he suddenly *wanted* to see his enemy since six years back. The young Slytherin had stopped at nothing to make Harry's life hell, yet Harry suddenly felt the need to see him.

“Of course,” the Headmaster said gently, and once again Harry didn't understand. Normally, Dumbledore would at least wonder *why* Harry would want to see the son of a Death Eater. He might not ask it out loud, but his eyes would ask for him. Now, Dumbledore had just smiled when Harry asked his question.

Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed. He walked, still a bit unsteadily, over to the door that Dumbledore held open for him. The older wizard then walked before Harry to the door to Malfoy's room. Without another word, he let Harry inside and closed the door behind him. Harry was left alone in the room with Malfoy.

Even though the blonde on the bed didn't look like the Malfoy Harry knew, he still looked more like himself than Harry did.

The Malfoy on the bed didn't look much taller than the one Harry knew, meaning the Slytherin would be several inches shorter than Harry if they stood next to each other. Malfoy's complexion was still as pale as it had always been.

His features had changed, however. The childish roundness around the cheeks was gone, replaced by a razor sharp cheekbones and jaw line. His nose was completely straight, splitting his face evenly. Two thin eyebrows in the same colour as his hair framed his closed eyes. His mouth was still small, his lips full and pale red –

Then Harry realized that he was checking out *Malfoy's* lips, of all people.

He shook his head to clear it.

He moved forward to stand next to the bed. The Slytherin, Harry noticed, was also sporting the long hair now, but unlike Harry's, Malfoy's hair was completely smooth and straight. It fell softly down just below his shoulders.

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Now that Harry stood closer, he also noticed a bruise on Malfoy's left temple. The pale skin looked almost blue.

As if drawn there by an invisible force, Harry reached up and touched the darkened area with his fingertips. He had barely made contact when he felt a jolt of energy shoot through his body, into his hand and disappearing into Malfoy's skin. A bright light began shining right where Harry's fingertips touched Malfoy's temple. A moment later, the energy seemed to explode, for Harry was thrown away from Malfoy, landing several feet away.

Stunned, Harry shook his head.

Completely bewildered, he wondered what had just happened.

Just then, Malfoy gave a small, soft sigh. Harry picked himself up from the floor, and moved forward to the bed. Malfoy's eyelids fluttered, and a moment later, they opened.

Silver eyes met emerald.

"Who are you?" Malfoy spat, trying to sound angry, but his eyes betrayed him. He looked scared, his eyes flitting between Harry and his surroundings. "What do you want?"

Harry, who was still standing by the side of the bed, said, "Calm down, Malfoy. It's me, Harry."

He couldn't help the smile that spread over his lips. Malfoy was still the person Harry knew. If he hadn't been, then he would have recognized Harry – and probably have been a bit nicer (though Harry wasn't completely sure about that). In any case, fright would most likely not have been the most evident emotion on his face, as it was now. Harry couldn't remember the last time he'd seen Malfoy scared.

The blonde on the bed looked searchingly at Harry's face.

"Potter?" he asked finally, his voice filled with disbelief.

Harry nodded.

"But that's not... you're not..." Malfoy stammered.

Harry decided to help him out. "I don't look like me, no," he said. "But neither do you, so that's okay."

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Malfoy's hands flew up to his face. "What?!" he cried. His fingers felt frantically at his changed features, and his mouth fell open as he felt the differences.

Harry looked around the room and saw a small, golden hand-mirror on a table in the corner.

"*Accio hand-mirror*," he said, pointing his wand at the item, and the mirror flew to his hand. He handed Malfoy the mirror silently.

Malfoy's face still held a look of disbelief as he watched himself in the mirror, but he seemed calmer now that he'd been reassured that he was still *him*, just a bit changed.

"What happened Potter?" he asked. "What did you do to me this time?"

"Me? I didn't do anything," Harry said, taken aback by the sudden outburst. "For all that I know, *you* might be behind this."

"Get real, Potter. Why would I do this to us?" Malfoy sneered.

"For the same reason I'd do I to you – none. I don't think it's our fault at all. All I know is that we're definitely not the same anymore."

Malfoy looked at him. Finally, he seemed to decide to put their differences away for the moment, just to be able to figure out where they were.

"What's the last thing you remember?" he asked Harry.

Harry's brow furrowed as he tried to recall something before the darkness he'd just woken up from. Grass? Grass moving towards him quickly...? Darkness, someone yelling... before that, air... Soaring high above the grounds of Hogwarts – Quidditch? Yes, that seemed about right. He'd just seen the Golden Snitch... Someone yelled, "Duck!" at him, but it was a moment too late. Both Bludgers hit him, and he lost control of his broom. He lost his grip on it, and suddenly he was falling... He tried grabbing something on the way down, but it fell with him and then there was the darkness...

"I remember Quidditch," Malfoy said. "Something happened... I saw you falling, and you fell on me. I couldn't hold you though, and I don't think you were really conscious. We fell."

Harry nodded. "I remember Quidditch as well. The Bludgers hit me, but then I don't recall anything at all. Well, there was screaming, but it was black..."

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They both fell silent, lost in thought of the Quidditch game and their current situation.

“Where are we?”

It was Malfoy that broke the silence.

Harry shrugged. “I have absolutely no idea. But Dumbledore and Madame Pomfrey are here, and they don’t think it’s weird that we’re different all of a sudden, so... I think it’s just us. Something happened when we hit the ground at the pitch. Dumbledore said I’d been out for five days, so I guess the same goes for you.”

“Why was I unconscious?”

“I don’t know. Dumbledore said we ‘came back’ from something or somewhere, but he wasn’t very specific.”

“Since when is that Muggle lover specific? He loves talking in riddles.”

“*Don’t* call Dumbledore Muggle lover like it’s something bad,” Harry threatened him.

“Or what?” Malfoy spat. “Or else you’re going to hex me?”

“Oh, I can think of plenty of horrible things that I could do to you that doesn’t involve a wand, Malfoy.”

Malfoy kept quiet. He too had obviously noticed the difference between their heights – getting into a fight with Harry could be fatal for the Slytherin. Not that Harry would ever kill him, yet he could inflict a whole lot of damage. Harry was bigger, taller and looked overall stronger than the sleek, petite Malfoy.

A knock on the door saved them from the oncoming fight.

“Come in,” said Harry.

Dumbledore, followed by two other people that Harry didn’t recognize, came into the room. Harry smiled at the two new people – a young man, and a pregnant young woman – in a greeting. Then he did a double take.

“Mione? Ron?” he asked.

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“Who else, Harry?” Ron asked and grinned at him in a very Ron-like way.

Hermione smiled at him. She looked beautiful, Harry thought. Her brown hair, still a bit bushy but now cut short in a cute ‘do, framed a face that much resembled the sixteen-year-old Harry had known. There were changes, but they were subtle, and only made her look like the grown-up she undoubtedly was. Her pregnancy only added to her beauty.

Ron on the other hand had grown into a young man who shone with confidence and trust. There was still something playful about him, but it was less apparent now than it had been in his teens. He was tall – taller than Harry and he towered over the petite Hermione, but Harry still thought they fit exceptionally well together.

“Ah, Draco, I see you are awake. I hoped that Harry here could persuade you into waking up,” Dumbledore said, walking over to the bed and turning the attention from Harry and his friends.

Malfoy’s face made Harry want to laugh. He looked like a fish out of water with Dumbledore’s concern for him showing. Harry would have fun with that later... much later.

“Madame Pomfrey will be by shortly to check up on you, but I believe that she won’t find anything wrong with you after Harry healed you.”

Malfoy stared at Harry, while Harry stared at Dumbledore. As they both got the impression that Harry had healed before, neither one said anything. This world was turning out to be odder than they first thought.

Ron walked over to Harry and squeezed his shoulder. “Knew you’d make it. Didn’t think a small thing like a few Death Eaters would get you. Not after having faced what you’ve faced – still I must say, we were worried for a while there.”

“What – what happened?” Malfoy asked. Harry shot him a look, but Malfoy still looked at the others expectantly. “I don’t remember much,” the blonde on the bed continued.

“We don’t really know,” Ron said. “Sirius said everything was going according to plan until more Death Eaters Apparated to the site. Suddenly you had a bunch of Muggles in the middle of a wizarding war – that’s never a good combination. A whole lot of them got hurt, and you two healed them while Sirius, Rem and the others fought. They couldn’t protect you, so one of the Death Eaters got the Cruciatius curse in on you -” he pointed at Malfoy – “And then they got a few curses in on you too, Harry. You’d lost so much energy while you

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were healing that you were both unconscious. Then the back-up finally came, and Sirius and Rem could take you home.”

“You’ve been unconscious since then,” Hermione said, opening her mouth for the first time since she came into the room.

Harry was both shocked and not at how friendly Hermione and Ron were to Malfoy. At home, they would never have been smiling at him, especially Ron. However, since everything else in this world was weird and different, it wasn’t that much of a shock.

Madame Pomfrey entered the room. Silence fell over the room as she performed a few check-up spells, and a last healing spell. Finally, she announced, “You’re as good as new.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Good. Then we should be going back to the school,” he said to Madame Pomfrey. “I’m sure Mr and Mrs Weasley here will take good care of these two.”

Harry’s eyes widened slightly. Ron and Hermione were *married*? Well, okay, she was expecting, but still... They were *married*.

Madame Pomfrey nodded, and they said their goodbyes. A few minutes later, they had Apparated, and Harry and Malfoy were left with Hermione and Ron – or *Mr and Mrs Weasley*. Harry couldn’t get that through his head.

“Well, now that you’re up and about again, we can move you back to your normal rooms,” Ron said. “No use in separating you anyway.”

Harry and Malfoy exchanged looks. What did Ron mean this time? Wisely, they chose to keep quiet. They followed Hermione out of the room in silence. Ron walked behind them.

Hermione led them through the hallway to what looked like the entrance hall, and up the wide stairs. When they reached the top of the stairs, there was an opening so that you could see down into the living room. There were hallways going off in both directions from where they stood, and Hermione led them down the left one. They passed two doors on each side of the hallway and stopped right at the end. Hermione opened the door to reveal another beautifully decorated room. The walls were painted in a light blue, and the curtains were white, moving slightly with the wind coming in from the open window. The floor was covered in a thick, royal blue mat, and in the middle of the room was a large bed.

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Harry and Malfoy looked at each other, then at the bed, then back at each other.

“Now, we’ll leave you two alone,” Hermione said, before adding slyly. “I think you have some catching up to do.”

“We’ll call when dinner’s served,” Ron said, then closed the door behind him and his wife.

“They’re *married*?” Malfoy asked incredulously.

“Seems like it,” Harry replied, before turning back to the bed.

“I am not sleeping with you,” Malfoy said, following Harry’s eyes.

“Actually, it seems like you might be,” Harry teased. “Seems we’re together in this little reality.”

Malfoy blushed and growled at him, “I would never be together with you, Potter.”

“Am I not your type?” Harry said.

“My type?” Malfoy asked. “Let’s just say you’re a little too ... masculine... for my taste,” he spat.

“Oh really? I thought I heard some rumours about you. In those, you didn’t seem to mind the masculinity thing.”

Malfoy blushed deep red. “I am not – I have not...”

“Oh calm down, you big ninny. I won’t tell anyone you’re gay. Who would I tell? ‘Mione and Ron seems to know pretty well already, don’t you think?”

“Well, they seem to think that you’re gay as well. Now tell me, *why* is that?” Malfoy said.

Harry shrugged. “We’re in an alternate reality. Who knows? Everything seems to be different here.”

Malfoy sat quiet for a few minutes. “What if we’re not?”

Harry, who’d lain down on the bed, frowned. “What if we’re not what?”

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“In an alternate reality?”

“What else would this be?” Harry asked.

“The future.”

“You don’t believe what you’re saying, you git. Would the two of us be together in the future? With you fighting for the good side? You, the son of Voldemort’s right hand man? I *really* don’t think this is the future.”

Malfoy sat down and looked at his hands. “I’ve been on the side of good since the end of last summer, Potter,” he said, so quietly Harry barely heard.

“What?”

“You heard me. No need to say it twice.”

“Are you ashamed of it?” Harry asked, sitting up next to the blonde.

Malfoy looked up at him. “Ashamed? No, I’m not ashamed.”

“Then why don’t you want to say it?” Harry asked.

“So that you can rub it in my face and tell me you were right the whole time? No thanks, Potter, I can manage without that.” His voice was cold as ice.

“What – what made you change?” Harry asked.

Malfoy looked at him, then looked away. “That’s something I might tell you later, but definitely not now.”

Harry wondered why Malfoy was acting so... so out of character. This quiet-talking, almost shy young man was not the Malfoy Harry knew. However, Harry found that he quite liked this version of the Slytherin.

“But... Your father?” Harry said, remembering the older Malfoy.

Malfoy turned and looked at Harry. His expression was unreadable, though Harry thought he could detect sadness and pain in the blonde’s eyes.

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“Sorry, not my territory,” Harry began, but Malfoy cut him off.

“No, Potter, you want to know. Dumbledore will probably tell you sooner or later anyway.” He paused, and seemed to ask himself whether this was a good idea or not, for he shrugged to himself before he said, “My father still believes I’m going to be a Death Eater as soon as I’ve graduated. He has no clue that I’ve switched sides, and I hope he never will get one, for if he does, he will kill me.”

“But he’s your father!” Harry exclaimed.

Malfoy eyed him. “You really are naïve, Potter. Do you really think that flesh and blood matters when Voldemort orders him to murder me? I think not. And if Voldemort orders my father to torture me, he will do that as well. And you know what? I don’t even think it matters if Voldemort orders him or not. He will kill me just because he’s disappointed in me.”

He spoke as though he knew from experience, and Harry knew in that moment that the young Malfoy had not had the wonderful, perfect childhood everyone believed he’d had. Harry didn’t doubt Lucius’ ability to punish his son for one second, and he knew that the methods used would have been cruel to say the least.

“But I doubt that the Boy Who Lived knows anything about such a thing as a father who’s disappointed,” Malfoy said. “Your relatives probably did everything for you and rolled out the red carpet wherever you went.”

Harry stared at him. The Dursleys? Roll out the mat for him? Do everything for him? Hah. The day *that* happened was the day that Dudley’s size really was because of big bones.

“The Dursleys would never do that,” Harry said. “Roll out the red carpet? They were more likely to roll out the old, grey carpet with holes in it for me to use as a bed, but they would *never* do anything for me.”

Harry had no idea why he was telling Draco Malfoy of all people about how the Dursleys treated him, but it seemed all right for now. After all, Malfoy had shared his bit of information about how it was to live in the Malfoy Manor.

Now Malfoy was the one staring at Harry.

“But – everyone says your relatives treat you like a royalty at home,” Malfoy said, a frown on his face.

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“In that case, ‘everyone’ needs to check their sources,” Harry said, a sting of bitterness in his voice. “The Dursleys never did anything for me. I was always the one to do their chores – I cleaned their house, mowed their lawn, cooked their food...”

“Could have poisoned them,” Malfoy said with a sadistic grin.

“Now why am I not surprised to hear that coming from you?” Harry asked, but there was no malice in his voice. He found himself almost enjoying Malfoy’s company; it was rather nice to have him there. In a new world of madness, it was nice to have at least one person to talk to, even if that person happened to be his worst enemy.

“Malfoy?” Harry said, now that silence had fallen upon the room.

“Yes Potter?” the blonde replied.

“Can we be friends, just for now? Just while we’re in this crazy place?”

Malfoy, who’d been looking out the window, turned to Harry and the hand Harry had stretched out. “You offering me friendship, Potter?” he asked. “I remember a time when I wasn’t good enough for you.”

Malfoy’s eyes had hardened. Harry looked at him, in the silver eyes that now showed hurt pride, and he suddenly realized that part of why Malfoy hated him so much was probably just that. Harry had denied Malfoy friendship on the first day of school, and Malfoy’s pride had been hurt.

“I can’t turn back time, Malfoy, but we could try to make it better,” Harry said. “We have to pretend to be lovers here – we should probably try to act civil to each other.”

Malfoy looked at Harry, and for a long minute, he didn’t say anything. Then he finally accepted the outstretched hand.

“All right, Potter, but just while we’re here,” he said.

Suddenly came a cry from downstairs. “Dinner!” Hermione yelled and Harry walked to the door. He stopped, with his hand on the handle, and said.

“Oh Malfoy?”

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“Yes Potter?”

“Do remember to call me Harry while we’re with other people.”

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## Chapter Two A vision of pain

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The following few days were spent resting. Harry and Malfoy were supposed to gather their strength again, so that they could get back into the war against Voldemort. They found out that they were *Healers*, which was a sort of continuation of the medi-witches and wizards. The two young men could both heal people with their touch.

“It’s something you were born with,” Dumbledore said when Malfoy once again played dumb and didn’t understand why they couldn’t all be Healers. “It’s inside of you. I know Lily would have become a great Healer if she’d lived,” he continued sadly. “And I believe that it is from Narcissa’s side that you got your gift,” he said to Malfoy.

Dumbledore seemed to have realized that the two boys were not who they were supposed to be, for he didn’t think twice about answering strange questions about things the two should have known. He did, however, not mention anything about it.

They also found out about the whereabouts of several other people the boys knew from their own world – or was it their own *time*?

Sirius, Harry’s godfather, who was still on the run for a crime he didn’t commit, continued to do things for the Order. *The Order of the Phoenix* was the secret but powerful group of trusted people that Dumbledore had gathered for years and years. Even before the return of Voldemort at the end of Harry’s fourth year (that was almost a year and a half ago, to Harry), Dumbledore had been wise enough to gather the people that he trusted the most to him, to fight the Dark Lord in the case of his return.

Severus Snape, the greasy-haired Potions Master at Hogwarts, was another member of the Order. He had the Mark, the tattoo all Death Eaters received, for he was really a former Death Eater. However, he had switched sides over twenty years ago, according to the Dumbledore of this world, and was now acting as a spy. It was one of the most dangerous jobs in the Order, which was why Severus often came home bruised and broken after Voldemort’s use of the Cruciatus curse.

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They had yet to see either one of Sirius and Severus. Harry wasn't looking forward to seeing his most hated teacher from Hogwarts, while Malfoy wasn't looking forward to seeing the criminal on the run – Sirius. No matter how hard Harry tried, he couldn't get Malfoy to believe that his godfather wasn't guilty. Just the same way, Malfoy tried to explain to Harry that the greasy Potions Professor wasn't as bad as everyone thought – and Harry wouldn't believe him.

All the while, Harry and Malfoy found themselves playing the roles of grown-up lovers. So far, so good, but good things never stay that way. Ron and Hermione teased them and asked if they were too shy to kiss in front of them, and Dumbledore spoke in a secretive manner, his eyes twinkling with mischief. Harry and Malfoy had to fight to keep up the pretence of a working – loving! – relationship between them.

Still, there was a problem that was always on their minds.

“How are we supposed to get home again?”

Malfoy asked the question in his lazy, drawling voice as though he didn't really care if they actually *did* get home. Harry, who'd been getting dressed, turned to him.

“I don't know,” he said. “Maybe we should hit each other on the head and fall unconscious, and when we wake up, we're back home.”

“I don't think that would work.”

“No, Malfoy, I'm being sarcastic.”

“Oh.”

Silence fell, and Harry continued to get dressed. Dressing here was interesting, because here, he got to wear different coloured robes every day, unlike at Hogwarts, where all students were confined to black. Today, Harry decided to wear dark green robes that reminded him of the dress robe he'd worn at the Yule Ball in fourth year. The robes he wore now were different though, because they were open in the front, held together by his collarbone with a pin. Underneath, he had a white shirt with a high collar – that hid the tattoo on his chest – and pants that matched the robes. Malfoy still didn't know about the tattoo, and there was no need for him to. It was embarrassing enough as it was.

In a wide belt around his waist, Harry had a few necessities that Ron had said that he always had with him – a few vials with healing potions, a knife and of course, his wand.

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Ron had looked at him funny when he asked about the belt. “Who replaced Harry with an alien?” he’d asked and laughed.

There were a pair of leather boots down in the foyer as well, but he didn’t want to get Hermione on his case about wearing them inside, so for now, he wore only black socks on his feet. He didn’t mind.

One thing he found very nice about this place was that he was no longer in need of glasses. Seemed he’d had his eyesight corrected – whether magically or otherwise he didn’t know – a while ago.

“Ready?” Malfoy asked, and Harry turned to him as he worked on putting his hair up in a small ponytail. He hadn’t mastered that skill completely yet. He doubted his hair would ever look as nice as Malfoy’s did, but that was due to genes, rather than skill.

Malfoy was wearing the same sort of outfit as Harry did – the open robes, a shirt underneath, pants and belt, but all of his gear was in a light blue colour instead. He looked rather like an angel, so light and pure, Harry thought, and then wondered where the heck *that* thought had come from.

“Yes,” Harry replied shortly, and they made their way outside.

“Good morning,” Hermione said as they entered the kitchen downstairs. “Did you sleep well?”

“Wonderfully,” Harry replied. It was the truth; he slept better here than he’d ever slept before.

“Good,” Hermione said. “Well, Ron is out doing some errands for me, so he already had breakfast, but I’m making toast, eggs and bacon for you. That okay?”

“Sounds lovely,” Harry replied. “Anything we can do to help?”

The first time Harry had asked, he hadn’t realized how risky that question was. He had found out though – and made a complete fool out of himself by not knowing where the things were in the kitchen. Now he had memorized everything that Hermione had – with an odd look on her face – shown him, so now it was risk free to ask.

“You could set the table,” Hermione said.

Time out of Place

Harry nodded and did as he was told. Malfoy just stood there and watched him work, making no move to help himself.

“Is something wrong, Draco?”

Malfoy shook his head. “What?”

“You seem... distant. Is something wrong?” Hermione asked again. “You two didn’t fight or anything, did you?”

She didn’t sound as though she believed that they *could* fight, but the concern was apparent in her voice.

“No, no, we didn’t fight,” Malfoy said, still with the faraway look on his face.

Harry watched him curiously. Malfoy was acting strange, to say the least.

And then everything happened quickly.

One moment, the kitchen was calm and quiet as Harry proceeded to set plates on the table, and Hermione continued to watch the eggs and the bacon.

The next moment, Malfoy let out a scream and fell to the floor. Harry felt a sharp, splitting pain shoot through his body, and he lost the grip on the plates. They fell to the floor and shattered in a billion pieces. Harry was forced to his knees under the intense pain, and the pieces of porcelain cut his hands. He didn’t notice. Instead, he just moved painfully slowly towards where Malfoy was lying on the floor. Malfoy in turn was writhing back and forth, crying and screaming.

“Stop!” he cried again and again, “Don’t do it... No!”

Harry was on his knees. One hand pressed against his throbbing head, as pictures of torture passed in front of his eyes. Dead humans hung in thick ropes, and he could smell the blood, the fear and the death. Dark creatures moved around the room and Harry could hear them laugh. It made his stomach turn, and he fought to not be sick right there on the floor.

He crawled forward to Malfoy. Something within him told him he needed the other boy, and he followed the instinct. He couldn’t *not* follow it, for it was like there was a strong energy pulling Harry towards the blonde on the floor.

Time out of Place

“No, don’t,” Malfoy continued to cry, but he sounded weaker now. “Please don’t...”

Harry stretched his hand out and grabbed Malfoy’s wrist. He pulled the other boy towards him, until Malfoy was in his arms. Malfoy turned to him, and cried into his chest.

“No...” he mumbled, again and again.

Harry felt something wet, cool and soothing on his forehead. He opened his eyes, which he hadn’t realized he’d closed, to see Hermione there. There was concern and fear in her eyes, but she didn’t say anything. She only kept the cool cloth to Harry’s forehead, and something told Harry that this was not the first time something like this had happened.

Malfoy still lay with his head on Harry’s chest, drawing deep, shuddering breaths. Harry couldn’t bring himself to push him away; the blonde seemed to need the comfort.

“What did you see?” Hermione asked finally, breaking the silence that had fallen.

“People... tortured to death,” Harry said. “And dark shadows, moving around the bodies, laughing.”

“Death Eaters?” Hermione asked.

Harry nodded. “Yeah.”

Hermione nodded, her face deep in thought, then stood, albeit a bit ungracefully because her stomach was in the way.

“Take him upstairs and let him sleep for a while,” she said, motioning at Malfoy. “Then he can tell us what we saw. I’ll come up with breakfast for you in a little while.”

Harry did as he was told. Carefully, he stood up. Malfoy cried in protest as Harry moved away from him, and gripped his wrist tightly. Harry wondered if Malfoy was conscious of what he was doing at all. He didn’t seem to be.

“Mal– Draco, I need you to let go,” he said gently. He felt the death grip on his wrist loosen just a little bit, and he wriggled loose. Malfoy whimpered like a small child on the floor and fresh tears trickled down his cheeks when Harry was no longer touching him. Strange didn’t even begin to explain how Harry thought of the situation. Then he let it go for the moment, and bent down and picked Malfoy up.

Time out of Place

Now *there* was a strange sensation. It felt like he'd done this before... and not just once, but several times before.

Malfoy seemed to think so too, for he buried his head in Harry's shoulder, and gripped Harry's robes as though he knew exactly where to hold on.

Strange.

Once they were upstairs, Harry placed Malfoy on the bed. But this time, when Harry asked him to let go of his robes, Malfoy didn't do as he was told. Finally, unable to force him, Harry laid down with the blonde. Malfoy curled up next to him, his breathing still uneven and shuddering. His cheeks were still wet with tears, but there came no new ones.

Harry lay still, with one arm around Malfoy – it was the only way for him to be comfortable with Malfoy still gripping his robes, he told himself – and thought of the past half hour's events. He was not unused to the pain in the scar and the brief visions of Voldemort's whereabouts; that had happened before. But why did *Malfoy* feel it? Malfoy did not have a scar, and as far as Harry knew he didn't have any other connection to the Dark Lord either.

Still, he had to admit that it was possible – likely even – that something had happened with Malfoy in this world.

Maybe it had to do with their healing abilities?

It was possible. Harry didn't know enough about being a Healer to rule it out. Dumbledore had given him a brief description of what Healers did, but it was far from a complete picture. Harry was nervous about the time when he and Malfoy would be forced out to some war site to heal – neither one knew how to.

Yet Harry *had* done it once – to Malfoy. On the very first day in this strange world, Harry had healed the bruise on Malfoy's temple and the blonde had woken up just minutes later.

There was a knock on the door, waking Harry from his thoughts.

“Come in,” Harry said softly as to not wake Malfoy.

He wondered why he cared whether Malfoy woke up or not.

Time out of Place

Hermione entered with a tray of food. The delicious scent of eggs and bacon made Harry's empty stomach scream, 'I want food!' Hermione set the tray on the table next to the bed, so that Harry could reach it with his free hand. He took a piece of toast and began eating hungrily. Hermione stretched out and took his other hand in hers, cleaning the cuts off. They weren't bleeding anymore, but it looked nasty with the dried blood.

As she sat there with his hand in hers, Hermione said softly, "You look so perfect together."

Harry choked slightly on his food. Then he swallowed and said, "What?"

"You two," Hermione said, motioning at Harry and Malfoy, "Look so perfect together."

Harry looked at her and tried to hide the disbelief he felt. "Um, yeah..." he said.

"I know I was shocked when you got together in the first place, but that was because... well, it was *Malfoy*. And besides, we were quite unprepared. I mean, suddenly you just began kissing him and Ron fainted and –" She broke off and stayed silent for a moment before continuing. "That's not the point," she smiled, as though recalling a dear memory. "I saw how good he was for you. And besides, he'd switched sides, so we couldn't accuse him of being a Death Eater in training anymore.

"Then his father –" she spat the word out "– kidnapped him, and we saw how it pained you. You didn't speak to us for days... you were with Dumbledore the whole time and you wanted to go out and look for him. You were so angry when he wouldn't let you leave the school..."

She smiled sadly at the memory. "And then we found him... Beaten and starved almost to death. But the way his eyes lit up when he saw you... I swear, if he'd died that night – and I'm not saying he wasn't close to it – he would have died happy because you were there."

"And Lucius?" Harry asked, although he should have known what happened to the elder Malfoy, since he was supposed to have been there.

"I wondered how Draco would take the news about how you killed his father. I had all these different scenarios in my head, but *crying* was definitely not one of them. I thought he'd be raging mad, or perhaps be as cold as he always was back then, but I definitely didn't think he'd cry. Yet he did.

"I guess that's when I realized that he really was human, and that he *really* loves you."

Time out of Place

She fell silent, and Harry's gaze wandered from Hermione to rest on Malfoy.

"So yeah, you're perfect together," Hermione said with another small smile. One hand rested on Harry's leg, the other one on her stomach.

"You and Ron are a just as perfect, 'Mione," Harry said. "And you'll have a beautiful child."

Some alien emotion flitted over Hermione's face for a moment, but it was gone before Harry had time to tell what it was. Then she smiled at him. "I'll leave you two alone now. Don't forget to give him some of that to eat when he wakes up as well."

"Promise," Harry said, grabbing a plate with eggs and bacon on it. He placed it on the side of the bed, and began with the somewhat complicated task of eating eggs and bacon with only one hand, lying down on a bed. It was a wonder he didn't make a complete mess.

Hermione stood and left, leaving Harry alone with Malfoy once more.

He didn't know how long they had been lying there before Malfoy began to stir, but it had to have been a while, for the sun had risen high above the window's height. Malfoy, still curled up next to Harry, moaned and lifted his head.

"Morning," Harry said with a grin.

Malfoy practically flew out of bed. "What did you do to me Potter?" he yelled accusingly, staggering backwards when he discovered that his legs weren't supporting him.

Harry got up and stood next to Malfoy. Malfoy was leaning on a table, trying to get the world back into focus. He blinked rapidly, and for a second, Harry was worried that he might faint. He didn't, to Harry's relief. Harry didn't want to deal with an unconscious Malfoy yet again.

"Want to sit down, maybe?" Harry asked, offering his hand.

Malfoy didn't take the hand, but he did make his way back to the bed where he sat down heavily.

"What did you do to me, Potter?" he asked again, this time in a quieter tone.

"I didn't do anything to you, Malfoy. All of a sudden, you were on the floor in the kitchen, crying and screaming like a baby for something to stop. I grabbed hold of you -" Harry

Time out of Place

decided not to tell Malfoy just *how* close he'd held the Slytherin "- and you haven't let go since."

"You must have hexed me! You or that Granger girl! I would never -"

"You did, you git," Harry said. "You were on the floor, crying as though you were in pain and it took at least half an hour before you calmed down and fell asleep. Now, the more important thing is *not* that you were in fact sleeping with me as a pillow -" Malfoy glared at him "- but to know just *why* you fell down, crying and screaming for something to stop. So, do you remember anything?"

Malfoy continued to glare at him, but Harry glared back and won the staring contest within a minute. Malfoy's eyes were cast downwards, and he mumbled something.

"What did you say?" Harry asked, gently.

"I said that I saw blood!" Malfoy yelled, and Harry could tell that he was on the verge of breaking down again. "Blood and death... Muggles, hanging in ropes from the walls... Figures... Death Eaters... moving around the room, laughing at the dead bodies. There was one that was still alive, he begged for mercy, he begged for the others... but they wouldn't give it... They cursed him and he looked so shocked when he first felt it. Then they cut him with knives; they wanted to hear him scream. He wouldn't, though. I could see him biting through his tongue to not give them what he wanted..."

"And then they'd had enough... But they wouldn't just do the killing curse - they thought that was too easy. So they continued to cut him, and curse him with the Cruciatus curse... And there was so much blood..."

"And they opened his chest, while he was still alive. They kept him conscious with magic, it must have been magic, 'cause no Muggle would have been awake for that... They cut his heart out... And he watched it beat a last time..."

Malfoy's hand flew to his mouth, and he ran to the bathroom. Harry could hear him heave, and he walked after him. Malfoy was on his knees by the toilet, crying and trying to brush away tears and vomit off his face.

"I couldn't do anything... I couldn't make them stop," he cried, now lying down and rolling onto his side.

Time out of Place

Harry sat down on the floor in silence. Without a word, he lifted Malfoy's head up on his lap and held an arm around him as he continued to cry, living through the vision one more time. Neither one said anything for several minutes, until Malfoy stopped crying.

"I had the vision too," Harry said. "But not as detailed as you did. I felt the pain; I could smell the blood and the death. I saw the dead bodies..."

He fell silent again; he couldn't come up with anything that would make Malfoy feel better.

"What if my father was one of them?"

The question was unexpected, to say the least. "What?"

Malfoy looked up from Harry's lap – this time he didn't seem to mind or care that that was where he was – and repeated himself.

Harry sighed. "He wasn't," he said, and he didn't know if he should sound happy or sad for Malfoy. He settled for something that he hoped was neutral.

"How do you know?"

Harry took a deep breath. "Because he's dead."

Malfoy sat up straight. "He's what?"

Harry looked down at his hands, studying them but not really seeing them at all. "In this place, your father is dead. He's dead because I killed him. Or the me of this place at least."

Malfoy's mouth opened as though he was about to say something, then closed again. Emotions flew over his face so quickly Harry didn't have time to read them, before Malfoy settled into a mask of indifference.

"I'm sorry, Malfoy," Harry said.

Malfoy looked up at him. The silver eyes looked empty, devoid of any emotion. "You're *sorry*, Potter? You're *sorry* that you killed my father?" He paused, and Harry expected a raging Slytherin to come next. What did come, however, surprised him to no end.

"I'm not sorry."

Time out of Place

“Excuse me?” Harry asked, wondering if he’d heard correctly.

“I’m – not – sorry,” Malfoy spelled out to him. “My father has never my dad. I am – was – his servant, his heir, but I’ve never been his son. I told you, if he ever found out that I’m not going to join Voldemort, he would kill me.”

Harry opened his mouth, then closed it again, opened it to say something else, then closed it. His mind replayed his conversation with Hermione, and he realized that Lucius most likely *had* found out, and kidnapped his own son. He knew Malfoy was right about his father, and as such, Harry couldn’t find anything even remotely intelligent to say in reply to the blonde.

“You look rather like a goldfish when you do that, Potter,” Malfoy said.

Harry glared at him. “I happen to like goldfish.”

“I like spaghetti, doesn’t mean I want to look like it.”

Harry stood abruptly. “We should probably go downstairs. Mione wanted you to eat something, but I doubt the food she gave me is still warm.”

He left the bathroom without giving Malfoy a chance to speak. He walked into their room and picked up the tray of food on the bedside table. He heard Malfoy clean himself up in the bathroom, and just as he was going out the door, he heard,

“Potter?”

Harry stopped with a sigh. “Yes Malfoy?”

“Thanks for... well, you know.”

Malfoy gave him a small smile, and then left the room before Harry. The Boy Who Lived was left behind, staring at the blonde.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Three I can't help you if you don't tell me

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Professor Dumbledore came by later that afternoon. Harry was surprised to see him, but soon learned that the nightmare he and Malfoy had lived through really was a vision, and that was the reason behind the Headmaster's visit. It had happened before, and it was usually somewhere between a day and a few days before it happened for real, which gave the Order some time to prepare.

"Remus and Sirius are coming by tonight," Dumbledore said when they sat down for tea. Hermione and Ron – whom Hermione had no doubt filled in about the morning's events – sat on one couch; Harry and Malfoy were on the other. Dumbledore conjured up his favourite chair, and sat down with a cup of steaming hot tea.

When Dumbledore mentioned Remus and Sirius, Harry's heart leaped.

"But, if you could, I would like to hear this vision right away, so that I can go back and contact the necessary wizards of the Order," Dumbledore continued.

Malfoy nodded. Harry took his hand – they needed to maintain the image of a perfectly happy (if a bit odd) couple. He was surprised to find Malfoy trembling, and gave him a reassuring squeeze. Malfoy shot him a look, filled with both confusion and a bit of gratefulness.

Then Malfoy began telling Dumbledore what he'd seen. Harry was glad that he'd made Malfoy go through the vision once already – it wouldn't have done anyone any good to have him break down and throw up now.

"Did you recognize any of the Muggles?" Dumbledore asked when Malfoy was done.

Malfoy closed his eyes, trying to remember. "No," he said finally.

"Was there anything about them that could tell you where they came from, or who they were?"

Time out of Place

Malfoy was shaking, his face pale, but he went back and tried to remember. “The man, the one that they killed last... He wore a gun on his belt. I know, because they took it from him... And they shot at something, though I couldn’t see what it was...”

“Anything about the others?”

Harry put a hand on Malfoy’s shoulder. The blonde seemed close to a nervous breakdown, but he didn’t protest as Dumbledore continued interrogating.

“They... they all had the same hair... The woman and the children... His family. Oh those bastards... They killed his family right before his eyes...”

Malfoy held his head in his hands, and Harry tried to soothe him by making circles on his back. Malfoy pulled his hands through his hair again and again in a nervous motion.

“I’m so sorry to put you through this Draco, but I need to know,” Dumbledore said. “What did they look like? Hair colour, length, anything specific about them.”

Malfoy took a deep breath and spoke quietly. “There was a little girl... hardly older than three. She was wearing some sort of dress, or maybe a top and a skirt, I don’t know. Then there was a little boy, probably around seven or so. I don’t remember what he wore... And then there was a woman... She was beautiful. She had dark brown, close to black hair, just like her children... The one they killed last... he had a much lighter colour, and more red... He was around thirty-five, I think... He wore a shirt that said something like, ‘London shop of guns’ or something... I can’t remember...”

Malfoy spoke in a whisper at the end, and when his voice died out the last time, Harry said, “Enough. He’ll break down completely if you don’t let him rest now.”

Dumbledore nodded and smiled sadly. “Thank you, Draco. We will do our very best to find the family and make sure that they are not hurt.”

Malfoy nodded, but didn’t trust his voice enough to reply.

“You should get some rest. It is possible that we may need you out there on this one. Should the Muggles get hurt, we need you two to heal them.”

Harry and Malfoy nodded.

Time out of Place

“Well then, I shall get back to the school,” Dumbledore said, standing up. He made the chair he’d been sitting on disappear, and continued, turned to Draco, “If you remember anything else, don’t hesitate to floo me. I also want to hear what Sirius and Remus have to say,” he said, turning to Hermione and Ron. “And I will see if Severus sees fit to come and visit. He has to be careful, though...” he said, more to himself than to anyone else.

Hermione nodded. “We’ll floo you later tonight, don’t worry, Headmaster.”

“Good. Now you take care of yourselves, all four of you,” Dumbledore said.

“We will,” Ron promised with a slight grin. Harry nodded in agreement.

“Goodbye, Headmaster,” he said, and the old wizard stepped into the fire and disappeared.

Hermione walked back to the table and began to clean it off. Malfoy hadn’t stood up when Dumbledore left, and was still sitting with his head in his hands. Harry placed a hand on his shoulder. He wondered briefly if he did so to keep the pretence up, or because it was quite comforting for him as well. A second later, he’d decided to ignore the question until another time.

“C’mon, Draco,” he said, and this time, he was amazed by how easily Malfoy’s real name slid off his lips when they were in the company of Hermione or Ron.

“Will he be all right?” Ron asked Harry quietly.

To their surprise, Malfoy looked up. “I’ll be fine, Weasley,” he said. “Just need some rest.”

Harry smiled at Ron. “He’ll be fine,” he said. “You mind if I take him upstairs?”

“I don’t need a babysitter, Potter,” Malfoy muttered.

“Good luck,” Ron whispered to Harry. “I don’t envy you when he’s in that mood. Actually, I don’t envy you at all, but that’s beside the point.”

He grinned as Malfoy scowled at him and walked out of the room to the kitchen and his wife.

Harry put his hands on his hips. “Get up, Malfoy,” he said in a not-so-gentle tone.

Time out of Place

Malfoy glared at him. Finally, Harry stalked over and grabbed him under his armpits and lifted him to a standing position. “Walk,” he ordered, and to his astonishment, the blonde did walk. They made their way up the stairs, through the beautiful corridor with the paintings, passed the two doors on each side, and reached their own room.

Harry wasn’t surprised when Malfoy made his way over to the bed. Without changing his clothes, Malfoy pulled the covers away and crawled underneath. Harry watched him as his face softened into sleep, and then he left the room quietly.

He made his way down the stairs to join Ron and Hermione in the kitchen, when he heard them speak.

“It’s strange, though. It was a long time ago since the visions made him react so terribly. I mean, it was almost like the first time, all over again,” he heard Hermione say.

“Well, it could have been particularly bad, couldn’t it?” Ron replied. “Three dead people, and a fourth being killed before your eyes – doesn’t sound like something I would want to see.”

“Still, there’s something about them... It’s like they’re different, somehow. And have you noticed how lost they look sometimes. Like when I asked Harry to set the table? He didn’t know where anything was. And neither one seems to know that I’m expecting twins – yet we told them that a month ago.”

They were expecting twins? Oh my, another set of Weasley twins were just what Hogwarts needed, Harry thought with an amused smile. But it didn’t bode well that Hermione could see through their pretence so easily.

“Okay,” said Ron, “I’ll give you that. They *have* been acting strange since they woke up from the last Healing coma. But what could have happened to them? I mean, there are so many wards and protecting spells on this place that we would have noticed if someone had done something to them while they were out. You can’t even Apparate within the Castle’s ground. *And* there was someone with them almost the whole time they were out, whether it was us or Sirius or Remus’.”

“I know,” Hermione said, and it sounded to Harry as though she was biting her lip and thinking hard. “But there is *something*.” She paused. “Do you mind if I go to the library tomorrow after Sirius and Remus leave?”

Ron laughed, and Harry was close to doing the same. Some things never changed, it seemed.

Time out of Place

Then Ron stopped laughing abruptly, and Harry guessed that Hermione was glaring at him.

“I don’t mind, sweetheart,” Ron said.

Harry felt a bit bad about eavesdropping on their private conversation, and he slipped away as they changed subject. Silently, to not draw attention to himself, he made his way back to his and Malfoy’s room. He slipped inside quietly, hoping that he wouldn’t wake Malfoy up. The blonde needed the sleep – and Harry needed some time alone.

This was all such a mess, he thought, sitting down in a chair by the window. They were in a place where they certainly didn’t belong, and the people in this world had begun to notice. Malfoy’s theory about this being the future didn’t seem so far off now, for things were fitting better together. He still didn’t know what would make him and Malfoy get involved, romantically, some time during their last years at Hogwarts, but that was really the only piece of the puzzle that wasn’t fitting.

Ron and Hermione weren’t together at home, but Harry had no doubt about them becoming a couple sooner rather than later. The way they looked at each other, the way they teased each other – Hermione and Ron were really the only ones at Hogwarts that *weren’t* aware of the fact that they were in love with one another.

The Order existed here. And all the things that had happened in Harry’s life at home, had happened here as well, which made him doubt the alternate reality theory. Voldemort had killed his parents, given him his scar, he’d lived with the Dursleys, Hagrid, the gamekeeper and later the Care for Magical Creatures teacher, came and collected him when he was eleven, so that he could start at Hogwarts – all those things had happened both in this reality and that. Wasn’t the point of alternate reality that it was supposed to be just that – *alternate*?

Besides, Harry had looked at today’s *Daily Prophet* – and it had said that it was indeed, to the day, seven years later than it should have been.

So, he was either in a) the future or b) an alternate reality *and* the future. The future seemed to come back, no matter how Harry turned on things in his brain. But why in the world – and *how* – could he and Malfoy have been transported seven years into the future by just falling on their heads in Quidditch?

Maybe it was all a dream.

A very bad, strange and elaborate dream, but a dream just the same.

Time out of Place

Still, Harry didn't think so. It seemed too real to be a dream, and besides, he'd felt pain since he got here, and that was supposed to be a sign that it couldn't be a dream.

No, this was real enough. And if it was real, and he couldn't get home by just opening his eyes – he tried opening his closed eyes, but to no avail; he was still sitting by the window in the same room as before, and Malfoy was still sleeping on the bed behind him – then there had to be some other way. Harry refused to be stuck as a sixteen-year-old in a twenty-three-year-old body, and miss half his teenage-years. He just flat out refused.

“There has to be a way to get back,” he muttered quietly to himself.

Outside the window flew the birds, completely unaware of the problems in Harry's world. He suddenly found himself missing his Nimbus 2000 – he wanted to fly! He hadn't flown since he got here to this strange world, and now all he wanted was to soar up into the air and compete with the birds about who flew the fastest, far away from all the problems on the ground.

He walked over to the closet, opening the doors and hoping that his broom would be there. He pulled the robes aside, and – there was a broom! But it was *not* his Nimbus 2000.

Champion, it said simply on the side in gold letters.

Harry reached out and took it in his hands. It was light as a feather in his hands, perfectly balanced and with the exact right thickness for it to be comfortable to hold. He ran his fingers down its handle, and saw that ‘*H. Potter*’ was written in a small font right at the end of it.

“Awesome,” Harry mumbled to himself. “Absolutely awesome.”

He made his way downstairs. Hermione and Ron sat in the living room. Hermione was, unsurprisingly, reading a book. Ron looked like he was writing a report for the Ministry of Magic, for the paper had the Ministry's seal on it.

“I'm going to go outside and fly a bit,” Harry said.

Hermione looked up, and nodded. “All right.”

“See you later,” Ron said, and Harry was out the door.

Time out of Place

He had been outside the castle once before – that was the time when he had decided that it really *was* a castle. It looked old, and was built in stone. From the outside, it didn't look very comfortable at all, but Hermione and Ron had made sure that the place had all the luxuries a modern house would have. They had, of course, also increased the living standard with magic. At first, Harry had wondered how in the world Hermione and Ron had the money to buy such a home, but apparently, they hadn't bought it all by themselves. Dumbledore needed a second Headquarter, away from Hogwarts, for the Order, and this was it. Of course, there was also the fact that Ron and Hermione were making quite good money at the Ministry, so they still owned most of the castle.

The castle had two towers, one on each side. Harry and Malfoy's room was on the left side, while Ron and Hermione's was on the right. Underneath Ron and Hermione's were – amongst other things – the two rooms where Harry and Malfoy had been when they were unconscious. In the middle of the castle was the entrance hall with two staircases on either side, and behind that were the living room and the kitchen.

Both in front, in the back and on the sides of the castle were huge areas of grass fields, and further off there were forests.

Harry mounted his broom, fully enjoying the rare sun and the cool November breeze. It had rained every day since they got here, up until today. There were still dark clouds at the horizon, and Harry knew there would be more rain, either later tonight, or tomorrow.

He lifted slowly from the ground, getting the feel for the new broom. It was easy to steer; only a small change of his weight made it move differently. Harry tried to dive, and then, just a second before he would hit the ground, he moved and steered the broom upwards again. It was so easy, and he felt so free. For the first time in days, he felt the problems vanish. They felt so small up here, compared to the never ending skies, and the blood-red sun dropping beyond the forests.

The birds flew and sang around him, and he followed them happily.

He pretended to be writing in the air, and spelled out 'Harry' in great big letters. Anyone who'd have been watching would have thought he was crazy, but Harry just felt happy. He was *free*.

He didn't land again until the sun had set and the grounds were almost completely dark. His hair was a mess after so much flying, and his cheeks were rosy. A big grin was plastered on his face, and he felt like jumping and singing.

Time out of Place

“Harry!”

Harry saw Hermione stand in the doorway of the castle. He hurried up a little, wondering why she was calling him.

“Yes?” he asked when he got close enough.

“C’mon inside, Snuffles and Rem’ are here,” she told him.

Apparently, they hadn’t stopped calling Sirius ‘Snuffles’ whenever someone else could be around to hear them. Though Harry doubted that anyone who wasn’t supposed to was anywhere near the castle and its grounds at the moment.

Once they were inside, Harry took his boots off. When he turned around, someone caught him in a hug.

“Harry! It’s so good to see you, kid,” Sirius said happily.

“Kid? I’m taller than you,” Harry grinned. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched Ron and Hermione – they just continued to smile, so Harry assumed that this was something ‘their’ Harry would say.

“Yes, you’ve been that way for quite a while now. Say, you wouldn’t mind if I cut your legs off by your knees so that you’re shorter than me again, would you?” Sirius grinned.

“I don’t know if I’d care, but I’m pretty sure Draco wouldn’t love you so much if you did,” Harry replied, trying his hardest to say things that would sound like a twenty-three-year-old Harry.

“Ah yes, speaking of which, where is that boyfriend of yours?” Sirius asked, looking around. When he did, Harry caught sight of Remus. The werewolf hadn’t changed much since Harry saw him the last time at home; he still supported the rather scruffy-looking robes, his hair was still quite wild, although specked with more grey now than before, and he looked just as friendly as Harry remembered.

“Rem’,” Harry said, remembering to use Remus’ nickname. “How nice to see you again.”

“You’re looking better than when we dumped you off here,” Remus smiled at him.

“I would hope so,” Harry said, “As I am not beaten and unconscious this time.”

Time out of Place

“Well, maybe we should move into the living room,” said Hermione. “It’s a bit more comfortable than standing here in the foyer.”

“Always follow the lady,” Sirius grinned and walked into the living room where they had been before Harry had come back from flying. Remus and Ron followed him, while Hermione turned to Harry.

“Why don’t you go get Draco,” she suggested. “I think I heard him upstairs before, so I believe he’s awake. Just don’t take too long.”

Harry grinned. “I’ll try. But you never know, he might need a bit of ... comforting,” he said, a bit suggestively, trying his very hardest to be Hermione’s Harry.

Hermione looked a slight bit shocked. “Harry!” she said, but she was grinning, so Harry took it as a good sign.

“I’ll be right back,” Harry promised. Hermione nodded and followed her husband and her friends into the living room, while Harry set off up the stairs.

“Malfoy?” he asked as he opened the door.

The blonde sat on the floor with his back resting on the side of the bed. The bed was a mess; it looked like Malfoy may have had nightmares, for it seemed he’d been thrashing around quite a bit. Malfoy himself was now looking at a frame, but Harry couldn’t see the picture it held. Malfoy looked up when he heard Harry’s voice, though he didn’t say anything. He stared at the frame and its content, his eyes empty.

Harry sat down next to him.

“What’s that?” he asked, as he still couldn’t see the picture.

“Us,” Malfoy said simply and showed Harry the picture.

It was them. A happy them. Harry had his arms around Malfoy, and they were both grinning and waving at the person behind the camera. By the looks of it, it had been taken some time in the middle of the summer, for the sky was blue and they only had thin cotton shirts on.

But why was Malfoy sitting on the floor in their room with a picture of the two of them in his hands, staring at it like he was trying to memorize it?

Time out of Place

“Malfoy, what’s up?” Harry asked finally, coming up with no good answer to his question.

Malfoy shrugged. “It’s us,” he said. “We’re happy. Why are we happy *together*? I mean, what could make us be happy together? We don’t even like each other.”

His voice was even, flat as though he didn’t care one way or another, yet still like he was a bit curious at the same time.

“I don’t know,” Harry said, “But we don’t have time to think about that now. Sirius and Remus are downstairs with ‘Mione and Ron, and they want to see you. Are you up for that?”

Malfoy looked doubtfully at Harry. “Why in Merlin’s beard would they want to see me?”

“This is not home, Malfoy. Here, they have accepted you, just like ‘Mione and Ron have. Oh,” Harry added as an afterthought. “Just so you know, ‘Mione is expecting twins. And she’s kind of realizing that we’re not who we say we are.”

“That girl always was too smart for her own good,” Malfoy muttered. “And another set of Weasley twins? Just what we need.”

Harry stood up. “Now don’t be a grump. You need to act just the way the Malfoy of this time would. I don’t think it would be a good idea to try and explain that we really are Harry and Draco, just not the ones they are used to. Don’t think that would go over too well...”

Malfoy looked up at him. “Would you continue to do that?”

“Do what?” Harry asked, dumbfounded.

“Call me Draco, rather than just ‘Malfoy’ the whole time,” the blonde said. “Even when Ron and the lot aren’t around.”

Harry stared at him. “You actually *want* me to call you by your first name?”

Malfoy nodded, his eyes trained on a spot on the floor. Harry could have sworn he saw a slight blush creep onto his cheeks, though he couldn’t really understand why.

“All right,” he said. “But then you’ll have to call me ‘Harry’ rather than just ‘Potter’ the whole time.”

Time out of Place

Draco nodded. “Deal.”

“Deal.”

There was an uncomfortable silence for a few seconds, then Harry said, “They’re waiting for us downstairs. You ready to play boyfriends again?”

Reluctantly, Draco nodded. “I still think that Sirius is just pretending,” he muttered. “He’s going to murder me in my sleep the first chance he gets...”

Harry ignored Draco’s muttering and concentrated on getting into the right mood to play the part of the blonde’s boyfriend once again. He – no, they – *had* to play their parts well. Like he’d said to Draco – it wouldn’t be an easy task explaining to Ron, Hermione, Sirius, Remus, Dumbledore and anyone else they happened to bump into that they were Harry and Draco, just not Harry and Draco as the people in this place knew them. No, that wouldn’t go over very well, Harry guessed.

Down in the living room, Ron and Remus were talking to each other while Hermione and Sirius seemed to be discussing – baby care? Harry wondered if he had wax in his ear.

“There you are, boys!” Remus exclaimed as Harry and Draco came down the stairs.

Harry saw Draco smile shyly behind him, and he took Draco’s hand in his. Had to keep the pretence up. It was only for pretence. Really.

Sirius came over and gave Draco a big hug; just like the one he’d given Harry. Draco, however, was much smaller than Harry, and he looked frightened as Harry’s large godfather took him in his arms. Harry just grinned at him, though.

Draco and Remus shook hands like old friends, but didn’t hug. The young Slytherin looked happy about that.

“Honey, how long before dinner is ready?” Ron asked his wife.

“If you guys help me set the table, it will be done in just a few minutes,” Hermione answered.

All four boys – well, boys according to Hermione at least – began setting the table.

Time out of Place

“I’ve seen riots that were better organized than this,” Hermione muttered to herself when she saw that both Sirius and Ron were getting plates, which was why there were suddenly plates for twelve people on the table, rather than six.

Draco took glasses for all of them, and Ron went to pour wine instead of getting the plates.

Before long, the table really *did* get set, and the friends all sat down. They talked about everything between heaven and earth, and spent quite some time discussing baby names. Hermione wrinkled her nose at most of them.

“Sarah?” she said. “You’d really name your baby girl *Sarah*?”

Sirius looked slightly hurt. “Yes, I happen to like that name.”

“I like the name,” Ron said, “But it’s too common.”

“And you, Remus?” Hermione asked, turning to the werewolf. “What would you name a daughter?”

“Well, considering the fact that I will most likely, for several reasons, never have a baby at all, I haven’t really thought about it that much,” Remus replied quietly. “But if I did ever get a little girl of my own, then I would probably name her Rachel.”

Hermione and Ron both nodded thoughtfully. “Rachel is a nice name,” Ron said. His wife sat silent.

“And you, Harry?” Ron asked. “What would you name your daughter?”

Harry looked thoughtful. What would he name a child? “I like Amber,” he said finally.

“You are so not naming our daughter Amber,” Draco said. “No way.”

“So what do you suggest then, *love*?” Harry asked, annoyed.

Now it was Draco’s turn to look thoughtful. “Jade.”

“Jade is nice,” Remus said. “I like that name. It’s sweet. I could name my daughter Jade.”

And so it continued. They suggested name after name, but there was always something about it that someone didn’t like. When they were done with the baby names, they managed

Time out of Place

to move onto some gossip – which was slightly surprising, considering the majority of the people around the table were men.

“It just proves that boys like to gossip just as much as girls do,” Hermione said in triumph.

They also covered Draco’s vision, so that Sirius and Remus were now completely filled in on it. This topic, however, dampened the mood, so they left it fairly quickly.

They sat and talked until long after they’d finished eating. They continued to drink wine – all of them except Hermione – and by midnight, they were all more than a little bit tipsy. Hermione bid them good night when they moved from the kitchen table to the living room. Now, the five men were scattered around the fire. Sirius and Remus sat on the couch together, looking more than comfortable. Ron sat on his own now that his wife had left him. Draco lay in Harry’s arms on the other couch, almost asleep.

“Aw,” Ron said, “I am surrounded by cute couples.”

Sirius grinned and pulled Remus closer. Harry, pretending to be more drunk than he really was, asked, “Yeah... How long have you two been together now?”

“Let’s see...” Sirius said and began counting on his fingers. “Schix years.”

“Ooh, he’s drunk!” Ron said, his voice triumphant. “We’d better get him to bed.”

“I’m *not* tired,” said Sirius indignantly.

“I know one that is tired,” Remus said. “Despite having slept all day, according to my sources.”

He pointed at Draco, who was indeed either sleeping or very close to it, with a small but content smile on his lips, in Harry’s arms.

“You two are such a prefect... respet... couple,” Sirius said.

“You mean perfect,” said Remus.

“Thasch what I shaid,” Sirius said. “Respet.”

Time out of Place

“Okay,” Remus said, sitting up reluctantly. “Let’s get you to bed. You’ll have one hell of a headache tomorrow anyway, so if you get at least *some* sleep, you *might* be able to function tomorrow. Good night everyone.”

“Nood gnight,” Sirius said, as his boyfriend led him out of the room.

“Well then,” Ron said. “I guess we should be going to bed as well.”

Harry nodded. “Draco?” he said softly. The blonde moaned and muttered something that sounded like, “I don’t want to get up yet mum.” Harry smiled to himself.

“Draco, wake up.”

Draco opened his eyes reluctantly and saw Harry hovering above him. “What, Potter?” he asked irritably. “Why don’t I get to sleep?”

Harry grinned. “Because you’re a) on the couch in the Weasley’s living room, and b) lying on top of my arm, and I want to get to bed, so you need to get up so that I can get out of here.”

Draco muttered into the sofa, “This is good enough for me to sleep on, why not for you?”

Ron stood. “I’ll see you two tomorrow,” he said.

“Yeah,” Harry replied. “Good night.”

“Night.”

Ron left the room, leaving Harry and Draco.

“Get up,” Harry said to Draco. “I’m so *not* carrying you to our room this time.”

“Why not?” Draco whined into the couch.

Harry didn’t answer. He just pulled out the arm that Draco was using as a pillow, and as a result, Draco fell off the couch onto the floor.

“What did you do that for?” he groaned, sounding annoyed, mad and just a bit drunk.

“I’m going to bed,” Harry said to the blonde. “You can sleep on the floor if you want to.”

Time out of Place

He left. As he turned up the stairs, he heard Draco pick himself up from the floor, and then there were footsteps, so Harry assumed that the Slytherin was following him to the room. Too bad, or Harry would have had the bed to himself.

The house was silent now. Sirius and Remus were sleeping in one of the guestrooms below Ron and Hermione's room, which was all the way on the other side of the castle, so even if they were still awake, Harry wouldn't be able to hear them. He undressed and got into his pyjamas, then crawled into bed. A few minutes later, he heard the door open and saw the Draco enter. The room was dark except for the moonlight shining in through the window, and Draco didn't turn the light on, so Harry watched the moon's soft silver light play over Draco's body. Draco's pale skin and blonde hair shone, making him look like a ghost, or something else otherworldly.

"Ouch," Draco muttered, sounding not so ghostlike. He seemed to have hit his toe on something on the floor, for he continued to mutter curses under his breath. Then he was finally changed and he crawled into bed, careful to keep to 'his side' of the bed.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Four Home sweet home

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Remus and Sirius left early the next morning by floo. Harry almost laughed when he saw Sirius – ‘hangover’ was clearly written across his face, as he staggered into the kitchen and ordered coffee in a gruff voice. Remus was better off, as he and Harry were the ones that hadn’t been drinking so much the night before. Ron had already left for work and Draco was still sleeping, so it was just Hermione and Harry who bid Remus and Sirius good-bye.

“We’ll see you soon, I believe,” Hermione said. “I don’t doubt that Dumbledore will put you out there on this one.”

Remus nodded in agreement. “Yes, I think so too.”

Then he took Sirius by the arm and led him to the fire. He was muttering under his breath about never ever drinking again.

“Yes, yes,” said Remus, “The day that happens is the day that I no longer transform.”

Sirius glared at him, and they stepped into the fire.

Hermione and Harry walked back to the kitchen. “Would you like something to eat, Harry?”

Harry smiled. “You can sit down, ‘Mione. I’ll get it myself. Would you like anything?”

Hermione shook her head. “I don’t do breakfast since I got pregnant, remember?” she said. “I only throw it up anyway.”

“It hasn’t been getting better?” Harry asked, trying hard to say things that wouldn’t sound suspicious. The Harry of Hermione’s world would have known that she wasn’t eating breakfast anymore.

Hermione shook her head again. “Nope. I *really* wish it would, though. I’m getting so tired of being sick every ten minutes.”

Time out of Place

“But maybe it’ll all be worth it once the twins are born?” Harry asked, carefully choosing his words so that she realized that he knew she was carrying twins. Meanwhile, he took butter from the fridge to put on the bread he was toasting.

She stared at him for a moment, a confused look on her face, before she masked her feelings and said in a soft tone, “It will definitely be worth it.”

The toaster sounded, and the toast popped up.

“Maybe you could take a glass of water? Or milk?” Harry asked.

Hermione smiled. “Yes, actually. I think I’ll be able to keep a glass of milk down.”

A few minutes later, Harry was munching away on his toast, while Hermione was sipping a glass of milk. They sat in silence, looking out the big windows at the rain that was once again falling. Harry had been right – the big, dark clouds that had been at the horizon the day before were now over them.

“Draco still sleeping?” Hermione asked finally, after almost five minutes of comfortable silence.

Harry grinned and turned to her. “Like a baby. I think he’ll have a bit of a hangover, just like my dear godfather, when he wakes up.”

“And just like my husband had and probably still has,” Hermione smiled. “He always drinks when he’s with you boys, and then the next morning, I’m stuck with a hung over husband. And then he swears he’ll never drink again, although we both know that he will the next time you come over.”

She smiled. “And I would be right there with all of you if not for my... condition.”

Harry grinned at her, although he was surprised. Hermione had been drinking before she got pregnant? The clean, bookworm image *had* changed slightly, then.

The stairs creaked, signalling someone approaching. Harry looked up to see Draco.

“Morning,” Draco said in a low, growling voice that sounded more like Crabbe or Goyle’s, than Draco’s own.

Time out of Place

“Good morning,” Harry said cheerfully, deciding to torture Draco a bit. A hung-over Draco was not something he was treated to very often, and it could easily be even more fun than a drunk Draco.

The blonde winced at Harry’s loud voice, and dropped down in the seat next to Hermione.

“Coffee?” he grunted.

Harry was a bit surprised; he didn’t know Draco drank coffee.

“Coming right up,” Harry said in the same cheerful voice as before. “Would you like something to go with that? Toast? Eggs? Bacon? Anything?”

He saw Draco’s pale face become even whiter at the mention of food. Then the blonde shook his head ‘no’ and placed his head in his hands, sighing. Hermione stood and walked over to one of the cupboards. She took out some pills, then walked back to Draco and gave the pills to him.

“Here,” she said. “It’ll make you feel better.”

Draco took the pills and swallowed.

“Oh,” added Hermione. “They probably have some side effects, since the Weasley twins were the ones to create them.”

The Slytherin stared at her, as if wondering whether he should go and try to throw the pills up again. “What side effects?” he croaked, finally finding his voice.

“Well,” Hermione said, “I don’t really know; they didn’t tell me.”

Then there was a popping noise, and smoke steamed out of Draco’s ears. He looked around wildly, and put his hands to his ears, but had to remove them again, for the smoke was hot. The smoke surrounded him, so the only thing Harry and Hermione could see was a big cloud, and when it cleared, it showed Draco again.

Well, almost Draco.

A Draco with cat ears, a tail and whiskers.

Time out of Place

Harry laughed harder than he had in years. He was soon doubled over, pointing and laughing at Draco. The blonde in question didn't notice the changes until now.

"Aah!" he screamed as he saw his tail and felt the whiskers on his face. "What have you done to me?!"

Hermione was giggling hysterically as well. "It – it'll go away – as soon as your hang – hangover would have been gone," she said between the fits of laughter. "You got this instead of the hangover, like a replacement."

"You'd make a really cute cat," Harry laughed.

Draco's cheeks turned red, and he stormed out of the room. Harry and Hermione looked after him, still laughing hard.

"I didn't get a thank you," Hermione said, still giggling quietly. "I thought he'd be glad to be rid of his hangover."

"Oh, I think that deep down, he was really thankful," Harry said, then added, "Did you see his nose twitching?"

And they broke into yet another fit of laughter.

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Later on, Harry found Draco in their room. He was staring out the window, his face set in an angry mask. Harry didn't think he was aware that his tail was swishing back and forth, and even that motion seemed to reek of fury.

"Feeling better, Draco?" Harry asked. He couldn't help but tease the other boy.

Draco whipped around and stared at him. "This is a bloody great deal of fun for you, isn't it, Potter?" he asked.

"Well," said Harry, "You must admit that it's quite hilarious to see you with cat ears, and a tail."

Time out of Place

“You think it’s funny? I can give you a tail and some ears as well. Maybe then *I* will get a good laugh,” Draco said hotly.

Harry stopped grinning as he noticed just how angry Draco was.

“Jeez, Draco,” he said. “It was just funny.”

“Well *I* didn’t think so!” Draco yelled at him. “Do you know how many times I’ve been humiliated in the last thirty hours? I’ve fallen to the floor, ‘kicking and screaming like a baby’ in your own words, I have cried, I’ve had *you* comfort me, I’ve slept next to you, I’ve thrown up, I’ve told you things about myself that none except Dumble-bloody-dore knows, I’ve gotten drunk, I’ve fallen asleep on you *a second bloody time*, and finally you decided that none of that was enough, so you gave me *cat ears and a tail!* Did I forget anything?!”

Harry watched the blonde through his tirade, and when the other boy was done, he just stood silent. Draco’s tail swished back and forth in a foreboding way, as though he was watching prey. The silver eyes narrowed, and filled with tears, but Harry knew that this time, Draco wouldn’t let himself cry.

“You were brave, Draco,” Harry said. “You saw all that death and torture and -”

“And what did I do?” Draco screamed. “I went and *threw up*. I, the Malfoy heir, went and threw up after I saw someone get tortured.”

“What do you want me to say to that? You switched sides! Any normal person would get sick from watching what you had to see,” Harry tried to reason though he was becoming increasingly annoyed with Draco’s behaviour.

“I am not a good person! I’ve been raised since I was born to take over my father’s place in Voldemort’s circle! Even the Dark Lord himself has told me that I will be ‘the most perfect of my Death Eaters, more so than even your father’. I am not a nice goody-goody like you!”

Harry stared at Draco. “You’re not like that,” he said quietly. “You’re not evil.”

“I am *not* evil?” the blonde interrupted again, “Potter, there is nothing I am more than evil. Didn’t you watch me through the years? Didn’t you hear me? I was *proud* of my father when they tortured those Muggles at the Quidditch World Cup. I wanted to join him then – they had everything I ever dreamed of – power, and the fear of the people.”

Time out of Place

“You are *not* evil,” Harry said again, although he was beginning to realize that Draco wouldn’t listen to him, no matter how many times Harry told him. “If you were, you wouldn’t have switched sides.”

Draco stared at him, his eyes narrowed in anger and frustration. Harry turned to the door before Draco could begin raving on and on again. He was just about to open the door to leave, when he remembered the reason he’d come. “We’re moving after lunch.”

“Moving?” Draco spat, and Harry could hear the anger without looking at the Slytherin’s face.

“Back to our own apartment,” said Harry, trying to sound indifferent. “I talked to Hermione. Apparently we live together in a place right outside of London. We’re going there by floo later today.”

He left the room, his shoulders sagging slightly. It felt like there was a big weight hanging on his shoulders, and he knew that that weight was. For the past few days, Harry had come to rely, if only a little, on Draco, and to suddenly be fighting with him – it was unnerving. Especially since he didn’t know what to do about it. Draco wouldn’t listen to him. Draco was *supposed* to be his enemy, *not* his friend. Not someone to rely on. He didn’t know Draco at all; didn’t know how to deal with any of the things that the blonde had just screamed at him.

Sighing, he came downstairs. Hermione sat in one of the smaller rooms, a study by the looks of it, working. She took one look at him and asked, “Are you fighting?”

Harry nodded, but tried to look indifferent.

“About what?”

Harry stopped and thought for a moment. “I don’t really know,” he sighed. “Draco thinks that everything that has happened, with the vision, and him crying and all that, is humiliating. And he didn’t like that we laughed at him at breakfast.”

Hermione frowned. “Should I talk to him? I mean, it wasn’t supposed to hurt him. I just thought we could do with a laugh.”

Harry put his hand on Hermione’s shoulder. “We probably did need a laugh, only Draco doesn’t really like it when we’re laughing at *him*. If you’d done it to me, then I doubt we’d be here right now.”

Time out of Place

“Still, maybe I should go and talk to him.”

Harry shook his head. “He needs to let some steam off right now.”

“Are you still leaving after lunch?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah. I told him, he seemed okay with it.” Well, that wasn’t a complete lie. Draco hadn’t said much at all about going to live in their own apartment.

“I’ll be making lunch at about one, so we’ll floo at about one thirty or two. Is that all right?” Hermione asked and Harry smiled.

“Sounds good to me. So, you’re coming with us?”

“Yeah,” she replied. “Thought I’d visit the library afterwards, so I might as well come with you. Ron is at the Ministry.”

After a few more minutes of small talk, Harry grabbed a book from one of the bookcases and sat down in the living room to read. It was a Muggle-written book, but Harry didn’t mind. That was the only kind he’d had access to whilst living at the Dursley’s. This one was called, “*Angela’s ashes*” and was about a boy’s poor upbringing in a town on Ireland. It was quite enjoyable.

“You re-reading that book again?” Hermione asked when she came out of the study three hours later to start on their lunch.

Harry looked at her, then at the book, then back up at his friend again. “Um, yeah,” he said uncertainly. Obviously, his older counterpart had read this book before.

Hermione shrugged. “It’s a good book. You can take it with you home if you want to.”

Harry smiled. “Thanks. There’s no way I’ll finish it right now.” He closed the book and followed Hermione to the kitchen. “Anything I can do to help?”

“I’m doing a salad for us, so you can start cutting the lettuce for me, please,” Hermione said.

“Course,” Harry said and began.

Time out of Place

Another twenty minutes later, lunch stood on the table. The salad contained ham, tomatoes, cucumber and other vegetables. Hermione called upstairs for Draco. He appeared a few minutes later, but he refused to look at Harry. Over all, the table was very quiet as they ate their food. Draco hardly touched his food, which worried Harry a bit. The blonde hadn't eaten any breakfast and he now he just pushed his lunch around on the plate? Finally, he shrugged mentally, and signed it off to the hangover that Draco would still have been suffering from if it weren't for the pills – his ears, tail and whiskers were still in place.

After lunch, Harry went up to his and Draco's room and cleaned up – with the help of magic, of course. He assumed that the clothes in the closet belonged to Hermione and Ron rather than to him, and were supposed to stay at the castle for occasions like this – when Harry and Draco needed to be cared for, or were just staying there for some other reason. He checked Draco's closet as well, but found that the blonde had already cleaned up in there. The only thing Harry brought with him downstairs was his broom, his *Champion*, because he assumed that it really did belong to him since it had his name on it.

When he came downstairs again, Hermione had put on thick cloaks, making her look slightly less pregnant than she was. Slightly.

“It's the middle of November,” she said. “I thought it'd be good if I didn't freeze to death on my way to the library.”

Harry smiled, and nodded. “Ladies first?” he said and motioned at the fire. He was a bit nervous – what was he supposed to say to the fire? He needed Hermione to go first, and he and Draco would just do the exact same thing.

Hermione sighed. “Don't be surprised if I throw up when I get to the Nest,” she said.

The Nest? Well, that was one thing to name their home, Harry thought.

She took a pinch of floo powder and threw it into the fire. “The Nest,” she said clearly. Then she stepped into the flames and disappeared.

Harry watched as Draco, with a look of complete indifference on his face, did the same thing, before he picked up the book he'd been reading, and threw the floo into the fire.

The world began to spin quickly around him, and the living room disappeared, until everything around him was a blur. Then he saw the faces of Hermione and Draco before him, and he hurried out. He landed flat on his face on the floor of a large room, and his broom and the book fell out of his hands.

Time out of Place

“Oof,” Harry muttered.

“Really, Harry,” Hermione said. “One would think that after all these years, you should know how to travel by floo.”

Harry’s cheeks went a bit pink, but then he turned his attention to the room he was in. The floor he was on was soft because of a big, blue mat just like the one in their room at the Weasley castle. The walls were also similar to the ones in the castle; light blue. That was the end of similarities, though. This room was much more sparsely decorated; simple was definitely the description of the room. There was a couch, a white one, with three pillows – navy blue – on it, and a low glass-table. Right in the middle of the table stood a high vase with a single red rose in it.

Behind the couch, as well as on the other side of the fireplace, were large windows, and Harry could see a balcony outside of those windows. It was, as usual, raining.

On both the other sides, there were doors. One of them was open, and Harry could see a corridor but not much more. On that side of the room was also a wooden desk, with papers neatly stacked upon it. A comfortable-looking working chair stood next to the table.

“Welcome home,” Hermione grinned. “I had Ginny come by here before to clean this place up.”

“Tell her thank you,” Harry said. Draco kept quiet.

“Well,” said Hermione as the boys began to look around. “I guess I should leave you two alone then. I think Ginny filled the fridge too, so if you’re hungry...”

“We’ll be fine,” Harry assured her. “Thanks for everything.”

Hermione smiled at him. “Always,” she replied, then turned and walked through the door leading to the corridor. She navigated easily through the apartment – she should, after all *she* had been there before, unlike Harry and Draco. The Boy Who Lived followed his friend to what looked like the front door.

“I know I can floo to the library, but I actually think I’ll walk. I need the exercise.” Hermione stood on her tiptoes to give Harry a kiss on the cheek. “Dumbledore will probably contact you tonight,” she continued. “He should have a team ready by now.”

Time out of Place

Harry nodded, and said good-bye to Hermione.

When she left, he decided to have a look around the apartment. Draco had disappeared somewhere, probably sulking wherever he was.

There was an open door, opposite the front door. It led to a rather large kitchen, with a 'half-island', and three high stools on the other side of it for guests. Beyond it was a table with two chairs on each of the longer sides of it. All the furniture was made of wood; the table and the chairs were some light-coloured wood, while the high stools were made of something darker. Above the half-island were cupboards with glass doors. Harry looked through them, as well as the drawers, and memorized where everything was. Knives, forks, two different sets of plates, matching cups, and a large collection of cooking tools. Seemed that the older versions of himself and Draco liked to cook.

He liked what he'd seen of the apartment so far. The rooms seemed to have different colour themes – the living room was mostly in blue, with the occasional break of white and wood. The hallway was painted a deep red. On the walls hung pictures, but Harry hadn't had time to look at them when he walked with Hermione. He would look at those next.

The kitchen had pale yellow walls and ceramic in a soft orange leaning towards light brown colour on the floor.

Harry walked back to the hallway. Now, when he had time to study the pictures, he saw that they were an assortment of photos of himself and Draco, as well as pictures of their friends. Hermione and Ron were featured on several, and their photographic selves were grinning and winking at Harry as he passed them. There were pictures of the gang at the beach, in the forest, at the Weasley castle, at Hogwarts... Harry stopped and looked at the ones of their graduation. Harry, Ron, Hermione and – Draco. The Slytherin was the only one that wasn't smiling to the camera. Harry thought he could detect some bruises on his neck and the side of his face, although Draco tried his best to hide it.

Harry wondered if it had been right before graduation that Lucius had kidnapped his own son and tortured him. Hermione hadn't said any specific date about it, or even a year. It would make the pictures make sense, for that would explain why Draco had bruises – and why he could be with Harry so freely. Draco's father would be dead, leaving Draco free to do what he wanted.

Halfway down the corridor were two large wooden doors, formed like a portal, leading to a room. Harry pushed the doors open curiously.

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The Master Bedroom was an impressive sight. Deep red walls, and several paintings hung on them. Right in front of Harry was a large bed – the largest one he’d seen in his life. Beyond the bed was a big window, the same size as the ones in the living room – they started at the floor and reached almost to the ceiling. Dark red drapes with patterns of gold hung around the window. There was no doubt that the room was inspired by the Gryffindor colours.

But what made Harry move back out of the bedroom before he’d memorized how it looked was Draco. He was sitting with his back to Harry, staring out the big window. Harry couldn’t see his face, but he guessed that the blonde’s face was back in its mask of indifference again. The boy didn’t turn when Harry entered, nor did he turn when he left.

Harry went back to the living room, picked up the book and his broom off the floor and sat down heavily on the couch.

What a mess this was. Hermione was at the library, looking up who-knew-what because he suspected the truth – that Harry and Draco weren’t the people they made themselves out to be. Harry didn’t doubt that if she really tried, she would find them out. Would that be a bad thing? Perhaps if Hermione realized the truth she could help them get back home again? For Harry and Draco were certainly not getting any closer to being able to go home and leave these bodies to the people that were supposed to inhabit them.

Harry stretched and flexed his fingers – fingers that didn’t belong to him. It was odd to look at himself in the mirror and see a stranger. Well, there were the familiar eyes and the scar, but still... The reflection *was* a stranger. It was a bit easier to look at everyone else. Hermione, Ron and Draco had changed, but they were still *them*. He wondered if Draco thought of it the same way – that Harry looked more like himself than Draco thought he did.

This world was ... weird, to say the least. Hermione and Ron were *married*. He’d known that for a week now, but he had yet to come to terms with it. And Hermione was pregnant with twins. Hermione as a mum wouldn’t be so odd – but Ron as a father? Harry had a very hard time picturing that.

Dumbledore hadn’t changed much, thankfully. He still supported the long, white beard and hair, the occasional – okay, more than occasional – strange hat and colourful robes. His blue eyes still twinkled with mischief and amusement ninety-eight percent of the time.

Sirius and Remus had also been grown-up when Harry last saw them, which made them easier to recognize. They hadn’t changed as much – except for the fact that they were now lovers. Harry wondered briefly what made them discover each other – and then he

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wondered if everyone were gay now. Sirius and Remus, the Draco and Harry of this time... The Boy Who Lived suddenly realized that the thought of him and Draco as lovers didn't want to make him throw up anymore. In fact, it would probably be quite nice to have someone to hold and love and be loved by.

That, however, wasn't going to happen any time soon. Draco wasn't speaking to him, and Harry had no doubt in his mind that if Draco didn't want to make peace again, then it would be a *long* time before they would speak civilly to each other again.

"Potter, wake up!"

Harry woke from his reverie and looked around himself. The room was empty, so where –

"In the fire, Potter," the same, annoyed voice said.

Harry turned and almost jumped a foot into the air. "Professor Snape!"

The Hogwarts Potions Master looked oddly at him. "That was a while ago since you called me that, Potter," Snape said.

"Um, sorry," said Harry. "I was startled, that's all."

Snape shot him another look, but Harry was surprised to notice that it didn't hold the same amount of disgust as the Potions Master at home always had. The Snape at home had never, in almost six years, said anything even remotely kind to Harry. So the Boy Who Lived assumed that the reason Snape was being nice now would have to do with Dumbledore forcing them to make peace, for the sake of the Order.

"I've just spoken to the Headmaster," Snape said. "He wants you and Draco to come to Hogwarts tomorrow; they think they've located the family Draco saw in his vision."

"Does the Headmaster have a plan?" Harry asked, choosing his words carefully.

Snape nodded. "There will be a meeting here tomorrow afternoon that you and Draco are both supposed to attend. I've been called, as well as the Weasley twins, and a few others of the Order. Ron and Hermione have received orders about keeping the Ministry out of our way, so they're working on that, but that's all I know. Dumbledore will fill us in tomorrow. He seems to think there's plenty of time."

"I trust the Headmaster completely," said Harry.

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Snape smiled. Harry couldn't help but think that it looked strange on the Potions Master's pale face. "As do I, Harry," said the Professor.

"Oh," Harry said, remembering something. "Could you make some more Althidia potion? I'm almost out."

Harry had looked at the vials on his belt and memorized the names. As soon as he had time, he would find out exactly what the different potions did, so that he would be able to use them correctly. The Althidia Potion was the only one that he didn't have a lot left of, though. He'd taken a risk in assuming that Snape made the potions for him, but he couldn't believe that he himself was supposed to make them – Potions was definitely not his best subject at Hogwarts.

"Already working on it," Snape replied. "You asked me before our last operation, as you might recall. I will have it ready for you when you arrive here tomorrow."

"Thank you, Severus," said Harry, taking yet another risk. He hoped sincerely that 'Severus' – or perhaps 'Sev' – was what he called the Potions Master. It seemed right, for Snape didn't look at him oddly this time.

"Just tell that seer of yours to be at Hogwarts around ten tomorrow, and you can come at about twelve or so. The password for the Headmaster's office is 'Snickers', though I have no clue of what that means."

Harry laughed. "It's a Muggle chocolate bar," he explained when Snape began to look sour.

Snape muttered something that sounded like, "That Headmaster and his candy..."

"I'll see you tomorrow then," said Harry.

The Potions Master bid Harry good-bye, and with a 'poof', his head disappeared from the flames. Harry stood, picked the broom – which had once again fallen to the floor – and his book up and proceeded down the hallway to the kitchen. He didn't want to go to the bedroom, for he knew that Draco would still be there, still ignoring him completely.

Instead, he set about making dinner for them. He found noodles in one of the cupboards, and frozen chicken in the freezer. For once, he was glad that the Dursley's had made him cook their food every night since he was eight years old, for now he knew how to better than most of the students at Hogwarts.

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Soon, the kitchen smelled wonderfully of noodles and chicken sauce. Harry set the table for himself and Draco, cut the vegetables and poured them water to drink. Then he called for the Slytherin.

Draco showed up after a few minutes. His cat ears and tail were gone, Harry noticed.

“Dinner?” Harry asked, and Draco nodded but didn’t say anything. He held a look of complete indifference when he sat down opposite Harry. When he’d put the food on the table, he began eating slowly. Harry watched him out of the corner of his eye, and wondered if he was actually *eating* or just moving the food around this time as well.

“You need to eat,” Harry said when he’d watched Draco push the food around without taking a bite for several minutes.

“You’re not my mother,” Draco muttered back without looking at him, and making no attempt to eat any of the food on his plate.

“You didn’t eat breakfast -” Harry began, and Draco cut him off.

“And whose fault was that?” the blonde asked bitterly.

“Draco, I’ve said I’m sorry about that -”

“I don’t care if you’re sorry!” Draco said, and Harry could hear the annoyance in the Slytherin’s voice grow. Harry was getting angrier as well at the other boy’s childish behaviour.

“Can you just please eat?” Harry asked, his voice getting louder.

“No!” Draco yelled back at him. “I don’t want any of your bloody food! I don’t want anything to do with you at all!”

With that, Draco stood and stormed out of the room. Harry heard the doors to the bedroom open and then slam shut with a loud ‘bang!’ He sighed to himself and continued to eat.

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## Chapter Five Protect them with your life

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Draco left the apartment by floo at nine the next morning, to have time to both floo and walk from Hogsmeade to Hogwarts. Harry had managed to tell him that Dumbledore expected him at Hogwarts at ten, but that was all he'd been able to say before Draco began ignoring him again.

Draco hadn't slept on the bed in the Master Bedroom during the night. In the smaller room that was connected both with the living room and the bedroom, there was a bed for guests. The blonde had slept there all night. Harry felt a bit bad; that bed didn't look half as comfortable as the one in the large bedroom. Draco hadn't complained though. In fact, he hadn't said a word to Harry all morning. He'd made coffee, and eaten half a piece of toast – making Harry worry even more about how little the blonde was eating – and then he'd left.

Harry wondered if it was expected of them to Apparate to Hogsmeade rather than use floo. He assumed that was the case. It couldn't be helped, however, for neither Harry nor Draco had learnt how to Apparate yet. Instead, Harry had heard Draco say, "The Three Broomsticks," before he stepped into the flames. The Three Broomsticks was one of the pubs in Hogsmeade, a very popular one at that, and if they floo-ed there, then they could pretend that they'd really Apparated, and they would walk to Hogwarts.

Harry moved around the apartment, continuing to memorize where everything was. The guest room where Draco had been sleeping was laid between the living room and a bathroom. The bathroom had a Jacuzzi big enough for two people, and everything in the room was white. There were two sinks with a large mirror in front of them. There were three light switches, so you could get different types of light in the room – soft, romantic or stronger spotlights, or cold blue ones which Harry didn't like one bit.

It looked like Draco was the one in charge when they decorated the guest room, for it's walls were a soft, light green and the table by the window was made of silvery metal. The bed also had a metal ground, unlike the one in the big bedroom that was made of wood.

There were pictures in this room as well. One picture in particular caught Harry's eye, and he picked it up. It was one of Draco and his father, both waving at the person behind the

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camera. Draco couldn't have been more than four, and Lucius held his small hand in his and helped him wave. Little Draco was giggling.

Then there was the thing that really caught Harry's attention – a bookcase. It was filled with ancient-looking books and writings. Harry picked one that looked interesting – “*Potions of the world*”. He flipped through it to find the Healing Potions that he wore on his belt.

“Althidia Potion is one of the strongest life-giving potions in the world. It is used by Healers across the planet in extreme cases. It is given to the victim when the person's heart beats the last time; if given before this time, or at any other time in life, the Potion will drive the taker crazy. If taken too late, the person will already be dead, and the life will already have been lost.”

Harry's hand went down to the vial he knew held the last few drops of Althidia Potion. He read on.

“The Althidia Potion can be given in two different ways. The first, and most common, is to have the victim drink the potion. Three drops of the Potion is all that is necessary. The victim has a one in twenty chance of survival, which isn't good odds – but it's better than nothing.

“The other, much less used way is ‘the Life of Althidia’. The Healer soaks his or her hands in the Potion, and then places one hand on the victim's forehead and the other one by the heart. If done at the right time (at the last heartbeat), the victim's survival is guaranteed.

“Then why is this not the way everyone uses? Very easy. For this way to work, the Healer needs to love the victim more than he loves himself, and the victim needs to trust the Healer explicitly. If a random Healer met a random victim and tried to heal this way, it would have no effect – other than to drive the Healer crazy and kill the victim off.

“The Life of Althidia' hasn't been used in the last century. The last Healer to try it did so on his wife – but it turned out that one of them didn't trust the other, and the wife died while the Healer got a spot reserved at St. Mungo's.”

Harry stared at the text. It was certainly no simple potions he was using. He read through the text quickly, finding very little more that interested him. It was mostly the stories about the Healers who'd tried the Life of Althidia and failed. One section caught Harry's attention, however.

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“The world’s supply of Althidia Potion is made by one Potions Master, and one only. The Althidia Potion’s secret is passed down from one Potions Master to another, on the older one’s deathbed. It is a huge honour, and a sign that the Potions Master in question is the greatest one in the world. Neither the ingredients nor the way to brew it have ever been written down.”

Harry stared at the book. Snape had said that he was working on the potion – that meant that *he*, Professor Severus Snape, was the one who knew the secret of the Althidia Potion. Which, in turn, meant that Snape was the greatest Potions Master alive in the world at the moment.

What a strange, strange world.

Harry’s eye fell on the clock on the wall, and he saw that it was closing in on eleven. If he were to be on time for the meeting at Hogwarts, he’d better be leaving.

Half an hour later, Harry was strolling down the road that led from Hogsmeade to Hogwarts. It was raining, but Harry had put an anti-soaking spell on himself and his clothes, so he wasn’t bothered in the least. He sung quietly as he made his way down the road. His mind was filled with thoughts – most of them had to do with either the young blonde Slytherin that he was currently playing house with, or with the greasy-haired Potions Master named Severus Snape. At least with the latter, there was no *problem* involved. There, it was just trying to grasp the fact that the Potions Professor that Harry had had and hated for six years was the greatest one alive in the world. Oh yes, and that the same Potions Master was now acting nicely towards Harry.

When it came to Draco... Well, everything about Draco was a problem at the moment, and Harry couldn’t find a solution to any of them.

Then there was the ever-present problem of how to get home again, but Harry refused to think about that one right now. It only depressed him to know how little progress they’d made towards the goal of getting to go home.

The great castle that was Hogwarts loomed before him, and before long, he’d reached the entrance. He walked down the hallways towards Dumbledore’s office, and saw students walking about. It was odd to be at Hogwarts but not be a student, he thought.

He gave the statue by the Headmaster’s office the password, and it let him through.

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Dumbledore's office was crowded. The Headmaster himself sat by his desk, smiling to himself. Fawkes, Dumbledore's phoenix, sat on the desk, watching the chaos in the room as well.

Harry saw Ron, sitting in one of the chairs. He was talking to his older twin brothers, Fred and George. The infamous Weasley twins had the same red hair as Ron, and they were identical down to the last freckle. They hadn't changed much from 'home'. Ron however, was now taller than the two, unlike in the time Harry was used to. Of course, the Ron of this time seemed to be taller than just about everyone.

Harry saw two people he recognized but couldn't place. He thought they might have belonged to Hufflepuff in his own time, and were a year younger than he was. They were speaking to each other quietly.

In the back corner stood Severus Snape. He looked at the crowded room with a look of disgust on his face, and Harry wondered if the Professor would rather be down in the Dungeons making some complicated potion. He watched him a few more seconds, and *knew* that Snape would rather be making a potion in his quiet Dungeons.

In a chair opposite Ron and the twins sat Draco, staring out the window with an empty look in his eyes. Harry's heart went out to him, despite how the blonde had acted the last days. Harry could see through the mask of indifference and see pain, clearly written on Draco's face. Harry realized that Dumbledore must have shown him the pictures of the family in Draco's vision. It must have made him re-live it once again.

"Ah, Harry, there you are," said Dumbledore, and suddenly the room fell silent. Ron, Fred and George smiled at him, as did the two Hufflepuff girls. Draco continued to ignore him, and Snape didn't show any emotion at all.

"Good," the Headmaster continued, "Then we can begin."

With the wave of his wand, he conjured up chairs for everyone to sit in. Harry sat between Fred and Draco, and on Draco's other side sat Snape.

Dumbledore began speaking again, and everyone's attention turned to him. He sent pictures out, showing four happy, normal-looking Muggles.

"This is the Hanawalt family," the Headmaster said. "The main person here is the father of the family, Carl. He owns a gun shop in London, and is one of England's best shooters. The other people on the pictures are his family. Anna is his wife, she works as a teacher. Their

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daughter Riley is three, and spends her days at a day-care centre. Their son Brian has just started school.”

“What would Voldemort and the Death Eaters want with these people? They’re just random Muggles,” Fred said, voicing the confusion the rest of the room felt.

“We don’t know yet,” answered Dumbledore. “But since they took his family hostage in Draco’s vision, and they seemed to have been killed before his eyes, there has to be something they want that only he can give you.”

“I don’t think that he’s the only one who can give it to them, Professor,” said Harry. “Since they killed him off in the end of Draco’s vision, I believe that he was merely the most accessible one.”

Dumbledore watched him curiously. “Too true, Mr Potter,” he said. “Too true.”

“If I had to guess,” George said, “I think that the Death Eaters are after something that has to do with his gun shop. You said he was one of England’s best shooters? That has got to mean something.”

“Is Voldemort going to start using *guns*?” Ron asked. “Why? He has magic. We can just deflect the bullets.”

“Voldemort is always looking for new ways to torture people,” George answered with a slight shudder.

“Could we get to meet this man?” one of the Hufflepuff girls asked. “If we could speak to him, there’s a possibility we could understand more of what it is You-Know-Who is after.”

“Linda,” growled Snape, “We call Voldemort by his name in the Order.”

The Hufflepuff girl nodded nervously. “Yes, Professor Snape,” she said, studying a spot on the floor intensely.

“Back to the situation at hand,” said Dumbledore. “We need someone to contact this man, and interview him a bit, without seeming too interested. Anyone up for it? Preferably someone with some Muggle knowledge.”

Harry shrugged. “I can do it.”

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“Good!” the Headmaster said cheerfully. “Then we need a few wards to be set around the Hanawalt’s house, as well as around the gun shop. The wards need to be strong – if the Death Eaters want this family, they’re going to have to fight real hard for it.”

Fred and George nodded. “We’ll do it,” they said. “Should we link it to you or to ourselves?”

Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a moment. “Do some that are linked to you and some that are linked to me. Link one to Harry and Draco as well; if the Death Eaters get inside the house and hurt the Muggles, we’ll need their Healing abilities.”

As he spoke, he shot a look at Draco. Harry saw the worry in his eyes as the older wizard watched the young blonde. Draco looked sickly; his face was pale as always, there were dark circles beneath his eyes, and his eyes in themselves looked... dead.

“What about when they’re not at home?” Linda’s friend asked. “I mean, they all work and go to school, like you said.”

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes. We need three people to keep track of the family, and we need them to do it at all times. I don’t think it will be long before the attack happens, so you won’t be following them for very long, but it will still need people with eyes in the backs of their heads.”

Fred and George grinned. “That’s a perfect description of my brother,” they both said and pointed at each other. Dumbledore, Harry, Ron and the Hufflepuff girls laughed.

“I’ll do the last one,” said Linda’s friend.

“Good, good,” Dumbledore said. “Then we’ll put you, Rhonda, on the little girl Riley, George, you will be watching Brian and Fred, will you please take Mrs Hanawalt. Meanwhile Harry, you have to keep Carl safe.”

Harry and the four others nodded. The Headmaster continued. “Ron, I trust you and Hermione to keep the Ministry out of our hair?”

Ron grinned. “They will have enough to do about other things,” he replied.

“And Professor Snape, I believe you have a few vials for all of us?”

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At last, Snape took a few strides forward. Harry now noticed the small bag he'd been carrying, and watched as the Potions Master took out a bunch of small vials.

“For Harry,” he said, “Some new Althidia Potion.” Harry took the vial, thanked him and fastened the little flask to his belt.

“Some anti-sickness potion for you to give young Mrs Weasley,” Snape continued and gave a vial to Ron, then proceeded around the room and gave out the last vials of potion, of different varieties.

Then Dumbledore carried on by telling everyone the details – the Hanawalt's address, where they worked, where the children went to school.

“Good then,” said Dumbledore. “You're all set. So, off you go.”

“And remember,” Snape said coldly. “Once mistake and the result will most likely be the death of an innocent.”

“Now, now, Severus, they all know that. I trust that they will do their best.”

The room's occupants all nodded, and stood up. The meeting was over, and now they all had things to do.

“Harry, will you please stay for a moment?” Dumbledore asked, just as he was on his way out.

Harry turned and walked back into the room, where Draco was still sitting in his chair, looking out of the large window at the raindrops that kept falling and falling.

Professor Snape stood before Draco, trying to get the boy's attention. The blonde just ignored him. Ignoring Hogwart's resident Potions Master was never a good idea, however. Snape looked like he was getting angrier. Dumbledore stood and put a hand on Snape's shoulder, and the Professor seemed to calm down somewhat.

“Yes, yes,” he muttered.

Then he began searching his robes for something. He found what he was looking for – another vial with a blue liquid content – and gave the small flask to the blonde.

“Drink it,” the Potions Master ordered.

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Draco, finally turning away from the window, eyed him warily. “What is it?”

“Just drink it, boy. Drink it before you fall down on the Headmaster’s floor unconscious. You will do no one any good that way.”

The Slytherin seemed to decide that it was better to drink the vial’s content – even if it happened to be poison – than to be on the receiving end of Snape’s wrath. He opened the flask and emptied the content into his mouth. Still watching Snape with a wary look on his face, he swallowed.

“Now will you tell me what it is?” Draco asked.

“It’s just an energy drink,” Snape replied. “You look like you haven’t eaten in a while, and as I said, if you fainted right now, you will do no one any good.” He turned to Harry. “Now, Potter, would you please take your boyfriend home?”

Harry looked at Draco, who looked so small behind Snape’s tall figure. “I will,” he said.

Snape pulled Draco out of the chair, none too gently. “Go home, rest and cheer yourself up, boy,” he said, “For if worse comes to worse, your Healing abilities will certainly be needed.”

Draco nodded. He looked slightly more awake now, and Harry knew that the potion was doing what it was supposed to.

“Do you mind if we floo from here?” Harry asked. “I don’t fancy walking all the way to Hogsmeade to Apparate.”

“Course not,” said the Headmaster. “I was actually surprised when Draco said he’d Apparated. So much easier to just floo from here.”

Finally, they said their good-byes, and Draco stepped into the fire. The blonde still avoided looking at Harry, and Dumbledore watched them with a bit of concern. When Draco had gone, the Headmaster put his hand on Harry’s shoulder.

“He’s unhappy,” the old wizard said.

“I know,” said Harry. “But I don’t know what to do about it. He won’t listen to me.”

“You’ll find a way. After all you two have been through, I’d be very surprised if you didn’t.”

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Harry smiled at Professor Dumbledore, and then threw the floo powder into the fire. “The Nest,” he said clearly, and stepped into the flames. The Headmaster’s office blurred until all he could see was a spectre of colours, and then he jumped out as he saw his apartment’s living room fly by.

He landed a bit more gracefully this time; he was only on his knees. Draco had already moved out of the room and was nowhere in sight.

Harry sighed and got up. He had things to do.

*

Two hours later, Harry sat at a café, dressed in Muggle clothes and reading a Muggle newspaper. He still had his belt on, however. It had begun to feel like a security blanket of sorts – it held his wand, the knife and the vials. Now, however, they were hidden beneath a jacket and a sweatshirt. In front of him, he had a cup of tea and a half eaten scone.

On the opposite side of the street was Carl’s gun shop. It was a small place, but it fit well with the rest of the shops around it – there was a Muggle tattoo parlour, a bar that had yet to open, and a clothes shop selling the oddest clothes Harry had ever seen. He wondered how any Muggle could walk around in such clothes – they were hardly staying together. And the shoes! How could any person at all walk around in shoes that had a four-inch heel?

Carl himself was an attractive man with reddish brown hair, tan skin, and well-muscled body. He was about Harry’s height. His nose was slightly hooked, Harry had seen in one of the pictures. Perhaps broken in a fight? In any case, he looked like a person who could take care of himself, Harry thought.

The shop opened at nine in the morning. According to Dumbledore’s spies, he’d arrived one hour earlier both today and the day before, to train. In the basement, beneath the shop, were firing ranges for him to practice his skills. On the wall in the shop hung medals from sniper-competitions, and several diplomas from the military.

Harry wondered again what Voldemort wanted with Muggle *guns*, of all things. Wizards had too many counter-spells for dangerous objects moving towards them, for the bullets to be very effective. However, if the Dark Lord wanted to put fear in the Muggle population, then guns would probably be a good way to go about it. A Muggle was defenceless against bullets;

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they had nothing to put up against it, except the so-called ‘bulletproof vests’. Harry doubted that they were completely bulletproof, though. And besides, the everyday Muggle would not be walking around in one anyway.

So, it was a good way to kill the Muggles off. But could something be done to the bullets, or the guns themselves, to make them dangerous for wizards as well? Harry would probably have to talk to someone about that possibility. Hermione, perhaps? She’d know where to look for the answers, at least. Yes, that was what he was going to do.

Customers came and left the shop. Harry saw Mr Hanawalt show the customers the different sorts of handguns and their respective bullets, and they seemed to be discussing what gun would fit what lifestyle. Order forms were filled out, and hands shook.

Harry drank the last of his tea and walked over the street.

The doorbell chimed as he entered, and Mr Hanawalt looked up from behind the counter.

“Can I help you with anything?” he asked. He sounded very British, and smiled at Harry.

“I’m thinking of buying a gun,” Harry said.

“You’ve come to the right place,” said Mr Hanawalt. “Do you know what kind of gun it is you’re looking for?”

Harry shook his head ‘no’. “I want something small, that fits a belt this wide,” he said and held up his hands to show the width of his belt. Getting a gun might not be such a bad idea, he thought. If he had one, he could try out spells on it and perhaps figure out what Voldemort wanted with the weapons.

“Well,” Mr Hanawalt said and began picking guns from the glass monitors. He proceeded to explain the different guns and their respective pros and cons. Harry finally found one that both he and Mr Hanawalt thought would fit him. It was called *Beretta Compact 9000*, and felt light in his hand. It felt well balanced, just like his wand, and was almost seven inches long. The gun didn’t seem as natural in his hand as the wand did though, and Harry was a bit nervous about holding something that could kill so easily. Then he realized that his wand could kill just as easily, and he relaxed somewhat.

Harry couldn’t buy the gun immediately and just walk out of the shop, however. There were forms to fill in, Mr Hanawalt had to check his criminal record, and a million other things to which Harry just nodded. Once that was done, the gun would have to be ordered, and *then*

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Harry could have it. Mr Hanawalt also signed him up for one of his classes, so that he would learn how to use it correctly.

Harry thanked Mr Hanawalt, and turned to leave.

He had just time to register the dark figures before he heard,

“*Nesciosa.*”

The world became black.

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## Chapter Six A Healer's hell

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Harry opened his eyes and wondered if he'd gone blind. The world around him was completely dark. Then he realized that there was light coming in somewhere far down – underneath a door, perhaps?

He winced and groaned as he felt his hands bound tightly above his head with thick ropes.

“Someone there?”

Harry's head whipped up as he heard the frightened voice.

“Mr Hanawalt?” he asked, thinking that he recognized the voice.

“Yes,” said the same person again. “Mr Potter?”

“Yeah,” Harry replied. “Are you all right?”

It was slightly annoying, not to be able to see the person he was talking to, but at least he knew that Mr Hanawalt was well enough to be awake and speaking.

“A bit sore, and I think I was unconscious for a while,” Mr Hanawalt replied, “But I'm okay.”

“Good,” Harry said. A moment later he asked, “Do you know where we are?”

“I was hoping you could tell me.”

“Great,” Harry muttered.

He tried to feel around as much as he could. They seemed to be bound to a stonewall, most likely somewhere underground, for the floor felt cold and damp. The floor wasn't much better, and Harry could hear water dripping somewhere. He didn't care so much about the

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water – except for the fact that they could get a severe cold and then something worse – but he did mind the creepy-crawlies that were probably swimming around in there.

“Have you seen anyone else?” Harry asked.

“No, not since I woke up,” said Mr Hanawalt. “But the guys that came into the shop were wearing black robes and masks... Like some alternate version of Klux Klux Clan or something. They had sticks in their hands.”

Harry was surprised at how much Mr Hanawalt remembered from the short attack; he himself had hardly had time to register the Death Eaters. Of course, Mr Hanawalt didn't know that that was what the masked people were. And ‘sticks’? Wands, that was what they were, not sticks.

He cursed himself for being so stupid as to let his guard down while he was in the shop. If he'd been aware of the things around him, then they would probably not be here now. He'd had one thing to do, and he'd failed.

He'd failed completely.

Harry continued to feel his way around the small area he could reach, then he began tugging at the ropes, hoping that they would give just a little so he could get out. The least he could try to do was to get Mr Hanawalt out of this mess now.

“No use,” said a new voice that definitely didn't belong to Mr Hanawalt. It was cold, low, almost like a whisper of death. “They're magical ropes and wouldn't give even if you cut them with a knife.”

“Who are you?” Harry growled.

“Oh, I'm sorry,” said the voice, “But I can't tell you. At least not right now. My Master wouldn't like it if I didn't obey his orders.”

Harry wished he had his wand in his hand so that he could at least light the room and see the new person. It would be better.

Mr Hanawalt stayed silent in the other end of the room, Harry was glad to discover. It would do the man absolutely no good if he spoke.

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“So what are your orders?” Harry asked, hoping to keep him talking. He wanted information, he wanted to understand why Mr Hanawalt had been taken, and more than anything, he wanted to stay alive.

“Keep you alive. He didn’t mind if you were a bit... bruised... but my Lord wanted you alive,” said the cold voice.

Voldemort didn’t mind if they were bruised? Now there was something Harry had absolutely no problem believing. The thing was that the Death Eaters’ idea of ‘alive’ tended to be different than the everyday person’s idea.

“Now, to make this more fun,” the voice said, “*Lumos.*”

Mr Hanawalt let out a gasp when he saw the black robed figure and the hideous mask. The Death Eater turned to him.

“You’re not showing respect!” he said loudly. “I’ll teach you respect! *Crucio!*”

Mr Hanawalt screamed as the curse hit him, and he turned back and forth in pain. The chains wouldn’t let him move much, though, and Harry could only see the spasms shooting through the man’s body. Harry felt a sharp pain go through his own body, burning him like fire from within. He bit his lip hard to not let out a cry of pain himself.

The Death Eater turned to Harry.

“You feel that, don’t you, Healer,” he said. “Harry Potter, the famous Healer. How easy it is to control you.”

He turned back to Mr Hanawalt and lifted the curse. “Now...” he said, “Are you willing to co-operate a bit?”

The man looked terrified, from Harry to the Death Eater and back again. Harry nodded, saying he should go with him.

“Y-yes,” Mr Hanawalt whispered.

“Good. *Release,*” he said to the ropes, and they let go of Mr Hanawalt’s wrists. The man fell to the floor, his legs unused to the weight of his body. The Death Eater turned back to Harry again. “Now, Mr Potter, we will be moving you as well. I believe you will get some

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company. Some other... securities... assuring us that Mr Hanawalt will give my Lord what he wants.”

A feeling of dread settled into the pit of Harry’s stomach. It wasn’t possible that they had taken the Hanawalt family hostage – they were supposed to be protected! George, Fred, and that girl, Rhonda, were supposed to be watching over them...

“Your friends put up some... resistance, I believe, but they were not much of a match. So, Mr Hanawalt, if you want to see your family alive again, I suggest you co-operate real nicely with my Master.”

Mr Hanawalt was shaking, but nodded. The Death Eater lifted him off the floor with magic, and walked out the room, with Mr Hanawalt hanging a foot up in the air.

Harry watched them with wide eyes. He felt completely cold inside. If the Death Eaters had been able to take the Hanawalt family, then what had happened to their protectors? Were George and Fred and Rhonda *dead*? They couldn’t be... Yet it was very possible. Harry felt sick. This particular assignment had been supposedly easy – still, they seemed to have failed totally. And a family may well die for their mistakes.

Two new Death Eaters entered the room. They didn’t loosen the ropes around his wrists; they merely freed them from the wall. The magical ropes still held Harry’s arms above his head in an uncomfortable position where he had no possibility to reach his wand.

They didn’t say anything to him; the journey from one dark room to another was made in complete silence. In the little ‘hallway’, there were torches lit. To the left and the right were wooden doors, all closed. Spiders crawled down the walls, and Harry thought about Ron and how he would have hated this place. He was now certain that they were indeed underground. There were no windows anywhere, only wooden doors to other prisons, and water was running down the walls. The air felt clammy and cold, and Harry shivered as he walked.

The new room that they reached was a lot bigger than the last one. Several Death Eaters were moving about, talking quietly among themselves. Behind them, three Muggles were bound. The small girl, Riley, was crying, tears and dirt staining her face. She screamed for her mother, who was bound another ten feet away. Mrs Hanawalt seemed unconscious.

The little boy, Brian, stood on his sister’s other side, and was crying as well, but quietly.

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“Shut up,” one Death Eater roared at the little girl, and slapped her across her cheek. The young girl shrank back. The tears continued to flow, but she wasn’t screaming anymore.

“Mum...” Harry heard her whisper.

The two Death Eaters leading Harry put him on Brian’s other side. They tightened the ropes and added ones around his ankles as well.

“And just to be sure that an *accident* won’t happen, I think I will take this,” the taller Death Eater said and took Harry’s wand from his belt. Harry struggled against the ropes to try and stop him, but the Death Eaters just laughed at his attempts before moving away from him.

Meanwhile, Riley’s cries had become louder again. One of the Death Eaters groaned. “Would someone *please* shut the bloody kid up?”

One of his friends muttered a curse at the girl, and suddenly, no sound came out of her mouth. Her hands clamped over her face as she noticed that she could no longer talk or scream, and the tears multiplied. Harry’s heart went out to the little girl, and he felt a burn around his own mouth.

Suddenly he began putting the clues together.

The burn in his body as the first Death Eater put the Cruciatius Curse on Mr Hanawalt... The burn around his mouth as Riley received the silencing curse... And two days ago, when Draco had had his vision. Harry had fallen to the floor, not because Voldemort had been doing anything particularly bad – but instead because he could feel other people’s pain. Draco’s pain had been so strong that he’d shared part of the vision.

He was a Healer, and he felt other people’s pain.

When Draco had been in pain, he’d healed him without knowing. As soon as Harry had touched him, Draco had begun to calm down. He had wanted to stay close to Harry because it continued to heal him the whole time.

And on the very first day in this strange future, Harry had healed the bruise on Draco’s forehead and woken him from a coma.

He didn’t have to be nervous about *how* to heal another person; it was within him all the time. He guessed that Draco was the exact same way, although the blonde hadn’t realized it yet.

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But what happened if he didn't get to heal the hurt people around him? Harry soon realized that the other people's pain made him weaker; he could feel the energy drain out of him. If he didn't either heal these Muggles, or get out of the room, then he would grow continually weaker and weaker. He didn't want to think about what would happen if the Death Eaters decided to put the Cruciatus Curse on the children. He doubted they would be able to take it for very long.

The mother was stirring, he saw. The Death Eaters caught the movements immediately and moved towards her.

Harry prayed they weren't going to do what he thought they had in mind.

She screamed when she saw the Death Eaters, and then screamed again as she saw her crying children. She begged for mercy for her children, and Harry had to admire the way she didn't beg for herself. A mother's love, Harry thought, and his mind wandered briefly to his own mother, who'd given her life for him.

The Death Eaters gathered around the woman. "*Imperio*," one of them said, and suddenly she fell silent.

"Come with me," the same Death Eater continued.

"Yes," she said and walked behind him through the door and out of sight. Three other Death Eaters followed, and Harry closed his eyes and wished he were deaf. Moments later, he could hear the woman scream as the Death Eater had lifted the curse, and they began doing what they wanted with her. Harry felt the pain in his lower regions, and he knew exactly what they were doing to her. Since she was further away the pain wasn't as strong, but the knowledge of what they were doing was more than enough. It made him want to throw up.

The children had fallen silent when their mother had followed the black-cloaked figures out the door. They listened with tears glistening on their cheeks and wide, fearful eyes to their mother's screams.

"Mummy..." Riley whispered. "Mummy come back..."

Harry thought it was closer to an hour before the Death Eaters returned Mrs Hanawalt to the prison cell. She looked pale and sick, her cheek was swollen and coloured black. Her

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clothes were torn. Harry felt the pain radiating off her so strongly he could almost touch it, and he fought not to be sick.

“Mum!” Brian cried as he saw her, but both he and his sister had now been bound and could no longer move. He fought against the ropes, but only earned the Death Eaters’ laughter.

“Sit down,” Mrs Hanawalt said softly, brokenly, and her son obeyed her.

“Where’s dad?” Brian asked a few minutes later. His voice was small and scared.

Mrs Hanawalt looked at him, but didn’t say anything. Harry understood her; what could she say, really? ‘Your dad is talking to these madmen and hopefully they’ll let us go if he gives them what they want.’ Harry doubted she even knew that much about this whole operation. He didn’t think she knew that there actually was a *reason* behind the kidnapping.

“Your *dad* is talking with our Master,” said one of the Death Eaters.

“About what?” Brian asked.

“That, boy, is none of your business,” the same Death Eater said coldly. “Now sit down and shut up, or I’ll do with you as I did your sister.”

Brian shot a frightened look at Riley, whom was still unable to talk. He shrank back and didn’t say another word.

They waited. Harry felt the hours go by, and he was getting exhausted. The pain and the fear radiating off the Hanawalt family was making him weaker by the minute. Especially the mother; she seemed to be having some other pain than just the visible ones. Harry wondered what the Death Eaters had done to her besides ‘just’ raping her. He knew he didn’t really want to know.

Harry wondered if it was night or day outside. Then he wondered where his friends were. Were the twins still alive? Or had the two redheads given their lives trying to protect the Hanawalt family?

Had Dumbledore set out another operation to try and find the Hanawalts and Harry? Or did they believe him to be dead already, and that the Hanawalts were lost? He felt sick at the thought. Still, he couldn’t help but hope.

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He wondered where Draco was. Was he safe? Was he out looking for Harry? The Boy Who Lived was slightly surprised at the concern he felt for the young Slytherin. Then he shrugged and realized that it was only natural, after being with Draco for days on end. He counted in his head and realized that the 'days on end' were only ten. It was only ten days since Harry woke up in this strange future. What a bunch of trouble he managed to get into in that short amount of time...

Harry's thoughts ended abruptly as a door on the side of the room was slammed open. Two Death Eaters were leading a third, hunched figure between them. Harry gasped as he realized that the figure was Mr Hanawalt. He looked broken, like a child's toy played with for all too long. He was bleeding from cuts and bruises all over his face and his body, and he could hardly walk, yet the Death Eaters forced him to.

The pain radiating from the man broke down the last of Harry's walls.

He lurched forward as much as the ropes would allow and threw up.

Several of the Death Eaters laughed cruelly as Harry tried to stand up again, his legs failing him. He hung limply in the ropes, and watched bleary-eyed as the Death Eaters pulled Mr Hanawalt to a stop about ten feet away from Harry.

"Now," said one of the Death Eaters, "I would like you to show us how to use this beauty."

He held up a gun in front of Mr Hanawalt and the deadly pale man nodded. "All right."

The Death Eaters laughed amongst themselves, and Harry got a bad feeling in his stomach.

"I want you to show us... on Mr Potter here," drawled the Death Eater.

Mr Hanawalt dropped the gun in shock. "N-no," he said, "I – I can't..."

"Oh but you can," said another Death Eater. "After what you told us, all you need to do is pull the trigger. And you're supposed to be a good shooter – to hit Mr Potter from this distance shouldn't be too hard."

"N-no," Mr Hanawalt stammered.

"Y-yes," the Death Eaters mocked him.

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Mr Hanawalt looked up at Harry, his eyes asking what to do. Harry just motioned for him to do it. Hopefully, it wouldn't kill him, though Harry knew better than to really believe that. Any wound would kill him, given enough time down here.

“And don't even think about trying to shoot us,” one of the Death Eaters told him. “We've got protective spells around us, and the bullets will only bounce off – perhaps on your children...”

Mr Hanawalt looked as though he was about to cry, as he looked at his children. Both were crying, though no sound came from the little girl. Brian knew better than to actually call for his father. Their mother looked at her husband, eyes filled with fear and horror.

One of the Death Eaters hit Mr Hanawalt in the back with a curse, and the man fell to the floor.

“Get up!” the Death Eater screamed. “Don't lie there all day, we've got better things to do.”

Mr Hanawalt picked himself up painfully from the floor. He groaned, and held one hand to his side. Harry felt pain in his ribs, and knew that one or two of Mr Hanawalt's were broken.

“Now show us,” continued the same Death Eater once the Muggle was standing. “Shoot his heart,” he said. “Or you'll die within the next five seconds.”

Mr Hanawalt looked apologetically at Harry, his eyes wide with fear. ‘I'm sorry,’ he mouthed and Harry gave him what he hoped was a reassuring look. The Death Eaters were all watching with great interest, as Mr Hanawalt picked the gun up. His hands were badly shaking as he took aim at Harry, but Mr Hanawalt willed them to still.

‘Bang!’

A shot rang off, and Harry's world exploded in pain.

The bullet sat right above his heart, and blood was gushing out of the wound. The pain spread like fire through his already weakened body, and the world began to swim before his eyes. He heard metal falling to the floor, and low voices cackling evilly. Mr Hanawalt was thrown to the side, and a Death Eater pointed the gun at Harry again. He was mildly aware of another gunshot, and more pain, this time from his right side, below his ribcage.

Then there was shouting, he thought. Loud voices... or perhaps it was just the Death Eaters' continued talk, but magnified in Harry's throbbing head...? He didn't know

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anymore. He could feel his own blood trickle down his shirt, and the world became more and more unfocused. It was one big blur; mostly dark...

And there were the voices... They sounded familiar...

Someone told him to hold on, he thought, though he didn't really know. He might as well be dead; he couldn't tell anymore. The pain lessened slightly, and warmth surrounded him as he finally surrendered to unconsciousness.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Seven Cheer somebody else up

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He blinked, and wondered if he'd come to heaven. Everything around him was white, white, white... Then the pain assaulted him, and he realized that this *really* couldn't be heaven. He groaned softly.

He felt someone wrap a hand around his. Another hand was placed on his forehead. Harry felt warmth spread through his body; he moaned and moved, trying to get closer to the hands in question.

"Lay still, Harry, or things will only get worse," a voice Harry knew all too well said.

Draco's face appeared above him, his mouth formed in a slight smirk. Harry was surprised to say the least at the sudden change of heart in the blonde's behaviour towards him. He definitely remembered how Draco had acted before... before the kidnapping. The memories flooded him, and he remembered the Hanawalts, the little crying children, the mother, Mr Hanawalt, the Death Eaters, how Mr Hanawalt had been forced to shoot him, and he remembered pain, pain and pain...

He shut his eyes tightly, trying to block the memories out, but they just kept coming.

"The Hanawalts are all at a Muggle hospital," Draco said, seemingly reading Harry's thoughts. "We've put wards up so they can't be touched, and Muggle men in uniforms are watching them."

Draco sat down and took his hands away from Harry. The Boy Who Lived moaned as the warm feeling disappeared.

"Come back," he muttered quietly, his throat dry as a desert. He could imagine the smirk on Draco's face growing as Harry admitted that he needed him. Still, the words had the desired effect, for Draco put his hands on Harry's again, this time placing them on his side. He winced as Draco touched the sore, painful area where the second bullet had hit him.

"Relax," Draco said. "It'll hurt at first, but then it will be good for you."

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Harry let himself follow Draco's words and he relaxed. Soon enough, the pleasant feeling of warmth moving through his body was back. The pain diminished as the healing energy made its way up to the other bullet wound.

He felt himself become sleepy again, his eyes shutting against his own will. He heard Draco's soft voice whispering, "Sleep, Harry. I'll stay right here," as he drifted off.

He awoke again what must have been hours later, for the light in the room had changed. Or perhaps it had only been his muddled brain that hadn't seen correctly before? He didn't know, but according to the clock on the wall – a Muggle one – it was now five in the afternoon. He also realized, from the look of the room and the feel of the bed he was in, that he was at a hospital – most likely St. Mungo's Hospital. Harry doubted they would put him in a Muggle hospital. The walls were painted in a dull grey colour, the sheets thin and white. The hospital gown he was wearing matched; white as well. On the table next to the bed stood the only thing that gave any colour to the room at all; a bouquet of white gardenias, with small blue flowers and green leaves all around them.

He gave a big yawn, stretched and then gasped in pain as the sore areas around his wounds pulled painfully.

He saw a figure out of the corner of his eye, standing by the window.

"Lay still, Potter," Draco said to him, "Or you'll only make the wounds open again."

Harry muttered beneath his breath.

"No," Draco answered him, "I may not be your mum, but I am the one who's been watching over you for three days in a row, and it's not all that much fun to sit and stare at a comatose person."

Harry smirked at him. "You've been worried then."

"Everyone's been worried," Draco said, avoiding the question. "And everyone's been here. Granger and Weasley, Dumbledore, the twins –"

Harry sat up abruptly, and gasped as the pain stabbed him yet again. "They're alive then?"

Draco glared at him, ignoring his question. "Do you *want* to stay here for another week with bleeding wounds, or are you just doing this to annoy me?"

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He took a potion from his belt and poured it onto a piece of cloth, then he dabbed Harry's wound with it. It closed itself, but still throbbed. Harry didn't think it would be worth it to ask Draco for painkillers. The blonde didn't seem completely... stable... at the moment, he thought.

After Draco made Harry lay down again, the raven-haired boy asked again, "The twins, they're alive?"

The blonde shot him an odd look. "Yes, they're alive."

Harry stared out the window. He felt immensely relieved by the news. He said quietly, "I thought the Death Eaters may have killed them when they took the Hanawalts. How else did they manage to do that?"

Draco looked down at the floor. "You are partly right, for the Death Eaters did kill someone. The twins managed to trick the Death Eaters into thinking they were dead, though, and so they got away. But... Rhonda is dead."

Harry closed his eyes and swallowed hard. He had wanted so badly for the twins to live that he'd hardly given a second thought to the Hufflepuff girl. He felt horrible knowing that he hadn't even really considered her.

Draco stood quietly at Harry's side. The silence of the room wasn't broken until there was a knock on the door. Harry forced himself to open his eyes as Draco said, "Come in."

It was Hermione and Ron. She was carrying a bouquet of crown daisy flowers and looked at him happily. He tried to return her smile, but he knew it wouldn't look sincere. Hermione put the flowers in a vase next to the bed and sat down on Harry's other side with a concerned look on her face. Ron stood behind her while Draco moved to the back of the room. Harry instantly missed the warm feeling that the blonde brought as the pain returned.

Hermione pushed a strand of hair from his face.

"How are you, Harry?" she asked.

He gave her a small, sad smile. "Rhonda is dead. The Hanawalts were kidnapped and tortured. I'm great."

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She held his hand, her eyes showing sympathy. “It’s not your fault,” she said, knowing that Harry was blaming himself for everything that had gone wrong. “It was... an operation gone wrong, and we all had parts in it. It wasn’t you.”

The memories of the kidnapping flooded back over him in full force. First in the darkness, in the first smaller room, where he and Mr Hanawalt had woken up... The frightened look on Mr Hanawalt’s face as the Death Eater lit the room... And later, the children, the little girl, unable to speak... Their mother, screaming as the Death Eaters raped her and tortured her... He wanted to throw up.

He saw Draco flinch as he shared Harry’s pain, but the blonde stayed away from him this time. He knew that Harry needed to get through the memories without the help of Draco’s healing energy.

“Is the girl okay?” he asked finally, though he refused to look at the others.

Hermione nodded. “George broke the curse, and Draco calmed her down,” she said. Harry saw Draco’s cheeks turn a bit pink.

“I didn’t do that much,” he muttered.

“You calmed the whole family down,” Hermione said. “You *did* do a lot. And that was after you healed Harry...”

The Boy Who Lived looked up at Draco, but didn’t say anything. He guessed that he now owed his life to the Slytherin, from the way Hermione and Ron looked at Draco and how the blonde refused to meet their gazes, and instead studied the floor intently, his face blank. He wondered what he thought about being in debt to the blonde, but decided not to think about it, not now.

“How did you find us?” Harry asked after another couple of minutes of silence.

Hermione smiled. “That was Draco’s work as well. He followed your Heart Bind, and the others just followed him.”

Heart Bind? Harry wondered. What was a *Heart Bind*? Something strong obviously if Draco could follow it and find Harry when he was being kept somewhere underground. He looked at the blonde, but Draco shrugged in response and Harry assumed that he didn’t know any more about the Heart Bind than Harry did. Most likely, he had just followed instinct at the time, just like they both did when they healed.

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“It took a while for us to get there though. Voldemort and those goons of his do like to use the most inconvenient places,” Ron said, trying to lighten the mood a bit. “And then we had to actually *get in* there. Luckily, the guards weren’t very... awake, so we managed to stun them. *Then* we had to find you in there. Draco was hurting from the Bind so much he could hardly walk, ‘cause by then, they’d shot you the first time. We ran, and we heard the second shot as well.”

“I heard... voices,” Harry said uncertainly. “Someone told me to hold on. Then there was warmth, and I thought I was really dying.”

Ron grinned. “Nope, not letting some petty Death Eaters take you just yet,” he said. “That was all Draco. He ran over to you as soon as he saw you there and put his hands to the bullet wounds.”

Draco wouldn’t meet Harry’s eye, and continued to stare at the floor as though it was the most interesting thing in the world. What Harry could see of his face was still a blank mask, but Harry could sense his discomfort.

“Then when we were fairly certain that you wouldn’t bleed to death, I Apparated with you to here. The medi-wizards were a bit surprised at your wounds; they don’t get a lot of bullet wounds.”

“They might be getting more soon,” Harry muttered.

“Yeah, although I can’t for the life of me understand what he would want with guns all of a sudden,” Hermione said and Ron looked equally confused.

“I’m going to take lessons,” Harry said when silence once again fell over the room.

Draco’s head shot up and he met Harry’s eye for the first time in half an hour. “You’re going to do what?” he asked.

“I spoke to Mr Hanawalt, and decided to take lessons,” Harry said and shrugged. “Seemed like a good idea at the time. Though I don’t know if I’ll ever do it now – I doubt Mr Hanawalt will ever want to see me again.”

The only blonde in the room looked at him, slightly surprised. “Mr Hanawalt and his wife asked about you the whole time while I was... um, healing them,” he said. “They were very worried. I’m sure that if they knew where St. Mungo’s is situated, they’d be here right now.”

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“But... why?” Harry asked.

“They think of themselves as just as guilty as you do, especially Mr Hanawalt. He thinks that you got dragged into a kidnapping you weren’t supposed to have any part of, and on top of that, he was forced to *shoot you*. Oh, by the way, if you would so kindly refrain from doing such things like getting shot ever again; I would be very pleased. It was very messy to heal.”

“Oh yes *Malfoy*, ‘cause I *planned* getting shot, don’t you think?” Harry glared at him, and Draco’s eyes softened.

“Sorry,” he muttered.

“Don’t worry about it,” Harry said. “If I got to choose, I would like to avoid getting shot again as well.”

Draco smiled slightly. “Good. Then we agree on that at least.”

“We actually agree on something. I’m impressed,” Harry said, his smile growing.

Hermione stood up. “We should let you get some rest,” she said. “We’ll be by tomorrow. I think you’ll get released tomorrow afternoon, if Draco does his best in healing you.”

Harry gave her a small smile. “Thanks for coming, ‘Mione,” he said.

She bent down and kissed his forehead. “Of course.”

Harry blushed at the affection she was showing, but she was oblivious. She headed for the door as Ron said, “See you tomorrow, Harry. And Draco, be good and heal him properly, will you?”

Draco smiled slightly at him. “Yeah.”

“See you tomorrow,” Harry said and his two best friends were gone.

Harry and Draco found themselves alone together again. The raven-haired boy thought the Slytherin looked decidedly uneasy where he stood, changing his weight every so often and looking in every direction but at Harry. Still, he looked better than the last time Harry had seen him, before the kidnapping. That was when he was still not talking to Harry, still ignoring him completely and refusing to even look at him.

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“Are you okay now?” Harry asked.

Draco looked up at him, but didn't say anything. Emotions were flitting over his face at a quick rate, and Harry could read some of them – fear, sadness, worry, but then came relief and, ever so briefly, a bit of happiness. Then he went back to looking dejected and stared at the floor again.

“Talk to me,” Harry demanded softly. “I know I'm not the person you'd prefer to spill your innermost secrets to, but right now I'm all there is.”

Draco met his gaze, and said quietly, “I was just worried about you.”

Harry smiled to himself. “I'm glad you were, 'cause otherwise I might have been dead right now.”

“It – it just felt so strange,” the blonde continued in the same quiet voice, and Harry knew better than to interrupt. “It hurt inside of me, and I could *feel* you get weaker... And my whole body was screaming at me to find you, to heal you, to... hold you. It was the weirdest thing as we got closer... The pain got worse, but at the same time as it lessened because I was getting closer to you. Then we heard the first shot ring out and I – I fell to the ground... the pain was so intense but I knew it had to be ten times worse for you and that made me continue...”

“The second shot rang out just as we were running down the corridor. Ron and Fred were supporting me and I think that was a good thing, 'cause if they hadn't, I would have fallen to the floor with that second bullet, and I wouldn't have been able to get up...”

“You – you were completely lifeless, hanging there from the ropes on the wall... And there was blood and the woman was screaming and the Death Eaters were laughing and you looked dead...”

He was crying, though Harry doubted he knew it. Harry stretched his arm out to Draco, and the Slytherin came closer until Harry could take Draco's hand in his. He could feel the pain and sorrow radiating off the blonde in strong waves.

“I didn't even know what I was doing when I put my hands on you; all I knew was that I needed to make it stop hurting... You were unconscious, and I was scared when you didn't respond at all to what I was doing. I didn't know what I was doing, and I was so frightened I was doing the wrong thing... that I was only making it worse...”

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He trailed off, looking away from Harry, apparently ashamed as he noticed the tears streaming down his cheeks.

“And I remember thinking that you’d tried to be nice to me and I wouldn’t listen, and I didn’t want that to be the last memory you ever had of me,” Draco finished, seemingly thinking that if he’d confessed this much, he might as well tell Harry everything.

Harry sat quiet and just watched Draco. Draco Malfoy, his nemesis from school, his enemy for six years. The situation at hand was more than a little surreal, the Boy Who Lived thought. Fourteen days in the future – three of them spent in a coma for Harry, but still – was all it had taken to shake those foundations. Harry wondered if they, if – when, he told himself – they came home, they would be able to go back to their old relationship. He wondered if they even wanted to do that.

Draco just stood next to the bed, trying his best to wipe away the tears on his cheeks as inconspicuously as possible.

“Thank you for saving my life,” Harry said quietly. He didn’t know what else to say after Draco’s outburst, yet somehow he had to break the ice again.

The blonde looked at him, pain in his eyes. “You’re welcome,” he muttered, in a voice that sounded much more like the young Malfoy Harry knew. He smiled slightly at the Boy Who Lived, and Harry gave him the same, tentative smile back.

“Just don’t make a habit out of getting into these situations,” Draco said.

“Too late, I already do,” replied Harry, catching onto Draco’s slightly better mood.

“I’ve noticed.”

“Hey, I’m not the one who fell down screaming because of a vision, so don’t try to tell me I’m the only one in this room who gets into trouble.”

“I didn’t get into trouble with that vision; it just, um, hurt.”

“Right.”

“It did.”

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“I know it did, I felt it,” Harry said, deciding to bring the conversation onto their interesting healing abilities.

“What?” Draco asked, just like he’d expected.

“I said, I felt it,” said Harry. “Remember that I said I’d received parts of the vision as well?” The blonde nodded. “Well, I don’t think I really had the vision at all. I think it was just you.”

“You’re confusing me, Potter,” Draco growled, sitting down on a chair next to the bed.

“It’s not confusing at all,” Harry said and the blonde glared at him. “Really, it isn’t! You were in pain – *a lot* of pain – and I’m a Healer. I felt your pain, and either because you were in so much pain, I had parts of the vision as well or perhaps it was because of this Heart Bind-thing. Either way, *you* had the vision – I just kind of shared it.”

Draco stared at him. “And what made you come to this conclusion?” he asked.

“The Hanawalts,” Harry said. “When we were... down there... I could feel their pain. I felt the fear of the children and I felt the pain when the Death Eaters tortured Mrs Hanawalt. I threw up when Mr Hanawalt came in, he was in such a bad shape and I was weak.”

“Weak?” Draco wondered. “Why?”

Harry shrugged. “I think it was because I was around so many people in pain, and I didn’t get to heal them, and that made me weak.”

“So for future reference, stay away from sick people if we can’t heal them?” Draco asked.

Harry nodded as he realized something. “How can we be at a hospital and not get weak?”

“Oh,” Draco replied, “That would be thanks to Ron and Dumbledore. We are in a special part of the hospital, a sort of restricted area. There are no other patients within a five-minute walk. I couldn’t understand why when they took me here, but I guess I get it now.”

“Yeah, I would never get better if I were around a bunch of sick and hurt people – and you probably wouldn’t have been able to concentrate on healing me, either.”

“It still took me three days to get you to wake up, even when I was basically alone with you,” Draco said. “I don’t think I’m a very good healer.”

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Now it was Harry's turn to stare at Draco. "You *don't* think you're a very good healer?" he asked, the disbelief apparent in his voice.

"Well," Draco replied, running a hand through his hair, "You were in a bloody coma for *three days*."

"I was shot! Twice!" Harry exclaimed. "The fact that I'm alive at all is quite amazing, and it is all thanks to *you*."

Harry felt tired from arguing, especially something as ridiculous as this. Draco was an amazing Healer; he had to be for Harry to still be alive. He didn't know just what damage the bullets had done yet, but he was sure that if the blonde Healer hadn't arrived in the exact moment he did, Harry would be dead now. Something told him that he really had been an inch from death. Again.

He sighed, closed his eyes and then opened them again to look at the Slytherin.

"Look Draco, I know you won't believe it when I say that you must be a great Healer, but I'm going to say it anyway. *You are a great Healer*. I wouldn't be alive otherwise. Thing is, I don't think that this is about being a good Healer or not – I think it's something else, and I think it has to do with why you – we – got mad at each other before."

Draco looked down at the floor, and Harry continued,

"We need to talk it through, from beginning 'till end, but I can't do it right now. I'm falling asleep as we speak, and it won't do to have me snoring through such a conversation."

Draco gave him a small smile at his attempt to lighten the mood. "Should I go?" he asked.

Harry shook his head. "No, I think you should stay. And if you want to put your hands on me –" He broke off, realizing what he'd just said. "I only mean if you want to –"

"Save it, Potter," Draco smirked. "You're in too deep already."

Harry sighed again. "I blame it on getting shot," he mumbled as his eyes fell shut.

"I blame it on you being you," Draco said in a soft voice, placing one hand on Harry's forehead and picking the boy's right hand up in his other. A small smile appeared on Harry's lips as he slipped off into sleep, feeling completely content and secure.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Eight Nightmares and Heart Binds

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The next afternoon, Harry came home to a surprise. He stepped out of the fireplace and was immediately surrounded by Ginny, Fred and George, as well as the elder Mr and Mrs Weasley. Draco arrived next, carrying the one bag of essentials that he had brought to St. Mungo's.

"Welcome home, Harry," Mrs Weasley said and gave Harry a gentle hug. He was still sore in the areas where the bullets had entered, but hugged his friends' mum back.

Mr and Mrs Weasley hadn't changed much in seven years. Mrs Weasley looked slightly rounder, and Mr Weasley's red hair was now mixed with grey strands. Other than that, they looked the same.

No, the big shock was Ginny.

The formerly small, shy girl had become a beautiful young woman. Like the ugly duckling that became a swan, she had developed over the years into a confident-looking woman who looked like she could be cut out from any magazine ad. Her red hair fell over her shoulders and midway down her back, and her brown eyes were dancing around the room as she listened to everyone talking. She had a fabulous body, too, Harry reflected, although the thought didn't make him feel as much as he'd believed it would.

She moved towards him and gave him a hug as well.

"It's good to see you up and about again," she smiled at him, showing off a line of perfect white teeth.

"She was at the hospital while you were unconscious," Draco explained to him.

"Of course," Ginny said. "Friends are supposed to support each other."

Harry smiled at her. He liked this version of Ginny; preferable to the shy little girl at home who stammered and blushed as soon as he was around. Harry didn't want to break the

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young Weasley's heart by telling her that he had no interest in her whatsoever, and therefore this woman before him was much more comfortable to be around. *She* didn't have a crush on him, by the looks of it. She only regarded him as a friend.

The Weasleys had made food and set the table in the kitchen for seven people. As soon as Harry and Draco had arrived home, they sat down to eat.

"By the way," George said, "Ron sent his apologies about not visiting you at the hospital today. Apparently 'Mione got quite sick this morning and didn't feel like going out at all."

"That's okay," Harry said. "I hope 'Mione is okay, though."

"Oh, I'm sure she is," Fred said. "Although how anyone could be okay when they're being blown up like a balloon is beyond me."

Draco, George, Harry and Mr Weasley laughed, but were quieted when Mrs Weasley glared at them. "I'm sure there is some spell to blow you up as well, Fred, so you can feel exactly what it feels like," she said to her son. "That way you would, perhaps, be more sympathetic of poor Hermione."

"Mum, I was only joking," Fred said, exasperated.

"When is her due date anyway?" Harry asked, feeling the need to interrupt before Fred said something else stupid and got Mrs Weasley mad. A mad Mrs Weasley was not fun, Harry knew from experience.

"I think it's the middle of January some time," George said.

"Yeah," said Ginny, "January sixteenth."

"Ron as a daddy – has anyone gotten used to that yet?" Fred asked. "Cause I certainly haven't."

Everyone except Mr and Mrs Weasley shook their heads and Fred continued, "And mum and dad will become grandparents for the third and fourth time."

Harry and Draco exchanged looks. So one of the Weasley siblings had children? Harry couldn't help but wonder which one of them – or two – had little ones – and more so, he wondered *with whom*. Charlie? Bill? Or perhaps it was Percy with his girlfriend from Hogwarts, Penelope Clearwater? Were they still together?

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They continued talking for almost three hours before Mrs Weasley caught Harry yawning and said that he should get some rest. With that, she more or less forced her family through the fireplace. Harry heard the names they said when they threw the floo powder into the flames. Mr and Mrs Weasley still lived at the Burrow, Fred and George apparently shared 'the Joke House', and Ginny's apartment was called just that.

When the Weasleys had all left, Draco dragged Harry off to bed.

"Draco, it's only eight thirty," Harry whined as he was forced to change into pyjamas.

"I don't care," Draco said. "The medi-wizard said you should get lots of rest."

"Fine," Harry muttered. "Can you at least turn around while I change?"

"Afraid I'll take a peak at something likeable?" Draco said slyly and Harry turned pink.

"Just turn around, will you?" he asked.

Sighing, Draco did as he was requested. Harry changed into his pyjamas quickly and lay down on the bed.

"Happy now, mum?" he asked Draco, who just smiled at him.

"Very," the blonde said. "Want me to tuck you in?"

Harry glared at him. "Good night, Draco."

"Good night, Harry," Draco replied, surprisingly softly. Then he turned the lights off and left the room.

Harry's sleep was plagued with nightmares.

He was chained to a stone wall by thick ropes that cut into his wrists, making them bleed. A few feet before him, just out of reach, stood the Hanawalt family, all bound to the wall just like Harry was. The youngest girl, Riley, was moving her lips, but no sound came out. Tears spilled down her cheeks, and Harry could see her lips forming the word, 'Mummy!'

The little boy, Brian, stood quiet where he was. His eyes were filled with fear as he watched the shadows move on the other side of the room.

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Dark shadows... Black robes and ugly masks hiding the faces...

They took the children's mother and Harry heard her screams echoing in his mind, the pain searing through his body.

"Why didn't you protect my family?"

Harry whipped around at the sound of Mr Hanawalt's voice. He saw the man standing right next to him, looking at his children with sad eyes. "Why did you let us die?"

"But – but I didn't!" Harry said. "They said you were alive!"

Mr Hanawalt picked up a gun and pointed it at Harry. "It is your fault we're down here. It is your fault."

He pulled the trigger and the shot rang out. It sounded so loudly in Harry's ears he thought his eardrums would burst, but they didn't. Instead he felt the searing pain as the bullet entered his chest, right above his heart. He could feel the blood flowing, he could hear his heart pumping rapidly, but he couldn't do anything. And he didn't want to do anything. He deserved this, he told himself. He'd done this to the Hanawalts; he deserved the pain.

Another shot rang out and he screamed as it entered his body in his right side.

The pain seared through his body and he felt himself falling into a big black hole. Everything around him was dark, and everything inside of him was pain.

"Harry, you deserve this," he heard Mr Hanawalt's voice.

He looked up and saw that the Hanawalts were staring down at him. The little girl mouthed at him, 'It is your fault, Harry.'

He was screaming; he couldn't stop.

"...Your fault, Harry..."

"Harry!"

The Boy Who Lived awoke with a start as someone shook him. He was drenched in sweat and the world around him was a blur. For a moment he wanted to stretch for his glasses, but

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then he remembered that he didn't have glasses here. Instead, he blinked, trying to clear his mind.

Draco hovered above him, his eyes shining with worry.

"I – I'm okay," Harry muttered, feeling a bit ridiculous.

"You were screaming," Draco said, ignoring Harry's statement. "What did you dream about?"

Harry glared at him. He felt no need to share the dream – nightmare – with Draco at the moment – he looked at the Muggle clock on the wall – two in the morning. Definitely no need.

"Fine," Draco sneered at him. "Go back to sleep then, but if you could keep the yelling down, I'd be happy. I need my beauty sleep."

He lay back down, and suddenly, Harry realized that Draco was in fact sleeping in the bed, with him, in the Master Bedroom. It was the first time in their apartment. He didn't know whether he should feel comfortable or not with it. Finally, he settled on just trying to go back to sleep, hopefully a sleep without nightmares.

He was on his way off to dreamland when he felt a warm hand wrap around his own, and he smiled to himself at Draco's way of comforting him without words. Just before he fell asleep, he decided that sharing a bed with the blonde perhaps, maybe, wasn't so bad after all.

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The next few days flew by quickly. Harry and Draco continued to explore the world they were in during the day, and Harry took Dreamless Potion every night to be able to sleep without any more nightmares.

The two read everything they could get their hands on that might explain how they had ended up seven years into the future, but to no avail. Time travel, it appeared, was not very common. Especially not time travel that didn't involve any magic performed by the travellers – and all Harry and Draco seemed to have done was to fall off their brooms and faint.

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Harry wondered if it was something else. Perhaps they hadn't travelled through time – perhaps they really were the Harry and Draco of this time (the future), only with amnesia. Maybe they were so exhausted after the healing a few weeks ago that their brains just erased the seven years.

“And *why* would they do that?” Draco asked.

“I don't know – I'm just looking for possibilities since it seems impossible that we've jumped into the future by just fainting,” Harry defended himself.

“I don't think that's what happened,” said Draco. “Why would it happen to both of us? And why would it erase *exactly* seven years of our lives?”

Harry shrugged. “Perhaps the Heart Bind makes it impossible for just one of us to go through something like this, so it makes the other one do it, too,” he said weakly. He knew that none of this was very likely, but since they weren't making any progress in finding a way home, he wanted to at least try to think of some other ways.

He thought about asking Hermione – problem was that that would mean that they would have to tell both Hermione and Ron about, well, everything. And Harry didn't know if they could prove to his friends that they were Harry and Draco – just not the right ones. The only thing Harry could offer was to tell them was the secrets they'd shared in the six and a half years he'd been at Hogwarts so far. It should, of course, be proof enough, he thought, but at the same time, most of that could be found out, say, if you had the real Harry of this time and stuffed him with Veritaserum.

He sighed. This was getting them nowhere.

He wondered if they should tell Professor Dumbledore. Then again, it seemed like the old wizard somehow already knew. He hadn't said it out loud, but there was still *something* in the way that the Headmaster spoke and answered his questions that said that he just *knew*.

They were also reading up on Heart Binds, knowing that there was probably more to the name than just feeling each other's pain. So far, they hadn't found much about the Bind, but they were not ones to give up. Harry visited the big London library. The library held a huge area for magic books, an area invisible to all Muggles but perfectly visible and accessible to all wizards carrying a wand.

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Harry came home later that afternoon with copies of the more interesting texts he'd found. He wasn't allowed to bring the books outside of the library, for they were too valuable for that, but the librarian didn't mind him copying the passages he needed.

"Did you find anything?" Draco asked as he re-entered the apartment through the fireplace.

Harry nodded. "It's... interesting," he said, his mind still reeling with the news of the Bind.

He handed the blonde the copies, and Draco eyed through the information quickly.

"But..." he began, staring open-mouthed at Harry. "This can't... I mean... how?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know, but that's the stuff I found. Pretty interesting, don't you think? And to think that the two of us actually went through with it?" He read out loud from the piece of paper.

"The Heart Bind is one of the strongest magical binds two wizards can perform. It ties the wizards to each other with a combination of soul- and heart-magic. The process of doing so is painful and requires, among other things, that the two parties exchange blood (for more exact instructions on the spell, see 'Heart- and soul-magic' by Ordena Olivoft).

Draco's eyes went from Harry to the parchment and back up again. "How can *anyone* do this willingly?" he asked in disbelief.

"Once the Heart Bind is in place, the two wizards/witches will be able to, among other things, feel each other's pain and happiness. If one party is injured, the other can heal it, although it requires a great deal of energy.

"At the same time, the Bind can weaken both wizards/witches. If one party is hurt, the other one will be affected as well.

"Several spells are much easier to perform once the Bind is in place. Among them is the Audiosis spell (telepathic abilities, see page 256), and several healing/strengthening spells.

"The Heart Bind is highly unusual. It takes a powerful wizard or witch to perform the Binding, and the two parties have to trust each other completely. The more powerful the two parties are, the stronger the Bind will be once in place. No matter what magical strength the wizards have, it will not affect the length of the bind. It is a forever-bind. If one party dies, the other will die within weeks. If one party decides to leave, both will die.

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This is why the Heart Bind is frowned upon by the wizarding community and not performed very often.

“The last bind to be performed was in 1827 between Avongara Aidée and Lev Layndu. That did not end happily; after six years of marriage, Avongara fell in love with another man. She left Lev, and both died eight days later.”

“You do know that the us of this place are really stupid, right?” Harry said when he’d finished.

“How could we *ever* decide to do something like this?” Draco asked. “It’s crazy!”

They sat in silence, contemplating the information they’d just received. Finally, Harry asked, “Do you want to try it?”

Draco stared at him. “What? You want to redo the Heart Bind spells?”

“No, you dummy,” Harry said. “I meant the telepathic abilities.”

The blonde continued to stare at him. “I’m not so sure I want you prowling about in my private thoughts, Potter,” he said.

“Got something to hide?” Harry asked innocently.

“No, but that still doesn’t mean I want you in my head,” Draco replied with a glare.

Harry grinned at him. “You get to ‘prowl around’ in my head as well, isn’t that good enough for a deal?”

Draco continued to glare at him, and Harry was getting quite sure that the blonde would refuse when he finally said, “Fine. I’m in.”

The raven-haired boy gave him a big smile. “Good!” he exclaimed, then looked through the pieces of parchment. “Now let’s see what we’re supposed to do... Oh, here it is,” Harry said as he found the right paper. He read out loud,

“The ‘Audiosis’ spell is a very complicated spell but with very easy instructions. The spell deals with gaining access to another person’s thoughts, and is therefore very hard to perform successfully. (Heart Bind mates are known to perform this spell easier on each other, see Heart Bind, page 143).

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“The only thing the wizards/witches need to do is to say the spell ‘Audiosis’ together with the other person’s name. The mind has strong shields around it for protection, however, and therefore very few are successful.”

“For Heart Bind mates, the spell will be hard to begin with, but easier and easier as you get used to your mate. When the parties are completely comfortable with each other, they won’t need the spell at all; if they want the other one to hear it, the other person will.”

Draco looked unsure. “Do you really think this is wise?”

“Since when have you cared about wise?” Harry shot back at him. “Yes, I’m sure. What bad could come out of it?”

The blonde looked like he could think of plenty of bad things that could come out of it.

“Oh come on, Malfoy,” Harry said, reverting back to his old name for the other boy. “It’s not dangerous.”

“How do you know, you’ve never tried it before,” Draco muttered. He looked at Harry suspiciously. “Or have you?”

“No,” Harry said tiredly, “I have *not* tried to read your thoughts before. Now, can we *please* try this?”

Draco gave him one final glare and nodded. “All right. So I’m just supposed to say those words and you will hear my thoughts?”

Harry shrugged. “That’s what it says.”

“Okay,” the blonde said, taking a deep breath and closing his eyes. Harry did the same to be able to concentrate better. He had no doubt that this would be hard; he would need all the focus he had. He and Draco didn’t share the same bond that he assumed the Harry and Draco of this time did, so it would be even harder.

“*Audiosis Draco,*” Harry said, at the same time as Draco said the same thing with Harry’s name.

Nothing happened.

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He opened his eyes slightly to look at the other boy, and saw his face scrunched up in concentration. He was obviously trying very hard, despite the verbal battle they'd just fought on whether to do this at all or not. It was a bit strange how the blonde could change so quickly, but he did, and Harry found it a bit... intriguing. You never knew what to expect from Draco, so the time spent with him was never boring. Harry could get annoyed with him, he could share the boy's pain, he could get into dangerous situations because of him, but he was never *bored*.

The Slytherin opened his eyes and glared at Harry.

"Are you going to do this or are you just going to check me out?" he asked.

Harry blushed scarlet and muttered, "Sorry."

"You were the one who wanted to do this, not me," Draco reminded him.

"Yes, I know!" Harry exclaimed, followed in a more quiet voice, "Let's try it again."

The blonde nodded and took another deep breath and closed his eyes again.

"*Audiosis Harry*," he said again, while Harry said it for Draco.

Harry thought they had failed again, when he suddenly heard,

'Harry?'

'Draco?'

'Yes, *that would be me.*'

'*We're actually doing this? I mean, I'm not just imagining your voice in my head and turning into a nutcase?*'

'*No Potter, you're really not. Well, actually, you might still be, but -*'

'*Oh shut up, Draco. And stop calling me 'Potter'! We agreed to call each other by first names like two weeks ago.*'

'*Fine, Harry,*' Draco grumbled. Harry was amazed that the blonde could sneer even in his thoughts.

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'Should we open our eyes and see if it still works?' Harry asked.

'All right.'

'On three: One, two, three.'

Harry opened his eyes at the exact same time as Draco did. Their eyes met and the Boy Who Lived heard the blonde's voice, *'Can you still hear me?'*

It was the strangest sensation, Harry thought with amazement. He heard Draco speak, but the boy's lips weren't moving. It felt surreal. *'Yes, I can hear you,'* he told Draco. The blonde gave him a small, triumphant smile.

'This is cool. I can actually hear your thoughts.'

Harry nodded. It was very cool indeed. He couldn't really decide what he thought of having Draco in there, inside his head, but just like sharing a bed with him, it wasn't altogether that horrible. It would probably be worse to hear Hermione in his head, especially the Hermione at home – she would never stop reminding him of the homework that needed to be done, and that he *really* shouldn't be out walking around Hogwarts in the middle of the night.

'Now how do we end this?' Draco asked.

Harry looked at the papers. There was nothing about ending the telepathy. "Um," Harry said out loud, "There's nothing in here about that."

"What?" Draco screamed, both in his thoughts and out loud. Harry winced at the harsh sound, but the blonde didn't notice. He was rapidly going through the parchments, trying to find anything on breaking the telepathy.

"I don't want you in my head for the rest of my life!" the Slytherin cried as he came up empty.

'Neither do I!' Harry said, *'Now stop screaming at me. I'm getting a bloody headache.'*

'Sorry,' Draco muttered without sincerity in his thoughts, still glaring at Harry.

"Go check the books in the other room," Harry told Draco. "There must be something on breaking a telepathy spell."

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'And try not to think so loudly,' he added as the blonde disappeared out of the room without a word. He could hear Draco's jumbled thoughts passing through his own mind at an incredible rate. Most of them were along the lines of, *'I should curse Harry for letting him trick me into this bleeding telepathy business to start with.'*

'I can still hear you, you know,' Harry thought to Draco.

'Good,' the blonde replied sourly.

Harry continued through the pieces of parchment, but he found nothing new.

They searched the entire evening, both getting more and more exhausted from constantly hearing the other one's thoughts. They both had strong headaches by the time the clock struck eleven. Harry wanted nothing but to sleep, yet he wouldn't let himself – he needed to find the ending spell. He couldn't fight the weariness off for very long, however, and all of a sudden, he was asleep on the couch with pieces of parchment scattered everywhere around him.

He was back in the room with the stonewalls, and the thick ropes that cut into his wrists were back in place. Everything around him was black, a never-ending darkness that seemed to mock him.

There was a flash of light and suddenly the family stood before him. The little girl was there, crying her eyes out, her lips forming the word, 'Mummy!' again and again, yet no sound would come out. The small boy sat next to her; they were both bound and their wrists were bleeding, just like Harry's.

"You did this to my children!" came Mr Hanawalt's angry voice. *"You did this! It is your fault!"*

"No," Harry cried, *"I didn't mean to... It wasn't supposed to be like this..."*

The dark shadows moved around him, and just like the darkness had, they were mocking him. Laughing at him.

"I want you to show us... On Mr Potter here," one of them said, *and placed a gun in Brian's hands. The child looked up at Harry, and said,*

"You deserve this!"

The shot rang out, and Harry screamed. Around him, the shadows were laughing at him. Harry bent forward; he couldn't breathe... His head was ringing with the cackling laughter, and the sound of his rapid

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heartbeat. He was falling, down, down, down... His world was black; his world was pain... He gasped for air, but found he couldn't take a breath. His body screamed for air, yet he couldn't give it.

He screamed; it was all he could do.

"Shh..."

Warmth surrounded him for a brief second, and he could breathe again, just for a little moment. Then the warmth disappeared and the darkness surrounded him again. He was still falling.

Something soft was around him, cradling him like a mother would her child.

"Shh..."

Harry looked around; suddenly the surroundings had changed. He was by a lake, lying in the grass, watching the water move before his eyes. The sky was blue, and the sun warmed him where he was.

"You're okay, Harry..."

He wondered where he was and whom the strange voice belonged to. It seemed familiar... He didn't want to think about it right now, though – he only wanted to enjoy the feeling of the warming sun on his skin and the way the grass tickled him and the blood that flowed from his wounds... no, that wasn't right...

Searing pain followed again, and he felt the change around him. The blue sky was covered in black clouds and the water was raging, splashing up angrily over him. A cold wind swept by him, making him shiver. He wanted to leave, to find shelter, but he couldn't move. Fear gripped his heart again.

"It's all your fault..."

"It is not your fault, Harry!"

The calm, soothing voice was back, and Harry felt the warmth around him.

"It is not your fault, you did nothing wrong. Now just relax... You're okay, and you're safe..."

Finally, Harry let himself relax as the sky became blue and the water calmed down again. He closed his eyes and felt a pair of strong arms wrap themselves around his body.

He was safe.

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## Chapter Nine Share my mind

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When Harry awoke the next morning, it was to the strange sensation of being held by another person. It was strange because Harry had never woken up like that before.

The soft body pressed to his back, thin yet strong arms wrapped around his waist - Harry knew without seeing his face that Draco was the person behind him. Harry could feel it, as well as the fact that there weren't a lot of people it could be since they were the only two living in the apartment.

His mind was silent now, he noticed; only his own thoughts were in there. That most likely meant that Draco was still asleep, for Harry didn't think that the spell had been cancelled just because they'd fallen asleep. He knew it had to be more complicated than that to get out of the situation they'd created.

He wondered how Draco had ended up with him on the couch. As far as Harry could remember, the blonde had not been there when he'd fallen asleep. He didn't even think he'd been in the same room. So what had happened?

He remembered his dream, the warmth and the softly spoken words.

Was that all Draco? Was it *Draco* of all people who'd made him feel so safe and protected? He couldn't believe that... And yet at the same time he had no problem at all believing it. Draco had changed since they got here; he was no longer acting like the spoiled Death Eater son he had always been at home, at Hogwarts. Of course, that wasn't entirely true either; Draco hadn't been acting the part of a spoiled Death Eater's son in quite a while. Ever since the start of their fifth year, the blonde had been much quieter. He hadn't called Hermione 'Mudblood' very often; neither had he called Ron 'Weasel'. In fact, he'd been keeping more and more to himself lately. He did still have the occasional fights with Harry, but the raven-haired boy began to wonder now if that was all an act.

Draco would have to continue playing the part of Muggle-hating brat so that his father wouldn't get suspicious. If Draco had joined the good side at the beginning of their fifth

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year, then he would have to be a very good actor to get away with it without Lucius noticing anything strange about his son.

Yet at some point, Lucius *would* notice something odd. If the future they were living in really was what was going to happen, then Mr Malfoy would find something out about Draco and a kidnapping would follow.

If they came back knowing all this, would they try to change it? Harry wondered. Would Draco ask Harry to let Lucius live? Probably not since the blonde had told Harry he wasn't sorry to hear about Lucius' demise. Yet still... Would they try to avoid Draco's kidnapping completely, and with that change the whole future? Was it even *possible*? Perhaps it was all planned out already. Maybe Harry and Draco were *supposed* to come here, to the future, and learn some things.

Harry's thoughts were abruptly interrupted when Draco moved and moaned behind him. Harry could hear him waking up; his thoughts were beginning to seep back into Harry's brain. He felt him stretch and then cuddle closer.

Then he froze suddenly.

'Harry?' came the uncertain question.

"Yes," Harry said out loud, a small smile playing around his lips at the sound of Draco's small voice.

'What are you doing?' The voice wasn't accusing as Harry had thought it would be, but instead it continued in the same soft, small and confused tone.

"I was sleeping here," Harry said, still talking out loud and still not turning around to face Draco. He didn't think it would go over too well with the blonde to suddenly be face-to-face only inches away from each other.

"And me?"

"You were sleeping here as well." Harry couldn't help but tease the blonde a bit by replying with things that were obvious. This time, Draco took notice of the way he was being treated.

"Thank you," he sneered, and began to get up from his position behind Harry. "I think I will just go away now. Or perhaps you would like to?"

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Harry got up as well, without answering Draco. *'Do you want breakfast?'* he asked, walking out of the room.

'No, I'm going to take a shower.'

Harry tried hard not to let images of Draco in the shower flood his mind – it would be bad enough to think about it, but it would be even worse to have Draco know that he was thinking it.

'Want to join me?' Draco asked slyly.

'No!'

Think breakfast, Harry, he thought and busied himself with making coffee for Draco and tea for himself. He took bread out of the freezer and warmed it with a wave of his wand.

Ten minutes later, Draco entered the kitchen, showered and dressed. He was wearing Muggle clothes, Harry noted.

"I'm going to the library," Draco said, hearing Harry's thoughts. "Can't walk around there in robes, now can I?"

'Just never thought that the day would come when I saw you in real Muggle clothing,' Harry told him, taking a sip of his tea. *'Didn't think you even knew what they looked like.'*

Draco grabbed the cup of coffee. *'There are a lot of things you don't know about me.'*

'I've noticed.'

*

Draco spent the entire morning, up until noon, at the library. They could still hear the other one's thoughts as clearly as if they were standing next to each other, they noticed with distaste. Harry could hear everything that Draco was reading, and because of that, he had to point out things quite often. This resulted in a very annoyed Draco – and then an irritated Harry when the blonde wouldn't listen to him. All in all, it probably took Draco three times longer to find the right book than it would have if he'd been alone in his mind.

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He was reading a book about counter spells of all kinds when he finally found the right one.

'The counter spell to the famous Audiosis spell is the less common Mutus spell. It works just like Audiosis – just say, 'Mutus' together with the person in question's name, and Audiosis will be cancelled.'

Draco was home only two minutes later. They stood in the living room just like they had the afternoon before, facing each other.

'Let's put a stop to this, shall we?' Draco asked and Harry nodded.

'Mutus Draco!' Harry said clearly.

'Mutus Harry!' said Draco at the same time.

Suddenly, it got very quiet inside Harry's head. He could no longer hear Draco's thoughts run amok in there, and it felt very nice to be alone again.

"I can't hear you anymore," Draco said, obviously relieved. "You can't hear me either, right?"

Harry shook his head. "Nope, it's just me and my thoughts, alone at last."

They did do the spell again during the following days. Now that they knew the counter spell, neither one minded practicing the spell very much. It would take them a long time before they could do it without saying the spell first, but it was getting better. As soon as it got annoying to have the other person prowling about in their heads, they cancelled the spell. Of course, that happened quite soon, so their practice sessions were never very long.

Five days after their first attempt at the spell, they were still training when the doorbell rang. They looked at each other, confused, for it was the first time anyone had used the doorbell rather than entering through the fireplace. Well, they hadn't had much company in the apartment at all really, since the Weasleys had been there over a week ago.

"Are you going to open it?" Draco drawled.

Harry glared at him, wondering why the blonde couldn't do it. The other boy just ignored him and continued to read.

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The Boy Who Lived got up from his place in the couch and walked down the hallway to the front door. The doorbell rang again; apparently he was taking too long. He opened the door, not expecting anyone in particular. Perhaps someone had the wrong address?

He stared at the people outside of the door.

“Um, hi, Mr Potter,” Mr Hanawalt said.

Harry continued to stare at them, his dreams flashing by him. *“It’s your fault...”*

“Did we come at a bad time?” Mrs Hanawalt asked, bringing him back to the present time.

The raven-haired boy shook his head. “No, no, you didn’t,” he said, trying to stop staring at the family. “Come in, please.”

Riley and Brian, the couple’s children, walked inside with tentative looks on their faces. The little girl took off her coat. She was wearing a denim dress, white tights and black polished shoes. Her shoulder-length brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail, with her bangs still covering most of her forehead. In short, Riley looked adorable – much better than the last time he’d seen her. Tears running down her cheeks, unable to speak... The dreams and memories assaulted him yet again.

While the others took their outdoor garments off, Mrs Hanawalt held out a bouquet of flowers to Harry.

“I know it’s not much, but it’s something,” she said.

Harry took the flowers – a beautiful arrangement of Irises – looking completely flabbergasted. “What – why?” he managed.

“We are so sorry that you got involved in... what happened,” Mr Hanawalt said. “I still don’t know exactly why they were so interested in us, but I’m very sorry for the pain you were put through.”

Harry was a bit surprised that the Ministry had let the Hanawalts remember anything about the kidnapping at all – considering how much magic had been involved – and then he realized that perhaps the Ministry didn’t know at all. After all, it was the Order who’d known about the operation, and Ron and Hermione had been ordered to keep the Ministry far, far away from it.

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“It’s not... I mean,” Harry muttered, “I’m sorry for what happened. It wasn’t your fault at all.”

The elder Hanawalts just smiled at him while the children began to walk further into the apartment.

“We know about the failed operation,” Mr Hanawalt said.

Harry stared at him.

“Mr Dumbledore visited us at the hospital,” Mrs Hanawalt filled in. “He thought it would be good for us to know just what happened and why.”

Dumbledore had talked to the Hanawalts? Why hadn’t he been informed? Harry wondered. They hadn’t seen or heard anything from the Headmaster of Hogwarts since Harry’s hospitalisation, and the Boy Who Lived wondered how the old wizard could have kept something like this from him.

“Oh,” was all that he could say to the Hanawalts.

“Harry!” Draco’s voice made the raven-haired boy turn around.

“Yes, Draco?” he asked, and fought not to laugh. Both Riley and Brian were climbing all over the blonde, and he looked none too happy about it. “We have guests,” Harry said simply, for he knew it would be the best way to annoy the blonde.

“Thank you, *Potter*,” Draco growled.

“I do believe you’ve met each other before?” Harry said to Draco. “This is Mr and Mrs Hanawalt, and their children, Riley and Brian. Dumbledore seems to have told them just why they were kidnapped.”

Now it was Draco’s turn to stare, first at Harry, then at the elder Hanawalts. He woke up when Riley grabbed hold of his hair and pulled it.

“Ouch!” Draco exclaimed. Riley looked at him with a scared look on her face and ran to hide behind her mother. The blonde didn’t do anything to comfort the child; instead he just looked at Harry. “And he didn’t see fit to *inform* us of this?”

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“Apparently not,” Harry sighed. He turned to the Hanawalts. “You’ve met Draco before, I’m told, but I’m going to assume that you haven’t been introduced. Mr Hanawalt, Mrs Hanawalt, this is Draco Malfoy.”

“It’s so nice to finally be introduced to our rescuer,” Mrs Hanawalt said and Draco blushed to match the hallway walls.

“I’m not – I mean – that’s not,” he muttered incoherently.

“Let’s go sit down in the living room,” Harry suggested. Now that Draco had taken over the part of the stuttering, disbelieving host, he would have to be the one to get a real conversation going. It would certainly be interesting to see just how much the Hanawalts knew.

They moved through the hallway, and Brian exclaimed, “Mum! Look at the pictures! They’re *moving!*”

Harry grinned at him. He’d reacted about the same way the first time he’d seen the moving photographs and paintings. In fact, there were still times when they amazed him.

Riley asked her mother to lift her so that she could see properly, but Harry was faster. He grabbed her under her arms and lifted the happy three-year-old into the air. Her eyes widened as she saw the people moving in the pictures, and she stretched her hand out to finger them. When she found that she couldn’t actually touch the little people in the pictures, she frowned.

A few minutes later, they’d managed to make it through the corridor and sat down on the couch. Riley and Brian were running around the room, looking at the moving paintings on the walls and chasing each other all over the place. Mr and Mrs Hanawalt sat on the couch while Harry pulled another chair to the low glass table and Draco sat in the armchair.

Harry thought for a moment, then muttered, “*Audiosis Draco,*” and hoped it worked.

‘*Draco, can you hear me?*’

The blonde nodded to him, and did the same thing himself. “*Audiosis Harry,*” he said so quietly Mr and Mrs Hanawalt couldn’t hear. Harry was amazed when Draco’s spell also worked the first time he tried it. They must be getting used to both each other and the spell.

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Harry turned to Mr and Mrs Hanawalt. “Please excuse the rude wording of the questions I’m going to ask,” he said, “But we need to know exactly how much you know and remember.”

Mr Hanawalt smiled to him. “Everything, Mr Potter,” he said. “Dumbledore gave us the option of a forgetting-spell, but we said no. He did perform one on the children, though; we don’t think that they should have to remember any of it.”

Harry nodded gravely. “Sounds like a good idea,” he said. *‘The poor children shouldn’t have to remember that.’*

‘No,’ Draco agreed. *‘In fact, I’d rather not remember it, either.’*

“What did Professor Dumbledore tell you?” Draco asked, tilting his head slightly.

“He’s a Professor?” Mrs Hanawalt asked, interested.

Harry nodded, “Yes. Well, actually, he’s the Headmaster at Hogwarts.”

“That’s the Wizarding School, right?” Mr Hanawalt asked. “I’m having a hard time remembering the names...”

Harry nodded again. “Yeah, Hogwarts is the Wizarding School. Now, to get back to the topic at hand...?”

Mrs Hanawalt gave him a gentle smile. She said, “He explained to us about Volde- sorry, You-Know-Who.”

Harry smiled slightly at her. “It’s all right. We use his real name here.”

‘Just here? Have you ever used anything but his real name?’ Draco asked him. Harry shot him a look.

“Okay, well, he told us about Voldemort, and that he was the one behind the kidnapping. He said he didn’t know why he kidnapped us, but he also told us that it might have to do with Carl’s knowledge of guns?” Harry and Draco nodded at her.

“Then, when he’d told us about Voldemort, he had to explain to us about... magic. He explained about your school, though he didn’t mention that he was the Headmaster there,

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and a little about your world. My guess is that he didn't even begin to cover it all, but we gained some understanding at least."

'But why did Dumbledore feel it was better that they know?' Harry asked.

'I don't know, but there must be some reason. The Headmaster doesn't do things just like that,' Draco replied. He looked around the room, and his eyes stopped on the children. *'You know what?'*

'What?'

'I think I know exactly why Professor let them know.'

Harry followed Draco's gaze to look at Riley. She was holding something in her hand... and in front of her a piece of paper was floating calmly in the air...

"My wand!" Harry exclaimed and jumped up from his seat. He ran over to the child quickly and took the wand from her in one fluid motion. The piece of paper fell to the ground as he picked the little girl up in his arms.

'I think we have a future student for Hogwarts,' Harry heard Draco think.

'Most definitely.'

Riley's parents were staring at their daughter. She in turn was trying to get Harry's wand back from him, and pouted when he held it out of reach. He shook his head at her. "No, I don't think so," he smiled at her. She just pouted more.

"What – what did she just do?" Mr Hanawalt said, still staring wide-eyed at his daughter.

"It seems your daughter is a future witch," Harry replied calmly, "Which would explain why Dumbledore decided that you could and should remember about the Wizarding world."

"Our daughter? A *witch*?" Mrs Hanawalt asked. She didn't sound disgusted by it though; more shocked and a little bit curious.

"Seems like it," Harry said again.

While the grown-ups were talking, Riley seemed to have decided that Harry's lap was a comfortable place to be. She snuggled closer, wrapping his robes – which Harry now

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realized probably were quite odd to the elder Hanawalts – around her tightly. She yawned and closed her eyes, oblivious to the shock she'd just given her parents.

'Looks like you have a fan, Potter,' Draco smirked at him.

'Oh do shut up, Malfoy.'

The afternoon proceeded calmly after that. Harry and Draco continued to speak to each other telepathically whilst talking to Mr and Mrs Hanawalt at the same time. Riley slept for nearly two hours on Harry's lap, looking completely content where she was.

Harry explained more about Voldemort: some background history, excluding the part about him being the famous 'Boy Who Lived'. He didn't need that attention added to the way the Hanawalts were already looking at him. He guessed that for two grown-ups, the information about a hidden Wizarding community was quite overwhelming. It must be easier for a child to accept; Harry himself only remembered feeling excited about the new world he was led into by Hagrid at the age of eleven, never overwhelmed.

Draco in turn explained more about their work as Healers. The little he and Harry knew, that was. After all, Harry and Draco didn't know even close to everything about being Healers.

"I hardly remember it," Mrs Hanawalt said when Draco had told them about the healing he'd preformed after the kidnapping. "All I can recall is warmth, and that it felt good inside."

Mr Hanawalt agreed. "I don't think we were too coherent at the time," he smiled gently at them. "I remember the fear for Riley and Brian, and then, just like Anna said, the warmth."

"I can't tell you how thankful we are for what you did," Mrs Hanawalt said. "Without you, I'd be either at the hospital still – or perhaps I'd be dead."

She shuddered, and Harry saw Mr Hanawalt squeeze her hand in comfort.

Draco's cheeks were red, Harry noted out of the corner of his eye. The young man obviously wasn't used to people thanking him so much. Harry decided to add a little to it.

'I think that goes for me too, Draco,' he thought, filling his inner voice with both a bit of irony – to annoy the blonde – and a bit of honesty – he was thankful, after all. *'So thank you.'*

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He watched with amusement as Draco turned a deeper shade of red. *'Ob sod off,'* he muttered in his thoughts.

Finally, three hours after they'd arrived, the Hanawalts stood to leave. Riley had just woken up, so she was rubbing her eyes as her mother put her coat on. Brian, who'd been reading some book he'd found in one of the bookcases, didn't want to leave.

"Oh," Draco said, "You can borrow the book if you want to."

The boy's face lit up and he threw himself at Draco as Harry stared at the Slytherin. Who'd replaced Draco with this child friendly alien? The blonde seemed to be ignoring Harry, for he was hugging Brian, but then Harry heard, *'What? You're the only one who's allowed to have a fan club?'*

Harry grinned at him. *'Nope, you just go right ahead...'*

He turned to Mr and Mrs Hanawalt. "I hope that the afternoon wasn't wasted?" he asked with a grin.

Mrs Hanawalt smiled at him. "Definitely not," she said. "Thank you, Mr Potter. For everything."

Harry returned the smile. "Please, call me Harry."

"And call me Draco!" the blonde told them from behind.

"If you call us Anna and Carl. 'Mr and Mrs Hanawalt' make us sound so... old."

Draco and Harry grinned and nodded at them. They said their good-byes, and Riley hugged both of them, before the family left. Harry stood and stared at the closed door after them.

'Well, that was certainly an interesting afternoon,' Harry heard Draco say.

'Interesting is not a strong enough word for it.'

'I can't wait to see those two at Hogwarts.'

'Those two?'

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“Oh come on,” Draco said out loud. “Don’t tell me you didn’t feel the magic radiating off the boy.”

Harry shrugged. “I guess I wasn’t concentrating on that.”

Draco smirked at him. “No, you were too busy coddling the little girl.”

The raven-haired boy ignored Draco’s comment. “She’s cute,” he said, remembering how it felt to have Riley sleeping in his arms. “Do you want kids?”

Draco stared at Harry. “What did you say?”

“I asked you if you want kids. You seemed to be quite happy with Brian, just like I was with Riley,” Harry said, shrugging.

The blonde gave him a small smile. “I want kids. Someday.”

“Don’t you think it’ll be a bit hard?” Harry asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if this is the future or *a* future at least, which we’re fairly certain it is, then you and I will be... together... for some reason I can’t explain,” he added, and continued, “And if we’re together, we really won’t have children.”

‘If we’re together, then we’ll find a way,’ Draco said to him.

Harry paused for a moment, then asked, *‘Have you gotten used to it yet?’*

‘Used to what?’

‘Us being together here in this place,’ Harry said.

Draco looked at him. “It’s getting easier.”

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### Chapter Ten: You make me feel the strangest things

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Ron and Hermione sent an owl to Harry and Draco the next day. The note that the owl came with was short.

“Harry and Draco,

We will be having an early Christmas Party tonight. You are most welcome. We will start at six. Professor Dumbledore says he has news that will interest us.

Love,

Hermione and Ron”

Harry knew that if Dumbledore ‘had news’, it most likely had to do with the Order. He wondered if ‘Christmas Party’ was just a cover for a meeting with the Order.

Harry was clad in his favourite robes when they floo-ed to the Weasley castle at three minutes till six that night. The robes were black and completely open in the front. With it he had a pair of tight-fitting leather pants and boots, as well as a shirt with a semi-high collar.

“Nice outfit, Potter,” Draco had said with a low whistle when he’d first seen Harry.

Harry grinned at him. “You don’t look too bad yourself.”

The blonde had his long hair hanging loose down his shoulders, unlike Harry who preferred to have his in a ponytail. Draco was clad in all black and silver; his pants leather just like Harry’s. His black robes fell from his shoulders, almost reaching his knees. A pin held the robes together right by his collarbone. Underneath he wore a light grey shirt, and on his feet he had boots, just like Harry.

The Weasley’s castle living room was filled with people. Everyone was talking, which resulted in a rather high volume, and in the back, some music Harry didn’t recognize – although it sounded rather Christmas-y – played. The people stood scattered in groups and were speaking and laughing between amongst themselves. Harry recognized several,

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although they had changed from the last time he'd seen them – when he was at Hogwarts in his own time.

It looked like the whole Weasley family was there. Harry saw both Mrs and Mr Weasley speaking to Hermione – whose stomach had definitely grown since Harry saw her last – and Ron was talking to Bill. He also saw Percy standing with his girlfriend from Hogwarts, Penelope Clearwater. Unlike most of the others in the room, Penelope looked exactly like she had then. She had a baby on her arm and Harry remembered the comment about Mr and Mrs Weasley becoming grandparents for the third time. Percy was obviously one of the proud fathers. Harry looked around for Charlie and Ginny, but couldn't spot them. Of course, they could be somewhere else than the living room.

Harry also saw Remus and Sirius. They were standing by one of the trays of aperitifs, eating and talking happily to each other.

Seamus Finnigan, the Irish boy with the sandy brown hair, looked much the same as he had seven years earlier. The differences were that he was a bit taller and more muscled than before, and his hair was cut off to a half an inch in length.

It seemed he was still best friends with Dean Thomas, for the two were standing talking to each other happily in one of the corners. Dean, who'd been tall back in school, was even taller now, and Harry wondered who the taller one was – Ron or Dean.

“Hey Harry! Draco!” Seamus said happily when he spotted them. Draco stared at them – even after a month in this reality, he wasn't used to how nicely the former Gryffindors were treating him.

“Hello Seamus, Dean,” Harry said and elbowed the blonde beside him to get him to stop staring.

“How are you? ‘aven't seen you in a while,” Seamus said.

“We've been... busy,” Harry said, and tried to make it sound like they really had been busy.

“Ah, yes,” Dean said with a secretive smile, looking between Draco and Harry. “I'm sure you have been.”

“Well,” Draco drawled, “After we woke up from being unconscious for five days after one of the operations, I had a vision a few days later, and then Harry was kidnapped and shot and he spent a few days in a coma, and since then we've been taking it quite easy.”

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Dean stared at him. “You *have* been busy,” he said with an amused smile after a few moments.

Draco glared at him, and Harry took his arm. “Excuse us,” he said to Dean and Seamus, and dragged the blonde away.

“What?” Draco exclaimed when they were out of earshot from the two other young men.

“Could you at least *try* and be civil?” Harry asked. “They’re being nice!”

Draco glared at him. “They’re Gryffindors.”

“*Ex*-Gryffindors in this reality. The Draco of this time *likes* them. Because of that, *you* are supposed to like *them*.”

Draco continued to glare daggers at him, but Harry stood unaffected.

“Play nice with the other kids, Draco,” he said and walked back into the crowd of people. He wanted to get a chance to talk to Hermione and Ron before Dumbledore was to start the meeting. He saw Dumbledore over in his favourite chair by the couch, talking to someone... Professor McGonagall? It certainly looked like the Transfigurations teacher. Her grey hair was pulled back in a tight bun, as always.

Off to the side stood Severus Snape, not talking to anyone at all. His permanent scowl was firmly etched on his face and his hair hung down the sides of his face, greasy as it had been since the first time Harry had ever seen him.

“Hello Severus,” Harry said, his feet walking to the Potions Master against his will. “You look like you’re having a good time?”

“Fabulous,” Snape sneered. “Where’s your boyfriend?”

“Oh, Draco is... somewhere. He didn’t feel much like socializing tonight,” Harry replied. “Just like someone else here, it seems.”

“I’m socializing just fine, Harry,” Severus said. “Now go play with the other children. I think Ms Granger wanted to see you.”

Harry grinned at him. “She’s not Ms Granger anymore,” he said.

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“Oh, she’ll always be little Ms Know-It-All Granger, Potter. Just like you’ll always be the Boy Who Lived.” He gave Harry a small smile. “Now shoo.”

Harry laughed at the sound of his Potions Professor tell him to ‘shoo’, but left him shortly afterwards. He made his way through the crowd of people until he found Hermione, still speaking to Mr and Mrs Weasley.

“Hi ‘Mione,” he said.

“Harry!” she exclaimed excitedly and gave him a hug. “I didn’t see you when you came. Have you been here long?”

“Only about fifteen minutes. Sna- Severus was kind enough to inform me that you wished to speak with me.”

“Yes, yes, I did,” she said to Harry. She turned to Mr and Mrs Weasley. “Would you excuse us, please?”

“Of course. We’ll go try the food,” Mr Weasley said. “I heard it was most excellent...”

And they walked off, leaving Harry and Hermione alone. Hermione took Harry by the hand and pulled him into the kitchen. There were a few house elves scurrying around the room, making food and filling glasses with drinks. Harry hadn’t seen any house elves when he’d stayed at the castle and was a bit surprised – Hermione had after all been very much against house elves at one point in her life.

“What did you need, ‘Mione?” he asked.

“I was wondering – well, actually it’s me and Ron wondering... We just wanted to know...”

“‘Mione? You’re rambling,” Harry said gently.

Hermione smiled at him. “We wanted to know if you’d like to be one of the babies’ godfather.”

The Boy Who Lived was a bit shocked, but then a grin found its place on his face. “Absolutely, ‘Mione! I’d love to.”

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Hermione gave him a relieved smile. “Ron is going to ask Draco,” she said. “We’d like him to be one, too.”

Harry hugged her. “I’m sure he’ll be just as excited,” he replied.

“I really hope so. I mean, you two are the only ones we’d consider,” Hermione said.

“Really?”

“You know you are,” she said. “Remus and Sirius are lovely and wonderful, but – Sirius is *your* godfather, Harry. And then there’s Seamus, Dean, or Ron’s family, but they’re just not right. And it’s not like I would ask McGonagall or Severus, even after his heart attack.”

“Heart attack?” Harry asked before he could stop himself. Snape had had a *heart attack*?

Hermione shot him a look. “Yes, the one three years ago from which *you* saved him,” she said. “*Remember?*”

“Um, yeah, of course,” Harry laughed nervously. He was getting way too deep into this.

She continued to stare at him for another few seconds before she said, “Anyway. I know he’s been much nicer since then, but I still don’t want him as the godfather of my children.”

“I understand that,” Harry said, still very nervous and wary about what he was saying. He’d slipped up badly, and Hermione looked more suspicious now than he’d seen her the whole time he’d been in this place.

“Shall we go back to the party?” Hermione asked finally, and the raven-haired boy breathed a sigh of relief. He nodded to her, and they walked back out into the living room.

More people seemed to have arrived, for the room looked fuller than before. Harry hadn’t had time to admire the room’s decorations before, but now he saw it – the large Christmas tree in the corner, next to the fireplace, was decorated beautifully. There were hollies spread out about the room, and mistletoe was hanging in the entrance to the room. Underneath it, one of the Weasley twins was kissing a girl – was that Angelina Johnson? If it was, then the twin snogging her was probably Fred. Were they together, then?

“I’m bored.”

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Harry jumped as he heard Draco's voice in his ear. He turned around to see the blonde look at him.

"And what am I supposed to do about that?" Harry wondered.

"Entertain me?" Draco said hopefully.

"In your dreams."

"Always," the blonde grinned at him. "Whoa, is that Fred Weasley snogging Angelina Johnson?"

Harry arched an eyebrow at Draco. He was surprised that he'd actually recognized the pair beneath the mistletoe.

"I think so," Harry replied.

"Well, it looks like they're having fun. Maybe we should try it?"

Harry stared at him.

Just then, before Harry could reply to what Draco had just said, Dumbledore called the room's attention.

"Good evening everyone," he said pleasantly, his voice magnified to be heard. "I hope you're all enjoying yourselves."

Harry thought it sounded a lot like the speeches the Headmaster held every year during their big feasts and he listened attentively.

"I have some information for all of you. Some bad news, some good.

"First, we will start with the bad news. As most of you know, Mr Malfoy had a vision two weeks ago, and an operation followed, like always. Unfortunately, the operation went wrong this time and a member of the Order died. I want you all to remember Rhonda Gailey for the strong, proud young woman she was and the work she did."

The room was silent as he spoke. Harry saw Linda standing on the other side of the room. Her face was very pale as she heard Dumbledore's speech. He continued on about Rhonda, about her achievements and dreams.

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“We should never forget the ones we lose,” he said. “And it is for their sake, as well as our own, that we continue to fight.”

He continued on for a bit longer, before returning to the Hanawalt family’s kidnapping.

“In this failed operation, the Hanawalt family as well as Mr Potter were kidnapped. We were able to locate them, thanks to Mr Malfoy, though Mr Potter and the family all had to stay at the hospital for a few days afterwards.

“We don’t know the exact reason behind Voldemort’s sudden interest in Muggles, but our spies have told us that his interest lies in the guns. He is looking into ways to make the guns harmful to witches and wizards, as well as the danger they already pose to Muggles.

“We will continue to do our own experiments within the field in order to find a way to stop him.”

Dumbledore smiled slightly. “On a happier note, I have an announcement to make on the behalf of Mr Fred Weasley and Angelina Johnson, whom are now engaged. We all wish you all the happiness in the world.” The crowd applauded and a few men slapped Fred on the back, while Angelina talked excitedly to her girlfriends.

“Now that we have covered all that, I wish you all a happy Yule holiday,” Dumbledore finished, and the crowd applauded him.

The Headmaster of Hogwarts made his way over to Harry. “Could I take a second of your time, Harry?” he asked.

“Sure,” Harry replied, and followed Professor Dumbledore outside.

The night air felt chilly and cold; the temperature had reached below zero for the first time a few days ago. The skies were covered in dark, foreboding clouds and Harry suspected that there would be a storm in the coming days. The wind had already picked up, and he wondered why Dumbledore would choose to go outside to talk. All the people inside seemed to belong to the Order – otherwise the Headmaster wouldn’t have said the things he did earlier – so what was the secret they were going to share now?

“Did you need something from me, Headmaster?” Harry asked, breaking the silence.

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Dumbledore, who'd been looking out over the grounds, seemingly lost in thought, turned to Harry.

“Danger is rising, Harry, my boy,” the old wizard said looking away, out over the grounds surrounding the Weasley Castle.

Harry nodded but didn't say anything. Danger had been rising all his life, and most certainly in the seven years he had no memory of. So what was special now?

“I let Remus and Sirius, along with a few others, get on the case of the guns. They have been training with Mr Hanawalt, as well as tried magic on the weapons.”

“You said they hadn't made any progress,” Harry said, confused.

“They have, my boy, they have,” Dumbledore sighed. He suddenly looked tired and very old. The Boy Who Lived could see the pain of the war in the blue eyes; the twinkle in them subdued. “I do not want to cause a panic among the Order until we are certain that the results weren't just a one-time deal.”

“What – what happened?” Harry asked quietly. He wondered if he wanted to know.

“Remus tried combining several hexes on the bullets, and they found that with the right combination, the bullets can pass through wards and protection spells. If this is what Voldemort has found out, then the Wizarding community is no longer as protected against guns as we were before.”

Harry sat down heavily on the bench behind him. This news was certainly bad. If Voldemort began using guns, then every human on earth was in danger – no one would be safe, and no one would be able to protect themselves. The Muggles were already afraid of the weapons as it was, but it would probably take several casualties before the witches and wizards of the world understood that the danger now applied to them as well. He didn't want that to happen; no lives should have to be spent just because others were too arrogant to see their own weaknesses.

“I want you and Draco both to go to Mr Hanawalt to take lessons,” Dumbledore said. “I will keep you both updated on everything my team finds out, but I would like to know that you can handle a gun.”

Harry swallowed and nodded. He had already planned on taking lessons; however, he hadn't counted on it being this serious. Now it was not a choice anymore – he suspected that

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before long, taking classes in how to handle a Muggle gun would be a means of surviving, just like having your wand close at hand already was.

Dumbledore continued, “I also want you to take Draco home fairly soon. See to it that he gets plenty of rest in the coming days.”

The raven-haired boy looked at the older wizard, frowning. “But why?”

“I suspect that if Voldemort is making as much progress as we are, then it won’t be long before he will try it out by capturing Muggles or wizards or both.”

“And if that happens, Draco will have a vision,” Harry finished for him. He added, in a hopefully sad voice, hoping that Dumbledore would explain one of the mysteries Harry had encountered since coming to this future, “Why does he have to have those visions?”

“His father had it, and Draco inherited when you killed Lucius,” Dumbledore said, answering the question Harry had wanted answered. Again, the Boy Who Lived wondered if the Headmaster knew more than he let on.

“Sometimes I wonder if I shouldn’t have killed Lucius,” Harry said, trying to sound like the twenty-three-year old he supposedly was.

“No reason to look back and question your actions, my boy,” Dumbledore replied. “What is done is done, now look to the future.”

Harry looked up at him, and saw a twinkle of understanding in the Headmaster’s eyes. He didn’t know *exactly* what it meant, yet he understood the underlying meaning of it – ‘I know that you’re not who you say you are, but I still trust you.’ Harry smiled at Dumbledore.

“Yes, Headmaster,” he said, turning back to the door. “Now I’ll go inside and enjoy myself for a little longer before taking Draco home to rest.”

Dumbledore smiled at him and followed Harry inside, leaving the chilly blackness of the outdoors behind.

Inside, the party was still in full swing. People were eating, drinking, laughing and talking, all as old friends. As Harry watched, he realized that the crowd mostly consisted of Gryffindors. He also recognized a few Hufflepuffs, and even fewer Ravenclaws, but the most under-represented Hogwarts house was Slytherin. In fact, the only one Harry knew to

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belong to that particular house was Draco. He knew he shouldn't be surprised – after all, most of the dark wizards tended to come from Slytherin.

Speaking of Slytherins – where was Draco?

Harry spied around the room for the blonde, but couldn't see him. Among the redheaded Weasleys, several black former students, and the brunettes and blondes of the room, Draco would surely stand out with his platinum hair. Yet Harry didn't see him anywhere.

“Have you seen Draco?” Harry asked Ron after looking for five minutes without result.

Ron shook his head ‘no’. “Haven't seen him in a while. Check your room, or the guestrooms. He has been known to crash there when he gets too bored, after all.”

Harry nodded and walked through the crowd towards the guestrooms. He would try those first, since they were on the ground level of the castle, while the bedroom Harry and Draco had shared during their stay was on the second floor. He passed through the beautifully decorated corridor, stopping for a second to look at the pictures on the walls.

Just like on the walls in their apartment, Harry and Draco were in several of the pictures. There wasn't one where they weren't smiling and waving at the camera, although there were those where Draco looked a little unwilling. They looked like a perfectly happy couple, just like Ron and Hermione, and Harry felt a sting of jealousy of the love the Harry and Draco of this time and place shared. He couldn't imagine himself and Draco like that though... there was no way...

He shook his head to clear it and continued down the hall towards the guestrooms.

He opened the door to the room where Draco had first woken up a month ago. The room looked much the same as it had then – the same decorations and furniture, and the same bed, neatly made with green and silver covers.

And right in the middle of the bed sat Draco, cradling a little baby. The baby was, by the looks of it, asleep, contentedly sucking her thumb.

“Draco?” Harry asked, stopping dead in his tracks, his eyes wide.

“Shh,” Draco hushed him. “You'll wake her up.”

Harry continued to stare at him.

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“What?” Draco asked, in a voice that was quiet, yet managed to sound very annoyed.

“You – how – who...?” Harry said dumbly.

“You really like doing that impression of a goldfish, don’t you?” the blonde asked him.

“Shut up,” Harry muttered, moving closer to the bed. He sat down on the side of it and looked down at the little baby. She was beautiful; small nose, a pale complexion, tiny fingers – and red hair that made Harry assume she was a Weasley.

“This is Pearle,” Draco said, not taking his eyes off the precious bundle in his arms. “She’s Percy and Penelope’s daughter.”

“Percy, Penelope and Pearle?” Harry asked, letting out a quiet laugh. “What a family.”

“Well, they’re Weasleys, so what can you expect,” Draco said.

“Draco, you’re cuddling one of the aforementioned Weasleys in your arms. I doubt I could take your comments seriously right now.”

The blonde tore his gaze from the baby to give Harry a glare. “I’m ignoring you,” he said, returning his attention to the little girl.

Harry chuckled. “I can see that.”

They sat in silence, Harry on the side of the bed, and Draco with Pearle on his lap right in the middle. The blonde rested his back against a pillow that was leaning on the wall, and a few minutes later, Harry moved up on the bed and sat down next to Draco. The baby slept on peacefully.

“Was there something you wanted?” Draco asked after several minutes of silence. He didn’t look up at Harry as he spoke, but kept his eyes on Pearle.

Harry looked up from the baby to the blonde. “Dumbledore told me to take you home to rest. He believes you are going to get another vision soon.”

Harry was watching Draco closely as he said it and he noticed the slight widening of the grey eyes. He could also feel the sudden fear radiate from the blonde; the sensation increased by

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their Heart Bind. He knew that the other boy was remembering the old vision and the pain that had come with it.

Then Draco seemed to get himself under control again, for the fear radiating from him lessened to next to nothing.

“It’s okay to be scared, Draco,” Harry said, noticing that the blonde’s hands were still trembling slightly.

“How would you know,” Draco muttered. “You’re never scared.”

Harry stared at him. “I’m never scared?” he asked incredulously. “Draco, just in the past month while I’ve been here in this future, I’ve been scared more times than I can count.”

The Slytherin still refused to look at him.

“I woke up here and I was scared, because I didn’t know where I was. I was scared when I first saw you, lying unconscious on this very bed. I was scared when you had the first vision, and I was scared out of my wits when I was kidnapped... Why do you think I’m never scared?”

“You’re Harry bloody Potter,” Draco muttered. “You’re the proud, brave Gryffindor who fears nothing and is the hero of the Wizarding world.”

“Not by choice,” Harry grumbled back. “If I had a choice, I would never have chosen to be ‘the saviour’.”

Draco was silent for a few moments. Then he said in a small voice, “I don’t want another vision. It hurts.”

Harry offered him a small and hopefully comforting smile. “I know they do,” was all he could find in him to say. He knew that nothing he could say would make Draco less scared of the vision, and time and experience were the only two things that would make them easier. Harry assumed, from the conversation Hermione had had with Ron that the Draco of this time *had* become used to them, since Hermione had said that the visions hadn’t hurt like that in a long time.

Without warning, Draco sighed and leaned over on Harry, resting his head on the raven-haired boy’s shoulder. Pearle was still held securely in his arms. He was overwhelmed by the sense of security radiating off the blonde in waves, and sat uncomfortably on the bed for

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several minutes. Then finally, he gave a small sigh, placed his arm around Draco's shoulders, and relaxed into the bed.

He didn't see the small smile on Draco's lips as they both fell asleep a few minutes later.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Eleven

### He who angers you conquers you

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Pearle had woken them up two hours later, screaming her lungs out and thus demanding that they hand her over to her mother. Harry and Draco had gone looking for Penelope, and found her a few minutes later. The baby quieted almost immediately. From the short conversation with the redheaded mother, Harry understood that it wasn't the first time Draco had taken care of her and Percy's daughter. He also found out that Percy and Penelope had another child, a two-and-a-half-year-old boy, Peter.

Harry and Draco had bid Hermione and Ron, as well as a few others, good-bye before stepping into the fire to go home. It was about eleven at night by the time they crawled into bed.

The following days passed peacefully, like the calm before the storm. Even the weather seemed to agree with them; it continued to grow worse, but the full-out storm was yet to come. It was raining constantly, and the wind had increased to the point where it took the owls twice as long to deliver a letter.

Harry walked down to Mr Hanawalt's shop – which had been mostly restored after the kidnapping – and signed himself and Draco up for one of the beginner's classes. Carl had been delighted, and asked him if he still wanted the gun he'd asked for before the kidnapping. Harry said yes, and Carl promised that he would get the papers in order once again. Harry also asked how the children were doing and if they would like to come over some time.

“Sure,” laughed Mr Hanawalt. “You just go ahead and take them whenever you want to!”

Draco was on edge, Harry soon noticed. He snapped at the Boy Who Lived even more than usual; then sent him a look of excuse before going into the bedroom and closing the door. They didn't talk much and even the researching of a way to get home, for Healers and of Heart Binds, was set-aside for now. Draco paced restlessly through the apartment as Harry tried to find a way for him to help the blonde once the vision hit. He couldn't find anything. He wondered what would happen if they shared a telepathy-connection during the vision. Could he share the pain with Draco in that case? Would he be able to soothe him?

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Harry wasn't very surprised by his eagerness to protect Draco. In the past month, they had grown together, albeit unconsciously. Despite the fact that Draco was snapping at him every thirty seconds right now, Harry knew that *it wasn't for real*. It was just the blonde's nervousness needing an outlet. He would say things, tell Harry to shut up, and just flat out ignore him, but when the Boy Who Lived pointed this out, the blonde gave him a look that said 'sorry'.

Two months ago, Harry would probably have labelled this development as impossible. Of course, two months ago, none of this had happened.

It was strange – and a bit incredible – what a new world, future, whatever, could do.

He stood by the window next to the fireplace in the living room with a cup of tea in his hands. The rain was smattering against the window, grey clouds filling the sky. On the street below, Muggles were hurrying by, all soaking wet. Pity they didn't know any water-resistant spells.

“What are you thinking about?” a voice behind him asked.

“Everything,” Harry replied.

“That's a lot to think about,” Draco said with a smile and a nod.

The Boy Who Lived shot him a look. “As if you'd know.”

“I think you just insulted my ability to think, Mr Potter,” Draco said, eyebrow raised and arms crossed over his chest.

“I think you're right.”

Draco pouted at him and walked over to the couch. He flicked his wand at the fireplace. “*Incendio*,” he muttered and a fire started. Harry turned from the window to the blonde.

“You okay?” he asked.

“Yeah,” the Slytherin answered with a small nod. “So far, so good, you know.”

“You're nervous.”

Time out of Place

“No use trying to hide it from you, is there?” Draco asked, studying his fingers.

“We may not have been the ones who cast the Heart Bind spell to begin with, but I can definitely feel what you so openly broadcast,” Harry said softly.

“I do *not* broadcast my feelings,” Draco said indignantly.

Harry looked out the window and said calmly, “To me you do.”

“It’s just... I keep walking around, knowing that it could basically hit at *any* time, and that’s annoying. A little part of me actually *wants* it to come. Just to have it over with. Except it won’t be over with. It will happen again and again...” Draco looked sadly at his hands. “I don’t get it – why do I get these visions? I thought that was your area, not mine.”

Harry suddenly realized that he hadn’t told the blonde what he’d found out from the Headmaster.

“Dumbledore told me that Lucius had a link just like yours to Voldemort and the Death Eaters,” he said to Draco. “When I... when he was killed, you sort of inherited the link. Don’t ask me where the link between your father and Voldemort came from to begin with, ‘cause I don’t know.”

“I – I got it from my father?” He looked at his hands with a grim smile. “That must be the first time I got something from him that actually lasted.”

“You didn’t have a very good relationship with your father, I gather, from what you’ve told me so far,” Harry said.

“No, I ‘didn’t have a very good relationship’ with him, as you so nicely put it,” Draco sneered. “I was happy if I saw him once a week, and at those times, I wasn’t allowed to speak or act without his permission. I am – was – whatever – his servant, never his son. I learnt to follow orders before I said my first words.”

“And you’re happy that I killed him,” Harry said slowly.

The blonde looked up and grey eyes met green. “No, Harry, I’m not *happy*. I could never be *happy* that my father is dead. He is still a part of me. What I can be is... indifferent. It seems like I’m happy in this future, so my father’s death wasn’t the death of me as well. But I could never be *happy* about it.”

Time out of Place

Harry thought he understood what Draco was telling him. It made sense that the blonde wouldn't actually be glad that his father was dead. Even though the man had never truly acted like a father, Draco would miss his parental figure and all that Lucius had stood for. And, like Draco had said, Lucius was still a part of him. Harry wondered where Draco's mother was at the moment. He voiced his question to Draco, who looked down at his hand again.

"She's in St. Mungo's mental ward," the Slytherin replied in an even voice. "I – I found a diary that the Draco of this time keeps, and he said in it that he visited mum at St. Mungo's. I think she went crazy after father was killed."

Harry's ears picked up on two things – one was how Draco called Narcissa 'mum', while Lucius always was the much less affectionate 'father'. The other thing his brain stopped at was the fact that Draco had found a diary – and not told him.

"Sorry to change the subject so abruptly, Draco, but just *when* did you find this diary? And how come you didn't *tell me* about it?"

The blonde looked up at him defiantly. "It is my private diary, Potter," he said. "My future self's, but it's still mine, and I'm not going to let you read it. There are very few interesting things in it anyway."

"Very few interesting things?!" Harry exploded. "We don't know a tenth of all the things we should know in this place, and your future self is keeping a diary – yet you don't think there is anything interesting in it?"

Draco stood up, his eyes cold. "It is my *private* diary and I am not going to let you read it and I don't care if you want to know things about this place. It's mine and it's very, very private."

"You've said that about ten times now." Harry glared back at Draco.

"Then can you please stop bothering me, or do you need me to spell it out letter by letter?" Draco spat. Then he turned on his heel and stormed out of the room, leaving a seething Harry behind.

He knew that just because the fates and Voldemort wanted to screw with his life in every way possible, Draco would have a vision within the next twenty-four hours while they were both still angry. He decided suddenly that he needed to get away from it all. Taking a pinch of floo-powder, Harry threw it into the fire and said,

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“The Three Broomsticks.”

He stepped into it and was gone, arriving a moment later at the Hogsmeade pub.

The pub was crowded. It was Saturday, and by the looks of it, it was a Hogsmeade weekend for the Hogwarts students. Kids of all ages – well, from eleven to eighteen, anyway – were milling about the Three Broomsticks, some sitting by the tables talking and drinking Butterbeer and others just walking around the place.

Harry found a seat in the bar and ordered a Butterbeer for himself. The waiter had it before him within a minute, and he began sipping the drink slowly. His mind was wandering off when he heard,

“arry! It wasn’t yester’ay we saw yeh ‘ere!”

Harry turned around, a big smile on his lips. “Hagrid!”

The half-giant, and the first friend Harry had made in the Wizarding world, made his way through the crowd to sit next to him. Rubeus Hagrid quickly ordered a Butterbeer for himself before turning to the Boy Who Lived.

“How are yeh, ‘arry?” he asked.

“Good,” Harry replied automatically.

“Where’s yer other half?” Hagrid asked, looking around the pub for Draco.

“He’s at home,” Harry said shortly, wanting to talk about anything but the problems he’d left behind. Hagrid seemed to sense this, for he merely nodded and began to speak about other things.

“Yeh never come to visit anymore,” he said.

Harry gave him a sheepish grin. “Sorry,” he said, “I’ve had too much to do this past month.”

“I ‘eard. Had me worried there, you did, when yeh got yerself kidnapped an’ all,” Hagrid said and took a gulp of his drink.

Time out of Place

“Again with the sorry,” the raven-haired boy said with a half-smile. “I didn’t mean to get kidnapped – it just sort of ... happened.”

“I hear You-Know-Who is gettin’ into guns now?”

Harry nodded. “We’re trying to figure out what he wants with them. The team Dumbledore set on it has made progress, but not enough progress. So now I’m going to start taking classes in shooting, as well.”

“Yeh gonna learn ‘ow to shoot people?” Hagrid asked, surprised.

“Dumbledore thought it would be a good idea if both Draco and I could handle them, so yeah. We’re starting on Tuesday.”

“I don’t need guns,” Hagrid said. “Guns are no good.”

Harry couldn’t agree more. Ever since Draco’s first vision, all he’d heard and experienced about guns had been exceptionally *bad*. He’d been kidnapped because of them, he’d been shot with one, Draco had had his vision about them, and Voldemort would be gaining power because of them.

“So how have you been?” Harry asked Hagrid, wanting to change the subject.

“Good, good,” the half-giant replied. “Been having me’ classes, and then Dumbledore sent ‘e to France.”

“France?”

“Dinn’t I tell yeh?” Harry shook his head. It was possible that Hagrid had told the Harry of this time, but Hagrid didn’t need to know that. So the Boy Who Lived just played dumb. “Well, yeh know I’m keepin’ the giants together, for the ‘eadmaster?” Harry nodded, although he didn’t know. “They ‘ad a meeting a few days ago, together with me’ self and some of Dumbledore’s spies. Were informed of the gun problem, they were. Not very ‘appy ‘bout it.”

“Who is?” Harry muttered.

“Still, they’re ‘appier than the Wizarding population – bullets don’t hurt giants as much as yeh humans. The bullets are too small.”

Time out of Place

“True,” the raven-haired boy replied thoughtfully. Too bad he wasn’t a giant; then he wouldn’t have to worry as much. As it was, the gun problem seemed to take up most of his thinking time now, right along with thoughts of Draco.

No, he thought, I’m *not* thinking about Draco right now.

Hagrid and Harry continued to talk about everything, and before long the whole afternoon had passed. Hagrid was returning to Hogwarts with the students, and with a promise of more frequent visits, Harry said good-bye to the half-giant.

He stayed at the bar after the students had left, gingerly sipping his third Butterbeer.

“Shouldn’t you be home snogging your boyfriend?”

“No, Sev’, I shouldn’t,” Harry said, a bit amazed by how easily Snape’s nickname slid off his lips. He turned around to look at his former Professor.

“And why not, if I may ask?” the Potions Master asked, sitting down next to Harry. “You are not fighting *again*, are you?”

Harry glared at him. “As a matter of fact, we are, not that it’s any of your business.”

“None of your life is ever any of my business, nor is it any of my concern, Mr Potter – I was just trying to make conversation.”

“You need practice,” Harry said.

Severus chuckled, surprising Harry. “Yes, I believe I do. Conversation is, after all, not my strong side when it doesn’t involve lying and deceiving – weren’t those your exact words?”

“I don’t remember,” Harry muttered honestly into his glass.

The two sat in silence at the bar. Severus didn’t order anything; he just sat there.

“What did you fight about?” he asked finally, making another attempt at conversing with the Boy Who Lived.

Harry shrugged. “Something stupid.”

“It always is.”

Time out of Place

Harry gave him a small smile. "I guess so."

"Now, why don't you go home to that boyfriend of yours and make amends with him, for I am certain that he's sitting at home, sulking just like you are."

"I am *not* sulking," Harry said indignantly.

"You're making a rather good impression of it," Severus said, amusement clearly written in his voice.

"Please go away?"

"Only if you do, Harry."

The raven-haired boy stood up. "I'm going," he muttered.

And then he promptly doubled over as waves of pain and agony assaulted his senses.

*

Severus grabbed him by his collar as he fell forward and held him upright. Harry kept his eyes tightly shut, trying to block the pain and nausea out of his brain. He knew it was just an illusion – it was Draco's pain, not his. He should be able to keep it out.

"What are you thinking, you silly boy, leaving Draco with a vision impending?" the Potions Master hissed in his ear.

"Just – get – me – to – him," Harry hissed, cradling his head in his hands. There were white flashes before his eyes, and he knew that he would start having the vision with Draco before long. The pain seared through his body, making his insides feel like they were on fire. He stumbled as Severus led him towards the fireplace and if it hadn't been for the Potions Master, he wouldn't have made it all the way there.

Blood.

A person stood before him, his surroundings having changed completely. Harry knew he was inside of Draco's vision.

Time out of Place

He tried to look around, feeling sick as the vision blurred and mixed with the surroundings of the Three Broomsticks. They were out in the open... Grass? The sky was dark, filled with clouds.

There were flashes of something red around him, droplets of liquid splashing onto the ground.

There was someone before him.

“Potter!” Severus’ voice sounded far away. Harry shook his head, trying his best to clear it. The Potions Master’s face hovered above him, charcoal eyes forcing him to keep eye contact. “Stay with me, boy,” Severus continued.

Harry tried to force the vision out of his mind. There was something about it that was dangerous... He couldn’t get pulled into it as well; then he couldn’t help Draco.

“I don’t care! I don’t care about him,” he screamed, trying to get free from Severus’ grip. He was weak from the burning pain inside of him though and didn’t manage.

“Harry, be still!” the Potions Professor said to him. Harry heard him mutter ‘the Nest’ to the fire, and felt Severus almost drag him into the flames. The bar blurred out of his vision, and the sketchy outlines of other rooms, together with the vision that tried to fight its way back into Harry’s mind and the pain of it all, made him want to throw up.

Another searing jolt passed through him, and Harry fell to his knees just as Severus pulled them both out into the apartment’s living room. Harry was on the floor, unable to get up. He was close to Draco, and the pain intensified tenfold.

Blood, everywhere.

The person before him looked lifeless; dark blonde hair hanging down the front made Harry unable to see his face. Ropes around his wrists bound him to a wooden pole. His naked body was punctured with holes; bullet holes, no doubt. Around him, several others were bound, just the same way as the man before Harry. They were all lifeless... And around them, dark shadows moved...

He screamed.

Time out of Place

A matching cry came from the bedroom, and Severus quickly picked Harry up in his arms. The Boy Who Lived was hardly aware of what was happening, but he heard the Potions Master open the doors to the bedroom with a quick spell.

Draco was lying on the bed, writhing back and forth, curled up like a ball. His cheeks were wet with tears, his face scrunched up in obvious pain.

“No, no, no, don’t... Please stop it...” he cried helplessly.

Harry fought Severus, and he finally set him down on the floor. He stumbled blindly towards the blonde on the bed. His legs went out beneath him as he reached the bed, and he fell on top of it, next to his Heart Mate. He crawled up next to Draco and closed his arms tightly around him.

A bolt of lightning shot from Draco to Harry, pulling them closer towards each other. Draco’s smaller body moulded perfectly into Harry’s, and they both let out gasps of pain as they shared the last of the vision before falling into blissful unconsciousness.

*

When Harry awoke, he was completely confused as to where he was. He tried to move, but pain became evident, and he decided to stay still. He wondered briefly if he *always* had to wake up in pain. His head ached horribly, making him nauseous, and he dreaded opening his eyes.

There was something warm against his body. He had his arms wrapped around something – no, someone... Suddenly, he remembered the events that had rendered him unconscious. Draco’s fear... Their talk, that had become an argument, which had become a fight. He had left for Hogsmeade and spent the afternoon with Hagrid at the Three Broomsticks.

And he remembered the pain.

Severus had taken him home to Draco. The blonde had been on the bed, looking pale and sickly, crying in fear and agony. Harry had found his way onto the bed, pulled to the Slytherin like opposite magnets. Then there was more pain, a flash of lightning and then he couldn’t remember anything but the last few minutes of awareness.

“Harry?”

Time out of Place

“’innny?” Harry muttered, not quite finding his voice. He opened his eyes to a thankfully darkened room.

Ginny smiled at him. “You can just rest, Harry, I know how badly your head usually hurts,” she said softly, careful not to talk too loudly.

Harry tried to smile back, but it resulted in more of a grimace.

“We’ll leave now,” the young Weasley said, gesturing towards the corner, where a figure sat calmly – Snape?

“You stayed?” Harry croaked out.

“Of course, Potter,” Severus replied. “Had to see to it that you came through the vision all right. However, now that you are awake, and we’re all assured that your boyfriend will be fine as well, we can leave.”

“How long were we out?” Harry asked, his throat feeling dry as a desert.

“Four hours,” Severus replied. “Thought it’d take longer from the way you two were screaming. One could have thought you were both dying.”

“Be quiet Sev’, they don’t need to hear that,” Ginny said to him. She turned to Harry. “I’ll be back tomorrow, when he’s woken up,” she said, gesturing towards the blonde snuggled up next to Harry. “We need to know what the vision was about, so... I don’t know if Dumbledore will want me to bring anyone else, we’ll see. Now, do you need anything before we leave?”

Harry shook his head ‘no’. Ginny kissed his forehead. “Please don’t scare us like that again,” she said, and then she was out the door.

Severus nodded to him as he stood and left, and then Harry was alone with Draco.

The blonde was curled up tightly against Harry, much like after the last vision. He looked worse this time, though, Harry thought. There were dark shadows beneath his eyes, and the raven-haired boy could still see the traces of dried tears on Draco’s cheeks, which meant that it wasn’t long since he’d stopped crying. His hands held Harry’s robes tightly, his fists white from the effort.

Time out of Place

Harry used the hand that wasn't wrapped around the blonde to loosen Draco's hold on his robes. The other boy whimpered unconsciously as Harry lifted his arm, and the Boy Who Lived remembered how much he'd wanted and needed Draco's touch after being shot. He allowed the pale arm to slide around his waist, although this time, the blonde didn't grab Harry's robes so tightly. Instead he just laid still, his arm where Harry had placed it.

Harry wondered what the vision meant. There were no details in it that told him where it was – it looked like any field, anywhere. Grass, dark skies. People tied to poles by their wrists, bleeding from gunshot wounds.

Perhaps Draco had seen some of their faces – that would certainly help.

Would the blonde even talk to him, though? After yesterday's failed discussion, fight, talk, whatever, Harry doubted it. What troubled Harry, however, was not yesterday's fight, but the fact that they had now had *two* big fights like this one since coming here. It wouldn't have bothered him at home – at home, the two *always* fought. Yet even that wasn't the same. The fighting at home was a sort of competition, who could come up with the most insults. It was about who would walk away from the other with his friends cheering on him.

Still, since the start of fifth year, the fighting rate had definitely gone way down. If Harry hadn't been so focused on getting through his O.W.L's (the Ordinary Wizarding Levels) and the rest of his classes while at the same time trying to stay away from Voldemort and the Death Eaters' rise in activity – then perhaps, he would have noticed. As it was, however, Harry had barely had time to sleep.

Draco had told him that he'd switched sides at the beginning of the fifth year. That explained the sudden decrease in fights between the two; Draco probably didn't want to be called 'Death Eater in training' every day when he no longer was one. There were still the occasional spars, yet not nearly as many as before. He'd been doing his best to get along with "the good side".

What had made the blonde Slytherin switch sides?

It didn't sound like teenage rebellion against his parents – he seemed too set on doing it for it to be just some stage in his life. Becoming a spy for Albus Dumbledore was not something one did just like that, and the Headmaster wouldn't have taken Draco in if he hadn't believed in the boy fully. So what had changed?

Time out of Place

He'd told Harry that the reason was 'something I might tell you later, but definitely not now.' Whatever that meant – Draco had accused Dumbledore of loving to talk in riddles, yet the blonde himself certainly didn't make it any easier.

When Draco stirred a half hour later, Harry had come no closer to understanding him and the person he was. All he knew was that they *needed* to talk. They would have the talk that Harry had promised Draco at the hospital.

Harry saw Draco blink, the grey eyes focusing on the world around him. He lifted his head off the raven-haired boy's chest a few inches, only to fall softly back down again with a cry of pain. Harry felt it inside of him and without thinking, he offered the Healing Warmth to Draco. The blonde lay still, his breathing shuddering and heavy and took what Harry gave him without a word.

"Are we friends?"

Harry's eyes opened to stare down at the form of Draco, lying completely still under Harry's touch. Since the other boy had moved, Harry couldn't see his face any longer.

"I don't know," the raven-haired boy sighed. "Sometimes it seems like we are, but then..."

"Then we fight," Draco said softly, still turned away from Harry. He raised his head again, more carefully this time. He winced in pain as he moved, but didn't stop until he was facing Harry. The Boy Who Lived kept his hands around Draco, knowing that the blonde needed the healing.

"We've been enemies for so long," Harry said. "I don't know if we can change that."

"We can," Draco said with force. "If we want to."

"Draco, I know you've changed," Harry said. "I just don't know if I've changed with you."

"That's not it," the blonde said, his eyes and voice suddenly going hard. "You don't think I really have changed at all. You think that all of this, me joining the good side for the last *one and a half years* is just some crazy idea of mine before I become a full-fledged Death Eater... Isn't that true?"

Harry shook his head. "No, that's not what I think," he said and sighed, "But you must admit – it's hard to believe that you just suddenly completely changed your beliefs and became a spy for Dumbledore."

Time out of Place

“Dumbledore trusts me, Harry,” Draco said quietly to him, sitting up, away from Harry’s embrace. “Why can’t you?”

The Boy Who Lived winced at his tone of voice. “I want to, Draco. I just...”

“Just what?” Draco cut in. “Need a reason? Not everything needs a bloody reason!”

“Are you saying then that you just woke up one day and thought, ‘well, I think my father is wrong about becoming a slave for Voldemort, so I’ll just join the good side instead’? Understand me when I say that it sounds a bit... unconvincing.”

“I don’t care,” Draco said, turning away from Harry. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, his back towards the raven-haired boy. “It is all the explanation I have to offer.”

“I don’t think it is,” Harry said, raising his voice slightly. “You told me, ‘That’s something I might tell you later, but definitely not now’. What happened to that? Or were you just lying? Knowing you, you probably were, but still...”

Draco turned to face him slowly. “I haven’t lied to you once since we got here, Potter. So, all right, there is something more to my ‘change of heart’ than just waking up one morning and knowing it was wrong. But why can’t you just accept the fact that I *have* switched, without an explanation? Can’t you just trust me that much?”

“What is so horrible that you can’t tell me?” Harry asked, his tone going softer again.

“Trust me when I say you don’t want to know,” Draco said, standing up from the bed. He wobbled slightly, and Harry, still lying on the bed, reacted on instinct, sending the boy something... energy of some sort. The blonde straightened, wobbling gone, and looked at Harry. “What did you do?”

Harry looked nonplussed. “I don’t know.”

Draco kept his eyes on Harry for a moment longer before deciding that the raven-haired boy spoke the truth. He left the room.

Harry stood up from the bed as well, and followed Draco. They were far from done talking. He followed the sound of cups clinking together to the kitchen and found Draco taking out the necessities for making tea.

Time out of Place

“You’re making tea at ten thirty at night?” Harry asked incredulously.

Draco just shrugged.

“Talk to me, Draco.”

The blonde turned to him. “I’ve heard this before,” he said icily. “Something like, ‘I know I’m your enemy but I’m all you have here, so spill your innermost secrets to me, please’.”

Harry didn’t reply; he only walked around the half island and leaned on the table behind which the high stools stood.

Draco continued to work with the tea, taking out two cups despite how he and Harry were not getting along. He also picked sugar and milk out from the fridge. Then he stood in silence behind the water on the stove.

“It – it all started two years ago,” Draco said softly. Harry looked up at him, but the blonde wouldn’t meet his eye. “With the Triwizard Tournament and you becoming one of the Champions. Merlin, how I hated you... You got all the attention; everyone was talking about you. I couldn’t escape it.”

“You didn’t seem to *want* to escape it, what with the ‘Potter Stinks’ buttons. You were right there in the front of the Hate-Harry club,” Harry muttered.

Draco shrugged. “I had to do something. And people thought those buttons were funny.”

Harry glared at him, though kept silent.

“I remember the first task,” Draco continued. “I thought it was very entertaining to see you down there, trying to get past the dragon. I hoped it would get you. Thought it would serve you right...” He trailed off, lost in memory. Then he shook his head, returning to the present, and kept talking. “I saw how nervous you were about the second task. And some part of me... I began to worry. Just a little bit. Like some sort of nagging, in the back of my head. I couldn’t understand it at all, but there it was.”

“Didn’t stop you from selling me out to Rita Skeeter,” Harry said, with an eyebrow raised.

“Oh please,” Draco snorted. “Like *that* hurt you in any way. It was fun to see you squirm a little.”

Time out of Place

“You’re really not gaining any points for me to trust you, you know,” Harry said with an eyebrow raised.

The blonde gave him a small smile. “The third task came,” he said, the smile disappearing. “And when you came out of it, you were a mere shell of your former self. Cedric was dead, Voldemort was back, and everything was hell.”

“You thought so too?” Harry asked, slightly surprised.

Draco ignored him and just kept on. “I hated seeing you like that. I wanted to talk to you, to tell you that I cared if just a little bit. Though the only thing I managed to say to you was what I did on the train home. Couldn’t very well have said anything even remotely friendly with Vincent and Gregory right behind me.

“That summer was pure hell at home. With Voldemort back, father became even more unbearable. I was – am – expected to follow in his footsteps, yet the more I saw of the way Voldemort treated his followers, the more repulsive became the idea for me to become one. My father... My father used the Cruciatus Curse several times that summer, when I didn’t do what he told me.” Draco shuddered at the memory. “It’s lucky we learnt how to fight off the Imperius Curse, ‘cause otherwise he would definitely have used that one.”

“Your own *father*?” Harry asked, horrified. He remembered that summer with the Dursleys – it had been close to unbearable after the Ton-tongue Toffee that the Weasley twins had tricked Dudley into eating. Harry had done everything – cleaned, washed, mowed, cooked... He was forever grateful that the Weasleys came to pick him up to spend the last two weeks at the Burrow. But at least the Dursleys hadn’t physically tortured him.

“When school started, I was convinced that I could never be a Death Eater. I had already seen too much. Father took me with him once and I was close to throwing up when I saw the pain and horror they created. I knew I couldn’t follow Voldemort.

“Still, there was no reason for me to join the good side. My plan was just to – hopefully – finish school, and then go into hiding somewhere abroad, where my father couldn’t find me.”

The tea water whistled, and Draco took it off the stove, but didn’t do anything further to pour the steaming liquid into the cups.

“Then you came to school. You’d grown taller over the summer, and I know that I felt really small in comparison. Suddenly, it was not so much fun to tease you anymore. You had girls

Time out of Place

swooning all over you –” Harry blushed slightly at the memory “– and you were... happy. You liked being back at school, and you ignored me, for the most part.

“And I watched you... day in and day out, I watched you...” Draco’s voice trailed off, lost in memory once more. The grey eyes stared out the window, out into the darkness. “I found something there... watching you... I saw something in your eyes, and I wanted to be part of it. I saw faith. Faith in the human race, in the Wizarding community, and in the good side. Despite all you’ve been through, I can *still* see that in your eyes.

“I joined the good side, although I didn’t tell anyone but Dumbledore and Professor Snape. My father would kill me, as would the Slytherin house. I was quite content in playing my role, hating the Gryffindors because I was supposed to, because nothing was allowed to change in my appearance, and hating the Slytherins because they disgusted me. Professor Snape is my friend, ‘cause he knows exactly what it is I’m doing. He did the same thing.”

He sighed, and studied his hands.

“But then things had to get more complicated.”

“How?” Harry asked. “How could it get even worse?”

Draco let out a small, sad chuckle.

“I fell in love with you.”

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Twelve Love builds bridges where there are none

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It was lucky that Harry was leaning on the table as Draco uttered the words, for otherwise he would no longer be standing.

“You – what – how – huh?” he asked, trying to process the statement. “Run that by me again?”

“I’m in love with you,” Draco said quietly, going back to studying his hands. “I told you you didn’t want to know.”

Finally settling on a question, Harry asked, “*Why?*”

Grey eyes met green. “I just told you everything I know, Harry. Exactly *why* I fell in love with you, I don’t know. It just kind of happened.”

“But – you’re a boy – and I’m a boy,” Harry began.

“How very observant of you to notice that,” Draco said dryly.

They were quiet for a few minutes. The only thing heard was the sound of the seconds ticking by on the Muggle wall-clock. Neither boy knew really what to say; Harry was at a complete loss for words. Of all the reasons for Draco to switch sides – Harry definitely hadn’t expected himself to be the explanation. Yet here Draco was, watching him with those damn silver eyes, begging for acceptance.

How could he have missed it? How could he not have seen the signs, he wondered. The way Draco didn’t mind being close to Harry, neither after the visions, nor when they’d been drinking with Sirius, Remus and Ron. The time when Harry’s sleep had been plagued by nightmares. Or... Harry could come up with several more occasions when Draco hadn’t minded in the least to be held close by the Boy Who Lived.

Did Harry mind?

Time out of Place

He struggled to remember any time when it felt wrong or uncomfortable. When they'd both fallen asleep at the Weasley Castle, with Pearle in Draco's arms, a few days ago... That had been uncomfortable to begin with, when Draco put his head on Harry's shoulder – but then they *had* fallen asleep, so it couldn't have been *that* awkward.

In fact, Harry didn't mind being around Draco at all. In the past month, Harry felt secure to have him around. They had let each other into one another's mind, so there had to be a certain level of trust between them by now. They spent time in each other's company without being forced to do so, and Harry knew that if he was presented with the choice of spending time with either Hermione and Ron or with Draco, the choice wouldn't be as obvious as it had been before.

"Say something, please," Draco begged, his voice barely more than a whisper.

"I – I don't know what to say," Harry said, waking up from his thoughts.

Draco's face fell, though he stayed silent.

"I don't know what I feel about you," the Boy Who Lived continued. "I do feel *something* for you, but I don't know what it is, not yet at least."

The blonde gave him a small smile. "It's enough for now, I guess," he said. Then he added quietly, "Tell me when you find out, though."

He put the water back on the stove, as it had cooled too much now. A few minutes later, he presented Harry with a cup. He accepted it without a word and walked down the hallway towards the living room to think, his mind still reeling with the past half hour's revelations. One thought was constant through the storm of feelings – this was *not* what he'd expected.

He continued to make mental lists of pros and cons of an actual relationship. Unfortunately, there were a huge amount of cons and only a few pros.

If they managed to get back home to their own time, and he decided to start dating Draco, then his friends would go ballistic. Hermione, and Ron especially, would both think he'd gone nuts, or hit his head one too many times during the Quidditch game – which was true of course, but he wouldn't be able to tell them that.

If he overlooked the whole Hermione-and-Ron-not-dealing-so-well thing – which they would eventually get over, *if* this was the future they were heading for – then there was still the fact that Draco's father was Lucius Malfoy, one of the biggest supporters of Voldemort.

Time out of Place

If he found out that his *son* was dating the Boy Who Lived, then he definitely wouldn't live long.

Of course, the blonde was already living with that threat as it was, whether he was dating Harry or not. And Voldemort couldn't possibly want Harry's death more than he already did.

One of the biggest cons was that Draco was who he was. *Draco Malfoy*, sworn enemy of Harry's since the first day of school. The boy who'd made his life a living hell with his overall pain-in-the-ass attitude.

Yet he had changed.

No matter how many cons Harry could think of, this fact still returned to haunt him. The young man that Harry had caught a glimpse of in the last month was *not* the spoiled brat he knew from school. It was a quieter, softer and much more pleasant Draco, whom Harry had nothing against. Sure, they'd fought, but that was... It was something else. You could both fight with and love a person, couldn't you?

Love?

Was there any possibility that Harry had begun to fall in love with the blonde as well as the other way around? He knew he liked Draco's company, he knew they could understand each other – but love? It was a very strong word. Something Harry definitely longed for but had yet to attain. He had the love of Sirius and Hermione and Ron, but that wasn't the same. The warmth of a lover... Someone to call his own...

Would he mind kissing those soft, pink lips of Draco's? He remembered their first day in this world, when he'd first seen the blonde, lying unconscious on the bed at the Weasley castle. He'd checked the Slytherin out. He'd caught himself doing it of course, and stopped it immediately, yet... Hadn't he continued to check him out? Steal glances at him when Draco wasn't looking? He had certainly noticed what the blonde was wearing, how he'd kept his long, soft flowing hair...

With memories of the times he'd shared with Draco in the past month and a half, Harry fell asleep on the couch that night. His sleep was filled with dreams and nightmares, with Draco and the Hanawalt family as the main cast.

He was outside, lying down on the ground with grass all around. It tickled him, and he turned slightly to make it stop.

Time out of Place

"Lay still, Potter," Draco said to him, "Or you'll only make the wounds open again."

Harry looked up to see Draco right above him, and a sudden rush of pain went through his body. He felt blood pouring from his side.

'Bang!'

A shot rang off, and suddenly Harry found himself back in the cave. Mr Hanawalt stood before him, the gun in his shaking hands. Unlike in the dreams he'd had before, however, Harry saw that Mr Hanawalt's face was filled with horror.

A warmth surrounded Harry, and he knew that Draco was with him again.

"Have you gotten used to it yet?" Harry heard himself ask.

"Used to what?" Draco asked.

"Us being together here in this place," Harry said, motioning around him. They were back in the apartment living room. Harry was standing up, looking out through the window. Draco was sitting on the couch.

Draco looked at him and Harry met his gaze. "It's getting easier."

Then the world around them seemed to come apart again. They stood two feet apart, surrounded by a seemingly never-ending darkness.

"But then things had to get more complicated," Draco said, turning away from Harry. He was facing the ink black darkness, and Harry found himself wanting to see the blonde's face.

"How?" he asked. "How could it get even worse?"

Draco let out a small, sad chuckle.

"I fell in love with you."

He turned back to face Harry, and Harry let out a cry when he saw the other boy's face. He was tired, dirty... with bloodstains all over, as though he'd been fighting. Without thinking, Harry pulled Draco closer. Draco seemed weak, his legs barely supporting him.

Time out of Place

He whispered something to Harry, but Harry could no longer bear. They both shut their eyes tightly and concentrated on staying close to the other. A wind was roaring around them, pulling at them, making their cloaks swirl and their hair loosen from their ponytails. A moment later, a force stronger than anything they'd ever felt before ripped them away from each other.

Harry was left alone in the darkness. Then suddenly, a bright light blinded him. He felt his mind shut down, and surrendered to whatever force was behind it all.

Harry dreamt no more that night and remembered none of it when he woke up again.

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Harry awoke the next morning, slightly disoriented as he saw the living room's surroundings rather than the bedroom's. As he became aware of where he was, he also remembered why. Sitting up and stretching his slightly sore muscles, he recalled the conversation he'd had with Draco the night before.

Before he had time to get too far into the thoughts, however, a sound was heard, and in the very next second, Ginny walked out of the fireplace.

"Good morning," she said cheerfully.

"Morning," Harry replied, not nearly as happily.

Ginny's face fell. "What's up?" she asked. She looked at the couch, and the mess it was. "You slept here?"

Harry gave her a small nod and a look that said, 'I don't want to talk about it'. She pouted at him, but then continued into the apartment.

"Remus is coming by later on," she said, walking down the hallway and assuming that Harry was following her. He was, luckily for him. "He's going to talk to Dumbledore after we hear about Draco's vision, and I'm going to put together the op this time."

"*You're* doing the operation?" Harry said, surprise obvious in his voice.

She turned to glare at him. "I'm not a little girl anymore, Mr Potter," she said. "I can do this, and I intend on doing it better than the last operation you were sent on."

Time out of Place

“Yes, please do so,” Harry said with a shudder. He had absolutely no wish to be kidnapped again.

“Draco sleeping?” she asked. “Oh, you probably don’t know if you slept on the -”

“He’s sleeping,” Harry interrupted her. He could feel it inside of him. He didn’t like the feeling; Draco was feeling frightened and insecure. Nightmare, his brain told him, Draco’s having a nightmare. Making a quick decision, Harry said to Ginny, “I’ll be right back.”

Before she had time to reply, he was inside the bedroom, the doors closed behind him.

Despite the room being quite dark, Harry could make out Draco’s figure on the bed. He was beneath the covers, yet the raven-haired boy could still see him writhing back and forth, mumbling into the pillow. Distress was radiating off the blonde.

He walked over to the bed and sat down on the right side, stretching over to reach Draco. The blonde whimpered at first when Harry shook him, then his eyes shot open as he sat up. He looked around the room, his eyes wide, before they settled on Harry, and his features calmed considerably.

He didn’t say anything; he just fell back on the bed, his hands covering his face.

“What did you dream?” Harry asked.

“The vision,” Draco replied, his voice muffled by the hands over his mouth.

“Bad?”

“Bad.”

Harry smiled slightly at the small bit of conversation they’d just had, before he said, “Ginny’s here. She wants you to tell her about your vision. Are you ready to do that?”

Draco removed his hands from his face to look at Harry. “Do I have to?”

The Boy Who Lived nodded. “fraid so.”

“Crap.”

Time out of Place

“You’re a man of few words this morning,” Harry said, standing up. Draco didn’t reply. “There will be breakfast in a few minutes, so come out when you’re ready to face Ginny.”

The Slytherin nodded, and Harry left the room. He could feel Draco’s gaze lingering on him, and he knew what Draco was thinking about. Harry wouldn’t allow himself to start dwelling on their conversation, though – he had to keep his head in what was most likely going to be a rough conversation with Ginny Weasley.

“He’ll be out in a moment,” Harry told Ginny as he entered the kitchen where she had begun making breakfast. He assumed she’d done this before, since she knew where everything was and didn’t ask for permission.

She shot him a questioning look – she had obviously thought that they’d been fighting, in which case Harry wouldn’t have gone into the bedroom and stayed there for almost ten minutes. However, she seemed to give a mental shrug, for she returned to making coffee for herself and Draco and hot chocolate for Harry.

“Has he told you anything?” she asked finally, as the silence appeared to become too much for her.

Harry shook his head. “We didn’t have time to talk about it last night, we were both exhausted,” he lied. They’d had plenty of time to talk – just not about the vision. He wondered now if last night had been a good time to have the Talk. Draco had still been reeling from the vision and both had been in a bit of pain. Harry knew that the blonde had been more so than Harry himself had; he’d been able to feel it. Still, he hadn’t let himself touch Draco to heal; it would have given a completely wrong impression.

“You look like hell,” Ginny said to him.

“Thanks.”

She shot him a concerned look. “What happened yesterday? And whatever made you leave for Hogsmeade when Dumbledore *warned you* that a vision would most likely be coming? When Sev’ told me... I didn’t believe him at first.”

“Ginny, this is between me and Draco. I know I hurt him, and I will apologize to him for it, but what I did is done. Can’t change it. I’m not sure I would have, even if I could.”

“Why would you place yourself at such a risk?” Ginny frowned. “It’s not like you.”

Time out of Place

“Look, Gin’, I’m not ‘like me’ at all at the moment, so if you would stop the bloody Spanish Inquisition just for now, then I’d be very happy,” Harry snapped.

She backed away from him, muttering, “Fine.”

Draco chose that moment to walk into the kitchen. He looked tired; there were dark shadows beneath his eyes and his whole posture screamed of weariness. The blonde hair was a mess, as though the boy hadn’t cared about getting it as perfect as it always was. In fact, the Slytherin looked like he hadn’t done anything about his appearance at all since Harry woke him up. Harry felt a sting of guilt as he realized that he was largely responsible for making the vision – and what came after – so hard on Draco.

“Morning,” he mumbled, walking over to the table and sitting down opposite Harry. Ginny placed a cup of coffee before him, neither uttering a word. The blonde took a sip of the steaming drink before him, refusing to meet either of the room’s other two occupants’ eyes.

Finally, Ginny had once again had enough of the silence. “Look Draco, I’m sorry that I have to do this to you; I always am, but you need to tell me what happened in the vision.”

He looked up at her slowly, grey eyes meeting brown. “We were in a big field, there were mountains around us,” he said, his voice devoid of any emotion. “There were about fifteen poles, all around eight to nine feet tall. I think they were set in some sort of pattern, but I couldn’t see in what way.

“To each pole, a human was bound with ropes by their wrists. It cut into the victims’ wrists, making them bleed. They were all lifeless. None but one of them were over thirty; they looked young and strong.

“And they were all filled with bullet holes.”

He stopped and turned his gaze towards the table. Harry tried to sense the blonde’s emotions, but Draco seemed to have put up a shield, whether consciously or not, Harry didn’t know. The raven-haired boy felt the need to stretch out and help the other boy, yet he knew that Draco would pull away even further if he did.

“There was one who wasn’t bleeding. Two of the Death Eaters were talking to him, but I couldn’t hear what they said because they were too far away and the wind was howling too loudly. He must have said the right words, though, for they took him down from the pole and Apparated away with him.

Time out of Place

“The others were left to die, if they weren’t dead already.”

Harry wondered how he could appear so calm and unemotional whilst talking about the pain and death he’d witnessed. A voice told him that Draco was anything but calm and unemotional – it was just a façade that he had to put up in order to be able to give Ginny the information she needed to save the people in question. After the young redhead left, he would break down, either in front of Harry or in complete privacy. The Boy Who Lived found himself hoping that it wouldn’t be the latter.

“Do you remember anything specific about any of the victims?” Ginny asked, breaking the silence.

Draco gave a deep chuckle that sounded anything but happy. “You know, that’s the funny part,” he said. “I recognized four of them.”

Harry stared at him, and out of the corner of his eye, he could see Ginny unconsciously moving closer in what looked like – anticipation?

“It was Angelina Johnson, Dean Thomas, a young man that looked like Neville Longbottom, as well as Potions Master Severus Snape.”

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Ginny left shortly afterwards, when Draco had emptied out the last bit of information he could remember of the vision. She had been deep in thought, and had barely stopped to say good-bye as she floo-ed from the apartment, no doubt already planning the operation she needed to get going.

Harry returned to Draco in the kitchen, where the blonde sat staring out the window, watching snow fall. He didn’t turn or acknowledge Harry in any way as he sat down in the same chair as before. As the Slytherin gazed at the falling snowflakes, the raven-haired boy studied Draco.

His face was a mask of indifference. He looked tired, as Harry had noticed when the young man first entered the room, with shadows beneath his eyes and the eyes themselves a bit bloodshot. His mouth was set in a thin line, his jaws pressed tightly together. One hand stirred lazily in the now almost empty cup of coffee and Harry saw the slight tremble of the

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hand only because he was paying such close attention. He was upset; despite his efforts to hide it, it was plainly written on Draco's face.

Neither boy said anything; one didn't know what to say, the other didn't want to talk.

The snow had begun falling sometime during the night and was now covering the ground here and there. The skies were an anonymous grey, leaving the city almost as colourless. It fit their moods perfectly.

A half hour later, Draco stood and left the room. Harry stayed in the kitchen. He heard Draco open and close the bedroom doors, and sighed deeply to himself. He wanted to talk to the blonde, and he wanted Draco to talk to him. Yet he couldn't find the words to say, not after the conversation they'd had the night before.

"I fell in love with you."

The words repeated themselves in Harry's mind, echoing back and forth, again and again.

How had it happened?

Harry told himself he'd had this one-sided discussion too many times, yet he couldn't stop the thoughts from coming. He wondered where Draco's feelings had come from, and if he'd done something – anything – to encourage them. The thoughts swirling in his mind asked him whether it was really possible. Was the blonde lying to him? Although Harry would have jumped to that conclusion a month and a half ago, it was no longer such an open option. The way Draco was behaving now... It didn't seem like he would act like he was if the words had all been a practical joke. Besides, the story that had accompanied the words had fit all too well into reality to be made up.

And his eyes had told Harry that Draco was telling the truth.

The biggest question on Harry's mind, however, was not about Draco's feelings and his motives and reasons at all. No, it was the question of whether he could ever love the blonde back.

It would be so easy right now to take advantage of the situation and tell Draco that he loved him. That way, the blonde would be in it much deeper than Harry, and if something went wrong, he would draw the shorter straw. It would guarantee Harry warmth and love, whilst not having to give so much in return.

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Harry frowned to himself. That was *not* the way to build a relationship. No, if he were to get involved with *anyone*, then it would be with total, complete devotion. He wouldn't, couldn't, settle for anything less just because it was convenient.

Besides, Draco deserved love.

In the past month, Harry had seen the softer side of Draco – a side he'd never shown at home. It was a boy whom was starved for affection, a person who wanted to be held, liked and – loved. The Boy Who Lived had found it very easy to give Draco the comfort he craved. He *had* held Draco several times, just because the blonde needed it, and it had been neither uncomfortable nor hard to do so, for some reason.

Harry sighed and stood. He was getting nowhere; his mind was running around in circles, only serving to make him dizzy. Grabbing his cloak from the hanger in the entrance hall, he walked to the living room and the fireplace. Picking up floo from the small box on top of the fireplace, he threw it into the flames and said,

“The Leaky Cauldron.”

A few moments later, he stepped out of the fireplace at the Inn. There were a few witches and wizards at the bar, but no one looked up as he brushed himself off. Instead he went to the brick wall on the right and tapped it five times. It opened, and Diagon Alley presented itself before him, with all its little shops and hundreds of magical folks milling about. Harry stepped into the chaotic street, making his way through the stores and people. Snow now lay thick on the ground.

He needed something to distract himself with – and buying Yule gifts was just the thing to do the trick. After all, it was only two weeks until Christmas.

First thing first – he needed money. Thus, he made his way down the street towards Gringotts Wizarding Bank. The tall, white marble building was, as it had been every time Harry had been there before, guarded by two goblins. They glared at him before letting him pass, as did the ones by the second door. Harry didn't care much, however, knowing that it was just in the goblins' nature to do so. Instead, he made his way through the main hall, to one of the goblins in a high chair.

After speaking briefly with the goblin, he was allowed down to his vault and another half hour later, he was back outside, ready for some shopping.

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He knew it would be hard to buy Hermione, Ron, Sirius and the rest gifts that the Harry of this time hadn't given them before, but he would have to try. A book was a safe bet for Hermione – although the question was *which one*, since the castle seemed to have every book imaginable. He entered Flourish & Blotts, and the store manager looked up from the desk he was sitting in.

“Can I help – Oh, hello, Mr Potter,” he said, a smile on his face as he saw who it was.

“Hi,” Harry replied, trying fervently to recall the name of the man. When he couldn't, he said, “I'm looking for some Christmas gifts.”

“As usual, then,” the man grinned at him. “I suppose you're looking for something for young Mrs Weasley?”

Harry grinned sheepishly. “I'm at a loss...” he said.

“That's not unusual,” the man replied. “Well, I recently received several books which I think would interest your friend greatly.”

He walked into the store and Harry followed through the long racks of books and books and, well, more books. There were old ones, new ones, ones that Harry recognized, and many, many more which he definitely didn't.

“Here,” the manager said to him, pointing at a couple of titles to his right. Harry came to stand next to him, and saw the names of the books. A small smile spread over his face.

“I think she'll definitely like that,” he said.

Another half-hour later, Harry found himself in Quality Quidditch Supplies. It was one of Harry's favourite stores, and he knew he would find something for Ron in there. He did. After almost an hour, he forced himself to leave. He made a few more stops, among others to get Draco's present. He found that Draco was just as hard to get something for as the others, but for different reasons. Several hours after he left home, he decided to leave. It was getting late and the shops were closing – and he couldn't avoid Draco forever, no matter how much he wanted to do just that.

Stepping into the fire at the Leaky Cauldron, he returned home moments later.

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## Chapter Thirteen Poison

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Once out of the fireplace, Harry stopped dead in his tracks. The living room was filled with people, with Ginny Weasley in the chaos' midst, trying to bring order. She wasn't succeeding.

On the side of the couch sat Draco. He met Harry's gaze briefly and Harry winced at how the blonde looked. He didn't appear to be any better off now than he'd been in the morning. Suddenly, Harry felt guilty for leaving without telling the boy where he was going.

He walked through the living room to the Master bedroom and set his purchases away in his closet to be wrapped later on. Returning back into the living room, he looked briefly about the room.

All the people he saw had been at the party at the Weasley Castle as well. He saw a few Weasleys; close to the balcony stood Fred talking with Angelina. For once, the other Weasley twin wasn't right next to him, although he could very well be some place close by. Ron and Hermione were there as well, Harry noted with a smile. They had sat down next to Draco and Hermione looked like she was checking if he had a fever – her hand was on the blonde's forehead. Harry smiled at Hermione's huge stomach; it wasn't long 'till her due-date.

Sirius and Remus stood talking with Severus, Harry noted with surprise. Remus and Severus looked completely at ease together, although Sirius didn't look completely comfortable with it.

There were a few other people – Harry thought he'd heard someone in the kitchen and it looked like a few were in the smaller bedroom next to the living room.

Harry made his way over to the couch.

“Harry! There you are!” Hermione exclaimed. She made an attempt to stand, but Harry stopped her.

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“You can sit, I don’t mind,” he said with a grin.

She pouted and said, “I’m huge. Can’t do anything.”

He gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek. “You’re beautiful.”

“You sound just like Ron,” Hermione said. “You should try being in my shoes some time.”

“I don’t think your shoes would fit me,” he replied with a small grin.

“Oh, I know,” Hermione continued in her pouting tone. “Still, you should try this for just one day, and you’d be much more supportive of me.”

“You’re saying we aren’t supportive?” Harry asked.

She glared at him. “You’re making fun of me.”

“I just told you that you look beautiful,” Harry said, slightly exasperated.

She gave him another look, and Ron, who’d been following the conversation with interest, laughed. Draco was leaning back into the couch, his eyes closed, looking very small and fragile. Unlike Ron, he didn’t look like he’d been listening to Harry and Hermione at all. Harry’s heart went out to him; he looked bad.

“How are you?” he asked quietly.

Draco opened his eyes to look at him. “I’m fine, Harry,” he said. “Don’t worry.”

Hermione moved to the side of the couch, allowing Harry to sit down in the middle, between herself and Draco. He did so, both wanting and dreading what could happen. Still, it was a room full of people – neither could throw a fit with that much of an audience and they weren’t expected to be snogging. Maybe this was the best time to comfort.

He sneaked a hand behind Draco’s shoulders – only for show, for Hermione and Ron, he told himself. Nothing more... It had absolutely nothing to do with the need to comfort the blonde.

Draco sat stiffly for a moment, before relaxing into Harry. It was strange; Harry could feel the weariness radiating off the Slytherin. For a brief moment, he let himself give Draco the Healing Warmth, before stopping himself. Draco looked up at him and gave him the

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smallest of nods. As he settled back into Harry's embrace, the raven-haired boy began giving strength to Draco.

Hermione and Ron were speaking to each other and Harry returned his attention to them, as Draco seemed to lull off into some semi-sleep.

"Ginny is really into this," Ron was saying with a grin at his little sister, whom was running around, speaking briefly with each occupant of the room.

"She's one of the best things that ever happened to the Order," Hermione said. "Dumbledore can't take care of *everything* and she's *really* good at organizing. She gets things done."

"Have you talked to her today?" Harry asked. "You know what's going on?"

Hermione shook her head. "Nope," she said. "I know she met with Dumbledore after she left here, and they came up with the plan. Apparently, things need to get going, 'cause otherwise the meeting wouldn't have been 'till tomorrow."

"Well, the vision was awful," Harry said quietly.

"I know. They always are. Draco didn't tell us much, though," Hermione said with a look at the blonde. Her eyes softened as she saw Draco, half-asleep.

"I'm sure Ginny will tell us," Ron said. "Looks like she's about to start the actual meeting."

Harry looked up to see Ginny floating a foot above the ground, making her a bit taller than everyone else, and capturing most of the people's attention. She stayed silent until the room had become quiet.

"I thank you all for coming here with such short notice," she said. "Also, thanks to Draco and Harry, who've let us hold the meeting here.

"Last night, Mr Malfoy had a vision. I won't tell you its exact content, for it would take too long, and time is something we don't have. Therefore, I would ask the following to step up.

"Dean Thomas."

The young black man, whom Harry hadn't noticed until now, looked up from the corner where he was standing with Seamus Finnigan. He walked over to Ginny.

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“Angelina Johnson.”

Angelina left her fiancé after squeezing his hand shortly. Both twins were unusually quiet and Katie didn't look much better.

“Neville Longbottom.”

Harry looked around. Neville was here? He gaped as he saw a young man step forth. He was only vaguely similar to the chubby boy Harry knew. This young man was about Harry's height, well built, with short dark hair. The only thing that proved it was still the same person Harry knew was the slight shyness in his movements as he took his place next to Ginny. There, Neville looked briefly at Ginny. Harry wondered how Draco had been able to recognize Neville in the vision at all.

“Severus Snape.”

The Potions Master strode to her side with long, confident strides.

“Now, I cannot stress enough how important it is that this operation is not crashed like the last one,” Ginny said. “I do not accept casualties if they could have been avoided. There are fifteen people's lives at stake here, plus everyone involved in the rescue mission and I do not want as much as one of them to be wasted.”

She turned to the four she'd called forth and handed each one of the men a necklace. “These necklaces are directly linked to a few people. Firstly they are linked to Albus and me. Secondly they are linked to the person closest to you. Thirdly, a security person, chosen by me, who's been notified already. Lastly, to Harry and Draco.”

Harry felt Draco stir at the mention of his name, and he had to admit he was startled himself, especially as Ginny hadn't spoken to him earlier. Still, it made sense; if something happened, he and Draco and their Healing powers would be much needed. Hopefully, this time, one of them wouldn't be on the receiving end of those powers.

“They also contain a locator so that we can find you,” Ginny continued. “That way, we'll find you immediately, should you be kidnapped.”

“What if we don't want you to come?” Angelina asked quietly. “It could be dangerous. You could Apparate right in front of a bullet, or something.”

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“You say *Incapacitate* and it will be sending us a red signal until you remove it. However, I do not recommend that. This will be dangerous, no matter what we do. We’ll have to take some risks, if it can save lives.”

Angelina nodded.

A few more minutes were spent going through the details of the plan. Dean and Seamus appeared the most nervous about what they knew was about to happen. Snape’s face was set in a glare. Harry knew that the Potions Master was the least likely to be afraid; after all, he had been a Death Eater. He knew he wasn’t any longer; he’d overheard Snape’s story from Lavender Brown at the Christmas party, when she’d been talking about it with her girlfriends. Apparently, the heart attack Severus had had was the result of the Cruciatus curse, placed on him for hours after he’d been found out. Harry, together with Ron, Hermione and a few other Order members, had been the ones to find him. As soon as he’d been taken off the Cruciatus curse, the heart attack had hit him. Harry had apparently been the closest to him, as the others were fighting off the Death Eaters – which was why Hermione had thought it very odd when Harry had been so surprised at the information.

Ginny finished, “I’m sorry that we can’t lock you away somewhere safe, but several Muggles have already been kidnapped, and we think Voldemort is behind those crimes. If we are to find them, we need to let you be kidnapped as well.

“Now, everyone except Ron, Hermione, Harry, Draco, Sirius and Remus are allowed to leave.”

The crowd scattered. Angelina returned to Fred, who gave her a hug. He held her tightly against him, stroking her back, comforting both himself and her. Seamus and Dean disappeared through the fireplace within moments. Severus walked over to Remus and Sirius. Harry suddenly realized that Remus must be “the person closest” to Severus. It would make sense that Sirius was a bit upset about that.

Harry watched Snape shake hands with Remus and Sirius, before he left through the fireplace.

He also saw Neville take Ginny’s hand. “Go home,” she said softly. “I’ll be there in a while.”

“I will be there when you arrive.” He pushed a lock of hair out of her face and placed a gentle kiss on her lips.

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She offered him a sad smile, and let him hold her. Eventually they pulled away and Neville placed a last, soft kiss on her forehead, before he left the same way as the others had.

Harry saw Ron stare at Ginny. It seemed like Ginny's relationship with Neville was news to him as well.

"Ginny! You didn't tell us you finally got together with Nev'," Hermione said happily, ignoring the gaping mouth of her husband.

The young Weasley-girl blushed. "It just kind of... happened," she said, grinning.

"But – Neville?" Ron stuttered.

"Yes, *Neville*," Ginny said pointedly. "I'll have you know that he's been a perfect gentleman the whole time."

"And exactly how long is 'the whole time'?" Ron asked as Sirius and Remus came to sit down. They conjured up a second couch for themselves and Ginny to sit in.

"A month and a half," Ginny said, meeting her brother's gaze evenly.

Ron knew better than to go against that Look – the Look that Ginny had inherited from her mother. It told anyone – especially the Weasley-boys – that they were dangerously close to getting into something very unpleasant. Ron recognized the look from Hermione as well; perhaps it was a woman-thing, rather than a Weasley-women thing.

"Anyway," Ginny said, pointedly changing the subject to the more important matters at hand. "I need to talk to you a bit."

Harry watched as the group changed from the relaxed attitude, to one of business. Only Draco, still sitting with closed eyes beside him, didn't change. Harry knew that the blonde wasn't asleep; he seemed merely indifferent. As though he didn't care about what was happening, as though he was... weak? Harry frowned. His thoughts were interrupted by Ginny's continued speech.

"Hermione, I *need* you to stay inside until the twins are born, and for a while after that. You are weak at the moment, whether you want to admit it or not. You wouldn't be a match for the Death Eaters.

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“Albus and I would both like to ask you to always have someone with you. Inside the Castle you can move on your own of course, but not outside, even on the grounds around the Castle. So could you please...?”

Hermione nodded. “I know. I’ll be careful.”

“Good,” Ginny said with a small smile. “I don’t like it any more than you do, but at times like these... We do what we have to.”

“Now, Sirius and Remus, I want you to go with Hermione and Ron to the Castle and place the heaviest wards on it to alert us if anything happens to Hermione while Ron is at work.”

“But the wards are already some of the strongest in Britain,” Remus said.

“I know,” Ginny said. “However, they aren’t the kind we need. We need something to alert us if Hermione goes into labour while she’s alone and she can’t contact us. I know it’s unlikely, but it needs to be done. So, the spells we need are self-inflicted pain – yes, ‘Mione, this is self-inflicted – wards. Can you do that?”

Sirius and Remus nodded. “It shouldn’t be too hard. To whom should we link it?”

“Ron first, then Harry and Draco. Is that okay, ‘Mione?”

“It’s fine,” Hermione said softly.

“It needs to be done very soon,” said Ginny.

“We’ll come with you now,” Sirius said to Hermione and Ron, “If that’s okay.”

Ron and Hermione agreed. Ginny smiled at them.

“Then that’s all. You four –” she nodded to Ron, Hermione, Sirius and Remus “– can go. Harry, Draco, I need you for a few more minutes.”

“Well, seeing as how we live here, you’ll be the one going rather than us, won’t you?” Harry asked her rather pointedly, as Hermione and the three men stood to leave. Harry didn’t stand with them; he only waved good-bye to them. A moment later, Harry, Draco and Ginny were the only ones left.

“Oh, right,” Ginny replied, shrugging. “Anyway, is he awake?”

Time out of Place

“I’m awake,” the blonde said without opening his eyes.

“Okay,” said the redhead, “This is going to sound a bit... I don’t know how it’s going to sound but... I don’t want you to take it the wrong way –”

“Ginny? Just say it, perhaps?” Harry asked softly.

“Both me and Albus are worried about you, Draco.”

Draco’s eyes opened slowly to look at Ginny. “Oh yes?” he drawled, sounding very Malfoy-ish.

“Don’t be that way,” Ginny said, finding herself again. “You aren’t eating enough, you are always tired – if I’m not getting the totally wrong expression, I’m guessing you are receiving Healing Warmth from Harry as we speak.”

“And if I am?” Draco said, continuing to drawl in that very Malfoy-like tone of voice.

“No healthy person would be able to receive healing for almost an hour and still be tired, Malfoy,” Ginny said. “You should be up, high on the amount of energy in your body, not just barely be able to open your eyes!”

“And this matters to you because...?”

“Because seeing as we have an upcoming battle against at least twenty Death Eaters, if not the Dark Lord himself, I would like my only two Healers to be well enough to heal everyone else, rather than each other.” Ginny’s tone was icy, and she met Draco’s glare evenly.

“You care too much, Weasley,” Draco told her coldly. “I’m fine.”

“Shall we test it?”

For a brief moment, Harry saw some alien emotion flit over Draco’s face, but it was gone before he had time to recognize it.

“Fine,” the blonde spat. “What do you want to do to me?”

Time out of Place

Before either boy had time to react, Ginny cast a spell at Draco. A red mist hit him, and was absorbed by his body. A moment later, the blonde began to glow with the same red colour.

“You are a Healer,” Ginny told Draco. “You should know what that means.”

Harry didn't *know* what it meant, but he could guess. “I think you're sick, Draco,” he said softly to the blonde.

“I am not!” Draco said, standing up. However, the sudden loss of Healing Warmth made him stumble forward. Harry stood and grabbed him quickly before he fell, but Draco pushed him away.

“Leave me alone,” he said, running out of the room.

“What do you think?” Harry asked.

Ginny looked away from the door through which Draco had just left, to Harry. “I don't know. I don't think it's something too serious – the light wasn't that bright – but it could still be something that needs treatment. I was serious about what I said before, Harry. We're facing a huge operation here, and if anything goes wrong, we need to be able to count on you. If Draco's sick, he won't be able to heal, and you won't be able to concentrate.”

“I'll talk to him,” Harry said. “I'll make him listen.”

“Good. Take him to Hogwarts to see Madame Pomfrey as soon as possible. I don't think you can heal away the illness in him now.”

Harry nodded. “It doesn't seem like it.”

“I'll go now,” Ginny said. “I hope you can make him see reason.”

She walked over to the fireplace, and with another set of good-byes, she left.

Harry moved about the room and picked up a few teacups that had been left by the guests. He set them in the sink in the kitchen, before taking a deep breath and opening the doors to the Master bedroom.

Draco lay on his stomach on his side of the bed, his head buried in a pillow. He didn't move as Harry walked inside and stood at the end of the bed.

Time out of Place

“Draco...”

“Leave, Harry,” the blonde said to him.

“No, Draco, I won’t leave,” Harry said. He forced himself to be and sound completely calm; he wouldn’t get into another fight with Draco. All they did nowadays was fight, say sorry, and fight some more.

Draco turned around and faced him, sitting up. “Why not? Why can’t you just leave?”

“Because I care.”

The blonde stopped himself and whatever nasty remark he’d been on the way to deliver. The three words Harry had just uttered were apparently not the ones Draco had expected.

“Now you’re the one who looks like a goldfish,” Harry said with a small smile.

Draco closed his mouth. Harry walked to him and sat down.

“I can be your friend, Draco,” he said softly. “Not your *boy*friend, not yet, and maybe not ever, but I can be your friend.”

“I thought we already agreed that we were friends, long ago,” Draco said quietly.

“That was a truce, lasting only as long as we are left in this place. We would go home and resume our roles as enemies. It wasn’t friendship.”

“And this is?” Draco asked, looking down at his hands.

“Look, Draco, I stand by what I said yesterday. I don’t know what I feel about you. But I know that I like spending time with you, and I know that I worry about you. Friendship is all I have to offer right now.”

The blonde was silent for a few seconds, before he said, “Then I accept that friendship.”

Harry smiled. “Good. Now will you listen to your friend’s friend? You are sick, Draco. We need you to be well.”

Time out of Place

The Slytherin looked up at him. “I know that there’s something wrong with me. I – it’s been that way for months.”

“Months? How do you – oh yeah, the diary.” Harry looked a bit apologetic as he spoke of the item that had caused their last fight. “I’m sorry about shouting at you about that.”

“You’re forgiven,” Draco said quietly.

“Do you – he – does he write about it? Does he know what’s wrong with you?”

Draco shook his head. “He only writes that he’s been very tired and weak. He says he’s lost his appetite.”

“Will you come with me to Hogwarts and let Madame Pomfrey check you, then?” Harry asked.

“Why not St. Mungo’s?”

“Ginny told me to take you to Hogwarts, so that’s where I’ll take you. I think she’s frightened that you will be recognized by one of Voldemort’s spies. It wouldn’t be good if he knew you’re sick.”

“Why can’t you just heal me?” Draco asked.

“I don’t know,” the Boy Who Lived replied. “I would if I could, trust me, but you just spent an hour receiving Healing Warmth and you still could hardly stand afterwards, so it’s clearly not helping.”

“You think it’s the other way around?”

Harry looked at him. “What?”

“The other way around. Like, your healing me is really making me sick. Maybe my body is getting allergic to it or something.”

Harry processed the idea for a few seconds and then said, “I think that’s unlikely. You still get better during and after the visions when I hold you and if your theory was correct, you wouldn’t.”

Draco shrugged. “So, should we go?”

Time out of Place

Harry nodded. "C'mon."

*

Twenty minutes later, they floo-ed themselves to Hogwarts. Albus Dumbledore was in his office, looking right at the fireplace as they stepped out. Harry wondered if he'd known they would arrive at just that moment. It certainly seemed like it. He didn't have time to ponder the question for long, however, as the Headmaster promptly led them both to the Hospital Wing.

There, Madame Pomfrey made Draco lay down on one of the beds in the corner of the wing. There were no students in the wing at the moment; the current Hogwarts inhabitants seemed to be better at staying out of trouble than the ones in Harry's year.

Draco seemed content to be lying down once again. He closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths. When he opened his eyes again, he said, "Oh don't look at me like that, Potter. I'm not dying."

"Now, Mr Potter, if you could step away from the bed, please?" Madame Pomfrey asked him.

Harry nodded, and stepped back. As soon as he had done so, the medi-witch began casting spells at Draco, to notice any illness. She frowned as they all came back negative.

"Mr Malfoy, could you please tell me the symptoms you've had so far?" she asked finally. "And how long have you experienced them?"

"It started a few months ago," Draco replied. "I was suddenly tired, much more so than usual. I used to wake up before Harry did and now I never do. Then a few weeks later, I began experiencing nausea. Real, horrible nausea that made me want to throw up, constantly. I never did; it was just sort of *there*, and I grew used to it, I guess, as it's still there."

Harry understood as Draco talked, that there were probably more than one reason why Draco didn't want to show him his older self's writings.

Time out of Place

“I think it became worse after the Death Eater attack two months ago, when Harry and I were both unconscious for five days. I’m not sure, but I’ve been even more tired since. And I reacted violently to the vision after that attack – that time I did throw up.”

Harry marvelled at how calm Draco could sound whilst talking about whatever it was that was wrong with him. Neither his eyes, nor the feelings which Harry could sense because of the Heart Bind, betrayed any fear or nervousness. He looked tired, just like he had for days in a row now; his eyes slightly bloodshot and dark circles beneath. Once again, Harry thought he looked small and frail in the large hospital bed.

“Yesterday I had a vision. It took me almost five hours to come back from that,” Draco continued. “Harry was awake an hour earlier. When I did wake up, my head was foggy and heavy, and my body more tired than I’ve ever felt it.”

“And you didn’t think to *tell* anyone?” Madame Pomfrey asked, her words disapproving, yet the sound of them more worried than anything.

“I don’t know... I didn’t want to think about it. I thought perhaps it was the aftermath of the vision – it was a bad one, after all – and I just assumed that I... I don’t know, maybe I was getting a cold or something. Nothing serious.”

Harry wanted to scream, “*Nothing serious?!*” at him, but refrained from doing so. He knew it wouldn’t do any good. It wouldn’t change anything. Still, Draco looked up at him, his eyes apologetic. The Boy Who Lived realized that Draco could feel his feelings, just like Harry could feel Draco’s.

“I’ll be fine, Potter,” the blonde told him quietly.

Harry offered him a small smile.

Madame Pomfrey stood by Draco’s bed, her face set in a frown as she tried to understand what was wrong with the young blonde man before her. As the spells had all come back negative, it told her that Draco was perfectly healthy – yet her eyes told her otherwise; the man before her was ill.

At last, she walked over to one of the many cabinets in the room and took a needle out.

“This is going to hurt a bit,” she told Draco. He nodded and she stuck the needle into his skin, drawing blood. She filled a small tube with the liquid, and drew the needle out. The tiny wound closed itself when she muttered a quick spell.

Time out of Place

“I’ll be back in a little bit,” she said. “I need to test this.”

She hurried out of the Wing, towards her own little room. Harry and Draco watched as the large doors closed behind her.

“So...” Draco said, looking up at Harry.

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” the raven-haired boy asked.

“So that you could do what, Harry?”

“I – I don’t know. But I could have helped. We could have gotten help earlier.” He slumped down in a chair next to the bed, his shoulders falling forward in slight defeat.

“Help from whom?” Draco asked softly. “Pomfrey doesn’t know what’s wrong with me yet. Heck, the spells came back negative – maybe I’m not sick at all. Perhaps I’m just tired.”

“You don’t believe your own words.”

Draco sighed. “No, I don’t because I can *feel* it. There is something inside of me, making me this way. Consuming me. And I just *know* that there’s no way to stop it.”

“Don’t talk that way!” Harry said, standing up abruptly.

“I’m just speaking the truth,” Draco said, and as Harry was about to scream at him, he held up his hand. “Please Harry. I don’t want to get into another fight.”

Harry sat back down again, hiding his face in his hands for a second, before looking up at the blonde. It was so much easier to just scream and be angry with Draco, rather than trying to understand why he cared so much whether the other lived or died. Still, as he heard Draco’s quiet plea, he could do nothing but do as he was asked.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“Don’t be.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes. Their – well, mostly Harry’s – brooding was interrupted when Madame Pomfrey re-entered the Wing, her eyes betraying worry and sadness. Harry knew the news were bad.

Time out of Place

“What did you find?” Draco asked, again surprising Harry with his calmness.

“You – you’ve been poisoned, Mr Malfoy. And by what, I don’t have any idea.”

“Take it to Sev’, then,” Harry suggested. “He should know, or at least be able to find out.”

“I can’t,” the medi-witch said.

“Why not?”

“Potions Master Severus Snape has just been kidnapped.”

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Fourteen

### I am a Healer

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An hour later, Harry was in Headmaster Dumbledore's office, with Draco beside him and Ginny pacing back and forth in front of him. Remus Lupin stood silently in the back.

"It's lucky we decided to move so fast," Ginny muttered to herself. She held a map in her hands, with dots moving around on it. A single one was labelled; '*Severus Snape*'. Harry couldn't see much of the map, but he guessed that the other dots were either Death Eaters, or other hostages.

"Not luck, Ms Weasley – we knew it was most likely to happen soon," Professor Dumbledore said, smiling kindly at the young woman.

"Shouldn't we be doing something?" Draco asked. He was sitting in an armchair on Harry's right side. Madame Pomfrey had decided that the young man shouldn't start freezing and as it was cold outside, she had made him put on a thick sweater and then placed a spell on it to keep it warm. Draco had had a few things to say to Madame Pomfrey about the arrangement, but in the end, she had won, refusing to let him leave the Medical Wing unless he did as she asked.

"He has placed the incapacitate-spell on it," Ginny said, sounding highly annoyed. "We can't see *where* he is on the map – only that he's with a bunch of other people. Until he removes the spell, we'll only see his dot and a bunch of others, but no names whatsoever.

"All we can do at the moment is secure the others that were supposed to be kidnapped, according to Draco's vision."

"Will the other three be taken here?" Harry asked.

Ginny shook her head 'no'. "Sirius, Bill and McGonagall are meeting them in the Three Broomsticks, 'cause they can Apparate there. They will take one person each here. They should be here –"

Time out of Place

Just then, a bright red light shone from the necklace around her neck. Her eyes widened and filled with tears. “Neville...” she mumbled. “He’s hurt! They’ve taken him, those bastards!”

She was running towards the door when Dumbledore stood and said, “Ginny, stay.”

She stopped dead in her tracks and turned, her eyes wide and frightened. The Headmaster motioned for her to return to where she’d been pacing before.

“Hand me the map,” he told her gently.

She unrolled another piece of parchment, which had been hidden inside her robes, and gave it to him.

“He hasn’t placed *incapacitate* on it,” Dumbledore said as the map revealed a detailed view of the area where Neville had been taken. “He’s in the Highlands, near Inverness.”

“Let’s go then,” Draco said, standing up. He swayed when he did so and Harry grabbed him.

“Oh no you don’t,” he told the blond. “You are staying here.”

“Since when did you become my mother?” Draco spat at him.

“Since we concluded that you’ve been bloody poisoned, you git. Now sit down and stay here. I’m sure you can help organize this with Ginny and Professor Dumbledore.”

Draco glared at him and reluctantly sat down. “I’m not the biggest git here,” Harry heard him mutter.

Meanwhile, Dumbledore, Ginny and Remus had started organizing for real. First, Harry and Remus would floo to Hogsmeade to tell Sirius, Bill and McGonagall what was happening. There, they would all wait until Dean and Angelina had arrived. Dumbledore and Ginny would have contacted the Order in this time, and filled most of them in. They would in turn floo or Apparate to Hogsmeade. From there, they would continue to Apparate to the Highlands.

Harry felt his stomach turn at the thought of him being expected to Apparate. He didn’t know how to!

Just then, Dumbledore placed a hand on his shoulder.

Time out of Place

“Don’t be nervous about Apparating, Mr Potter,” he told him, his eyes twinkling. “You’ve done it before; your body knows what to do. It won’t be as horrible as you think it will.”

Harry stared at the Headmaster. “Y-yes, Professor,” he mumbled. Again, he wondered just how much Dumbledore really knew.

“Harry?”

He turned around at the sound of Draco’s voice. “Yes?” he asked.

“*Audiosis Harry*,” Draco said softly.

Harry smiled at him. “*Audiosis Draco*.”

Standing up, Draco leaned in and gave Harry a kiss on his cheek.

‘Good luck.’

Harry felt his cheek burn where the blonde’s lips had come in contact with his own, but was dragged into the fire by Remus before he had time to think more about it.

They arrived in Hogsmeade a moment later, and spotted McGonagall, Bill and Sirius immediately. A quick set of ‘hello’s were exchanged, as well as a kiss between Sirius and Remus. The spot on his cheek felt hot.

It was not even five minutes before Angelina arrived, materializing before them. She looked scared and angry, but unharmed.

“Why are you here?” she asked Harry. “What happened?”

“Neville was kidnapped about a half hour ago and Severus before that,” Harry replied. “Nev’ hasn’t placed the incapacitate-spell on his necklace, so we will be able to find them. We’re Apparating there within short. You can either come with us, or McGonagall can take you back to Hogwarts.”

“I’m staying,” she said resolutely. “It could just as well have been me that was kidnapped; I need to help the two that were.”

Harry nodded.

Time out of Place

A minute later, Dean arrived. He looked calmer than Angelina. Remus explained the situation to him and he agreed to come with the group, just like Angelina had.

In the next ten minutes, the rest of the Order that had been called arrived. Ron was there, coming to stand next to Harry as soon as he had materialized.

“Where’s Draco?” he asked.

“At Hogwarts,” Harry said. “I’ll tell you later.”

The Weasley twins came, George with Katie Bell in tow. Fred joined with Angelina immediately. Percy and Charlie Weasley came next and then Seamus followed. Several people that Harry only recognized from the party at the Weasley Castle arrived as well, before Sirius said that they were now all there.

“Now, the most important thing is that no one gets killed,” Sirius said as they were getting ready to Apparate. “No foolish chance-taking – that will result in deaths. The Muggles are to be freed, as well as Severus and Neville. The hostages are our highest priority. As soon as we have them out of there, you leave. Stay together two and two, leave two and two. No one gets left behind. This is not the time to fight a war – now it is to save innocent people. The war will be fought when we are on home turf. Understood?”

A murmur of agreement followed, and then they all partnered up. Harry and Ron, Fred and Angelina, Seamus and Dean, George and Katie, and so on.

“Good then. Let’s go.”

A collective muttering of Apparition spells followed, as they all said the destination. A moment later, the previously so crowded pub was empty, save for the owner, Madame Rosmerta.

Harry heard two words as his world blurred before him.

‘Be careful.’

*

He was pushed to the ground.

Time out of Place

Above him, he saw Ron deliver a powerful counter spell to the one that had just been cast at Harry and himself, then throw another one off at their attacker. The Death Eater was fast, but not fast enough. He fell to the ground as though he was dead.

Ron quickly helped Harry get up, and they looked around hastily. They were standing in wet grass and rain was drizzling. Around them, the fifteen or so poles that Draco had described were in the ground, most of them with people bound to them.

“Snape...” Harry muttered and pointed over at the pole to which the Potions Master was bound. Ron followed his hand and they began moving towards him. Ron stayed behind him, checking around him for any Death Eater. Most of them seemed occupied with other members of the Order, however, which left Harry and Ron open to free the hostages.

Harry felt weakness shower over him as he came closer to Severus. The man was obviously hurt; a burning feeling below his ribcage on the left side told him where to heal when he got to the Potions Master.

“Duck!” Ron screamed again at Harry and Harry did so without thinking or asking why. Once again, Ron deflected the spell and returned it to the Death Eater. This time, the Death Eater in question was faster however; he shot another spell at Ron.

“Go,” Ron said to Harry, still concentrating on the masked man before him. Harry moved again.

‘Behind you.’

Harry whirled around, his wand pointed at the Death Eater that was suddenly there.

“*Stupefy!*” he screamed, and the Death Eater was too surprised at how quickly it had happened – he had no time to perform a counter spell. He reeled over, frozen.

‘Thank you.’

‘You’re welcome.’

Harry continued the last few feet to Snape and quickly put his hands on the wounded area. The black fabric felt sticky; Snape was bleeding. He was barely conscious, yet stirred as Harry healed him.

Time out of Place

Katie Bell came running to him. George was closely behind her, fending off any Death Eater that tried to stop them, much like Ron had done for Harry.

“Take him back, now!” Harry told Katie. “He needs to get to St. Mungo’s; he has a gunshot wound on the right side, below his ribcage. I think he’s taken some pretty strong spells as well, but St. Mungo’s will know what to do about that.”

Katie nodded as she worked on getting the ropes around Severus’ wrists untied. They were magically locked together and she had to break no less than six spells before they came undone. As they did, Snape fell forward into Harry’s arms, his legs too weak to carry him. Katie took him from Harry.

“We’ll take it from here,” she said, and a moment later, she and George had Apparated away from the war site.

Harry looked around. He spotted Ron a few feet away, fighting yet another Death Eater. Harry couldn’t get a grip on how many there actually were – and he was not about to stop to count them.

‘The one on the far left side is dying.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Don’t ask, just get there!’

Harry didn’t need to be told twice. He captured the attention of Ron and motioned to the redhead where he was going. Ron managed a small nod in understanding, never taking his eyes off his opponent. Harry knew that he was on his own.

‘Duck!’

Well, perhaps not completely on his own.

He ducked.

Then he rolled around, out of the way of an Imperius Curse.

“*Incendio*,” he mumbled and a fire started at the bottom of the robes. Quickly, to distract the Death Eater from the fire, he threw another curse, which the masked man blocked. He

Time out of Place

threw a new curse at Harry, which he in turn deflected. In the meantime, the flames had grown, and the Death Eater started screaming as he really noticed them.

A spell came from behind and the Death Eater keeled over, unconscious. Ron placed a magical bind on him before extinguishing the fire and then, together with Harry, he ran towards the faraway pole.

As they ran, Harry looked around and saw that most of the poles were now empty. Death Eaters lay scattered all over the place, with Bill in charge of binding them to take them back to the Ministry so they could be prosecuted. Several of the Order had Apparated away with the hostages; as far as Harry could see, there were only two left – one who was being taken care by two wizards and the one that Harry and Ron were headed towards.

They reached the person and Harry noticed with slight surprise that it was a young woman. She hung limply in the ropes binding her, her hair obscuring her face. She was wearing Muggle clothes; jeans and a shirt that had once been white, but was now stained red by blood.

Harry felt the by-now familiar pain as he approached her. His head hurt the worst, which must mean that she had some sort of head injury. There was a burning pain in his shoulder and he saw the large areas of semi-dried blood there. She had, just like Severus, been shot.

He put one hand on the back of her head and the other one on her shoulder. She didn't move as he did so, which worried him. He could feel the slight pulsing of her heart though – she wasn't dead. Besides, he could feel her pain clearly. She wouldn't be in pain if she were...

“Let's go,” Ron said to him as he broke the last binding spell.

Ron took the young woman in his arms and said, “You strong enough to Apparate by yourself?”

Harry nodded, although he wasn't sure he was. The young woman was more important than he was right now. “St. Mungo's?”

Ron nodded. “I'll see you there.”

A moment later, he was gone, together with the woman. As the last wounded person had disappeared, Harry felt the energy drain from him. He suddenly felt how his clothes were sticking to his body, wet with a combination of rainwater and other people's blood.

Time out of Place

'Apparate, Harry,' he heard Draco tell him.

'I can't... I'm not strong enough.'

'Yes you are. You need to get out of there. Apparate to St. Mungo's, and they will take care of you there.'

Harry sighed heavily and drew upon the last of his powers. Mumbling the words, he felt the world change around him. When he opened his eyes again, he was at the hospital.

Someone caught him as he stumbled and helped him onto a bed. He vaguely recognized Charlie Weasley, through the haze that his mind was captured in. He felt pain, all around him, and realized that St. Mungo's probably wasn't the best place to go to if he wanted to get stronger. There were too many injured and ill people, especially after the operation they had just come through.

He was however wheeled through the corridors and he felt the pain diminish. His wet clothes were dried with magic, leaving Harry warm and the feeling of tiredness even more prominent. The people wheeling him were taking him to the same place he'd been the last time he was at the wizard hospital.

'Go to sleep, Harry.'

'I should stay... awake... There are people... they need me.'

'Sleep for a few hours, then you can heal them.'

'But... Snape... and the woman... they need me.'

'They are both still alive. You can help them after you've slept and regained some strength. You are, unlike our future selves, not used to being out on the battle field like this.'

'Now who is whose mother?'

'Shut up and sleep, Potter.'

'Fine.'

He shut his eyes, blocking out the alarm of the hospital.

'Good night, Harry,' he heard as he drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Fifteen

**Wars have never hurt anybody except the people who die**

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Five hours later, Harry was up and about again. At the moment, he was sitting by Severus Snape's bed, one hand on the Potions Master's forehead, the other over the bullet wound. Severus was one of the most injured of the hostages; despite the short time he'd been kidnapped. There was some internal damage, caused mostly by the bullet wound, but also, most likely, by a long period of time under the Cruciatus Curse. The doctors wouldn't promise Harry that his brain hadn't been damaged – after all, people had been known to go crazy because of the curse.

He'd been sitting by Severus' side for the last hour. After he woke up, he had quickly found his way down to the intensive care, where the several of the ex-hostages had been taken. He had found out that Neville had already been moved to another unit, as he had suffered no life-threatening injuries.

The young woman had been worse off; the bullet to the shoulder had damaged the muscle. Here the medical personnel made the most startling discoveries.

“The bullets that were used have been cursed,” a medi-wizard had told him. “The one that hit her was hexed to make healing much harder. If left in too long, the wound is irreparable. The healing you gave her most likely saved her arm and perhaps even her life. The curses start making their way through the body, disabling the possibility of full healing until the bullet is removed. It is an absolutely horrid situation for any doctor.”

Another medi-wizard had told him a few minutes later that Snape had been hit by a similar bullet. Shortly after, Harry had positioned himself by Severus' bed, and he hadn't moved since.

The door creaked open, and Harry looked up to see a familiar blonde standing in the doorway.

“Draco,” he said, “What are you doing here? You're supposed to be at Hogwarts, resting.”

Time out of Place

Draco shrugged, walking into the room. As he reached Harry, he sat down heavily into the chair next to the raven-haired young man.

“Couldn’t just sit there,” he said. “There are too many people that need my help.”

Harry stared at him and then gave him a small smile. “So now you’re Mother Theresa?”

“Who is –?”

“Never mind,” Harry said. “The doctors are happy for any help they can get. The bullets have been hexed so that the wounds won’t heal right, or won’t heal at all.”

“I know, I talked to one of the doctors,” Draco said softly, looking at Severus. “He was shot?”

Harry nodded. “And put under Cruciatus.”

“Ouch,” Draco said, before standing up. “I should go help.”

“Just take it easy, will you?”

The blonde smiled at him. “I will.”

“Draco?”

The boy stopped and turned as he heard Harry’s voice. “Yes?” he asked.

“How did you know? Back out there – you helped me.”

Draco shrugged. “I don’t know, really. After we performed the *Audiosis* spell, I could suddenly see and feel parts of your surroundings. I don’t know how I did it. I don’t remember much of what happened at Hogwarts, either. Dumbledore and Ginny seemed to think it was all right; they just let me be. It might have had something to do with the Heart Bind, though.”

“I suppose. Well, whatever it was you did, thank you. I don’t think I would have come out unscathed, if at all, without you.”

The young blonde gave him a small smile. “You’re welcome,” he said and was out the door.

Time out of Place

Hours passed. Harry didn't move more than to stretch his arms once or twice; he just kept on giving the energy and strength he had, hoping and begging that the Potions Master would be all right.

It was strange to see the normally so alive Snape lying as if dead on the bed. He was hardly moving; only his chest rose and fell in sync with his breathing.

Again, Harry found himself thinking about how how unlikely this would have been two months ago. Two months ago in *Harry's* counting, not this world's. If he told the Hermione and Ron at home that he'd been sitting by Snape's side for hours on end just hoping that the man would pull through after being shot, they would have thought he'd gone crazy. The Hermione and Ron of this time didn't get upset about it; in fact they expected it, especially Hermione. It seemed that Harry and Snape had come to an agreement after the latter's supposed heart attack.

Harry liked this slightly softer version of the Potions Master. He was in no way actually *soft* – Harry didn't think that word could ever be used to describe the Professor – but he was... nicer. Slightly. He and Harry could talk civilly for a few minutes without Snape giving Harry a detention and making him lose house points – not that he *could* deduct house points and give detention to Harry now that he was out of school, but still.

He supposed that the heart attack Severus had had was the reason behind it all. He didn't know it, of course – there seemed to be little he actually *knew* about this world – yet he assumed that a heart attack would change a person's view on life.

He wondered what had happened back then to make Voldemort aware of the fact that Snape was a spy for Dumbledore. He also wondered why the Dark Lord hadn't killed him this time around, now that he'd had the man in his clutches once again. Of course, they weren't sure he would pull through all right as it was; prolonged exposure to Cruciatius was known to drive its victims insane. Add to that a cursed bullet, and no, the likelihood that Severus would be able to stand and harass the Gryffindors again was not big.

Of course, said Potions Master always had a way to prove young Potter wrong.

It was the middle of the night when Harry suddenly felt Snape stir under his hands. Severus' eyes shot open, and he looked around him a bit wildly. When his eyes focused and he saw Harry, his body relaxed slightly.

“Potter?”

Time out of Place

“That would be me,” Harry said. “How are you feeling?”

“Like I’ve been shot,” Severus said, his voice hoarse and dry.

Harry let out a low chuckle. “Sounds about right. You’re in St. Mungo’s, and you’ve been unconscious for the last... ten hours or so. I suggest you get some sleep while I get one of the medi-wizards to come in here and check up on you.”

Snape nodded, his eyes falling shut. When Harry was sure that the man was asleep, he stood and removed his hands from him. The Potions Master flinched at the loss of Healing Warmth, but Harry knew it couldn’t be helped; he needed to find a doctor and tell them that Snape had woken up.

*

Two days later found Harry in the basement below Mr Hanawalt’s shop, as he was about to get his first lesson in shooting. Draco stood beside him. Harry hadn’t wanted him to come; the blonde still looked worse for wear, but Draco had convinced Harry that before they knew what the poison would do to him, he might as well learn how to handle a gun.

“Okay,” said Carl. “Before we start doing *anything*, I am going to go over some gun safety rules. Number one – treat *every gun as though it were loaded*. That means no fooling around. Number two – always point the gun in a safe direction. No pointing at your friends, even if you’re only joking. There could be an accident, but as long as you’re not pointing at anyone, nothing too bad will happen. This also means no fooling around.

“Number three – keep your finger away from the trigger until you’re ready to fire. Number four – keep the action open or un-fireable as is a term you’re more likely to understand, until you’re ready to shoot. If any one of you breaks these rules, you will be thrown out of here, head first, understood?”

Harry, Draco, Ron and Bill, the group for the night, nodded.

“Good. Now, about these guns you are about to use. These are *handguns*. They’re designed to be held and fired with only one hand. However, you do normally use the other hand underneath for better support.”

Time out of Place

He continued to speak of how the gun was built, telling them about the cartridge, the ammunition, the detonator and more. The four men listened intently to every word Carl said before it was time to try their hands at actually firing.

“Stand comfortably in a relaxed position. Use your free hand to support the gun from underneath,” Carl began. He continued to guide them through the position in which they should stand, point by point.

“Now, remember. Lock the non-firing arm straight, otherwise your face will be on the receiving end of the gun’s recoil,” those were his last words to them before they all fired their first bullets.

By the end of the evening, they had all learned that shooting was not as easy as it looked. Still, they managed to do fairly well. They all promised to return a few days later to train more, knowing they would need it. However, there were other pressing matters that also needed their attention at the moment.

“How are you feeling?” Harry asked as they re-entered their apartment. Dumbledore had given Draco permission to stay at home while Snape tried to find the antidote. He’d had to give the permission, as the blonde had flat out refused to spend his days in the Infirmary getting pampered by Madame Pomfrey.

“Tired, but that’s no news, is it,” the blonde replied.

“You should go to bed.”

“You coming with me?” Draco asked, his voice tired yet still managed to sound sly.

“In a little,” Harry replied, not up to playing games with the blonde.

Draco pouted for a second before disappearing into the bedroom. Harry sat down on the couch, relaxing into the pillows. His mind emptied, and he felt himself pulled off to sleep. He should go to the bed, he really should...

“Get up, lazybones,” Draco said to him from the doorway.

Harry opened one eye to glare at him. The blonde had changed into boxers and a black shirt; his usual attire for sleeping.

“Go ‘way,” Harry muttered.

Time out of Place

Draco walked over and pulled him roughly up from the couch. He landed only inches away from Draco. Their gazes met for a moment before Harry quickly moved away. Neither said a word as they walked to the bedroom. Harry didn't want to – and couldn't – deal with Draco and his feelings now; it was too late, he was too tired, it wasn't the right time.

A voice in the back of his head asked if it would ever be the right time. Harry told the voice to shut up.

He brushed his teeth, changed his clothes and drew a brush through his hair even though it didn't make it much more willing to cooperate with him. Finally, he made his way to the bed, where Draco had already fallen asleep. Harry crawled underneath the covers and turned to look at the blonde. His long hair fell softly into his face, and he looked peaceful in his sleep. He was a beautiful young man; even Harry could admit as much.

Sighing, he dug deeper into the pillow, giving into the exhaustion.

*

The next morning, Harry and Draco were both called to Hogwarts. At nine thirty in the morning, they were both sitting, yawning, in the Headmaster's office. With a slight shudder, Harry remembered the last time he'd been in this room – just before the 'operation'.

No one had died. Therefore, Ginny was a happy bird and the Order was breathing a slight sigh of relief that things were going better after two less than successful operations.

The injured Muggles had been healed. Every person that had been kidnapped had also been interviewed after being fed Veritaserum. Harry hadn't been informed of anything that had come out of the interviews yet. He assumed that, given time and if it was important, he would be told.

The door to the office opened to reveal Potions Master Severus Snape. He was walking with a crutch, still suffering the aftermath of the kidnapping. Yet he was up and about, having been released from the hospital after only a day. Harry had heard from Remus that Snape had refused to stay any longer in the hospital, claiming he needed to get back to Hogwarts. After being on the receiving end of the Potions Master's wrath, the medi-wizards and witches had quickly agreed to release him.

Time out of Place

“Mr Potter, Mr Malfoy,” he greeted them.

Neither the blonde nor the raven-haired young man said anything. Snape greeted the Headmaster as well, before sitting down in a chair, putting his crutch away with a look of disgust.

“I have run some tests on the blood sample I received,” he said. “After several hours of work, I’ve come to the conclusion that you have been poisoned by something liquid. This something has been picked up by your bloodstream, and will therefore be almost impossible to get rid of.”

“Do you know what the poison is or does?” Draco asked, his voice even.

Snape shook his head slowly. “As I said, I ran several tests. This poison is not one that I recognize.”

“So there’s no antidote,” Draco said.

“I would not be so quick to assume that, Mr Malfoy,” the Potions Master said. “Almost all poisons have antidotes – it will just take some time to find them.”

“Optimism doesn’t suit you, Sev’,” Draco said with a sad smile. “You should stick to sarcasm.”

Severus shot him a deadly glare, which Draco met with an arched eyebrow.

“Do you know what the poison does?” Harry asked, wanting to stop the staring contest. The two people before him were the ones that could stare another person in the eye for the longest. He didn’t need them to compete against each other.

Snape turned his gaze to Harry. “The few ingredients I have found point at a poison that would tire you greatly. It must be very slow working, from what Madame Pomfrey said your signs have been. Other than tiring you out, it will make you feel ill. As it continues to work and gets a stronger hold on your body, it will make you weaker and weaker; possibly give you fevers and nausea. I don’t know any of these things for sure, but I would think that it will create hallucinations and then paralysis in the final stages.”

“I’m guessing the last stage of the poison is death?” Draco said, his voice flat yet with a hint of sadness.

Time out of Place

“I believe so.”

Harry listened to the words Snape was saying, but his brain had yet to understand their meaning. Draco was *dying*? He couldn't be. He was a Malfoy. He was Harry's enemy, or perhaps friend, he had been there, a thorn in Harry's side since their first year at Hogwarts. Now that he had switched sides, he was *dying*? It was *not* happening.

“I will work to find an antidote,” Severus said, “But I can't promise anything.”

Draco nodded, and Harry wanted to explode. How could he just sit there? He was nodding and agreeing as Snape signed what could possibly be his death sentence. He was in no way upset or angry. He wasn't screaming or crying. He just sat there, looking out the window behind Dumbledore's desk.

Just as Harry was about to share a piece of his mind, he felt Draco's hand on his own. The Boy Who Lived looked up to see Draco watching him.

“Calm down,” he said. “It won't do anyone any good to be mad.”

Swallowing hard and taking several deep breaths, Harry nodded.

“Do we know where it came from?” Draco asked.

“I was hoping you could tell me,” Snape replied. “I can only find out what's in it, not how it was induced into your bloodstream. My guess, however, is most likely the same as yours – Voldemort.”

“Why a slow working poison, though?” Harry asked. “Why not just kill him off – or both of us, for that matter? Make a statement. He likes to make statements.”

“I don't know, Potter,” the Potions Master said. “Your guess is as good as mine. I would think, however, that this way, he preoccupies more people. I will be working on this from now on; many others will be worrying. You will be spending your energy on Draco. All of this, instead of concentrating on his plans.”

“He poisoned Draco as a distraction?” Harry asked, his voice heavy with disbelief.

At this point, Dumbledore stepped in, feeling the need to interrupt before the discussion turned into a full-blown argument fuelled by emotions running high.

Time out of Place

“Severus, I trust you will do your best in finding this antidote,” Dumbledore said. “Harry, Draco, I suggest you go back to your apartment. Mr Malfoy, you should try to get plenty of rest. It is possible that you will have to be moved to the Hospital Wing before long and I would rather avoid that for as long as we can.”

Draco nodded, though Harry saw that he was avoiding the Headmaster’s eye. Suddenly he felt a slight bit of fear radiating off the blonde – it seemed the wards he’d had around his feelings were breaking down. Perhaps he should get the blonde home. If he broke down suddenly, Draco wouldn’t want to do so before both the Headmaster and the Potions Professor, both of whom Harry knew the blonde admired.

“Let’s go home, then,” Harry said. He took Draco’s hand and helped him stand. The Slytherin shot him a questioning look, but Harry just shrugged.

“We will be keeping closely in touch,” Dumbledore said. “We will give you any news.”

“Both good and bad, I hope,” Draco said.

“Yes, both good and bad,” the Headmaster promised with a very small smile.

A few minutes later, they bid each other good-bye and Harry and Draco left by floo whilst Snape returned to the dungeons to continue working.

When they returned home, Draco told Harry he would go take a nap. Harry agreed, his heart reaching out, if only just slightly, at the sight of the blonde’s tired form. He didn’t voice his feelings, but he assumed that Draco knew, just like he had known while they were at Hogwarts.

As the blonde disappeared into the bedroom to sleep, Harry made himself a cup of tea and scones. He sat down in the living room, having long since decided that it was his favourite place to sit and think. Here he could watch the snowfall through the large windows whilst he himself was warm and comfortable on the couch. The flames in the fireplace kept the room a nice temperature.

“Good afternoon, Harry!”

The Boy Who Lived jumped as he heard the words, spilling a few drops of tea. He swore to himself before he turned to the fireplace.

“Hello, Ron,” he said. Ron’s face hovered in the fire, his red hair matching the flames.

Time out of Place

“How are you this fine snowy day?”

“Fine,” Harry said, although he felt far from fine after hearing Snape’s news.

“Sounds like you’re not telling the truth,” Ron said, frowning slightly at him.

Harry sighed. “We were just at Hogwarts and talked to Snape.”

“About Draco?”

Harry nodded. He had told Ron about Draco being sick when Ron had come into Snape’s room at the hospital after the Potions Master had woken up. It had been around three or four in the morning and Harry had explained what was wrong with Draco. Ron had sat still, listening intently, and in the end promising to do whatever he could to help.

“Snape says the poison is not known. Therefore there is no antidote, at least not yet. It is slow working – and it will eventually kill him.”

Harry’s voice was tired, with little emotion. There were few left in him after the meeting with Dumbledore and Severus. The anger had subdued, leaving him drained.

“Damn,” he heard Ron mutter.

“Severus will try and find some cure,” Harry said. “Draco seems to have already given up.”

“He was always the melodramatic one,” Ron said, and the Boy Who Lived allowed himself a very small smile.

“Shouldn’t you be working?” he asked a moment later, needing to change subject.

“Oh I am,” Ron said with a grin.

“Talking to me?” Harry asked, one eyebrow slightly raised.

“Well, okay, perhaps not,” Ron admitted. “But I do need to speak to you for a real reason.”

Harry sat up. “Order business?”

Time out of Place

The redhead nodded. He looked around himself to see that no one was listening to him. When satisfied, he said, “We interviewed all the hostages from the kidnapping. Seems all of them are in the army in one way or another and they’re all adept with weapons.”

“No surprise. Bet Voldie was trying to get them to teach him. When they didn’t agree to it, they were... taken care of, I’m guessing. It would also explain why one of the kids spoke to the Death Eaters in Draco’s vision. That one person must have agreed to help them.”

“Exactly,” Ron said, “Which is why we now need Draco. We can’t tell which one of the Muggles would have turned to the Death Eaters, since we didn’t let it go that far. We need him to point out the kid.”

Harry nodded slowly. “He’s sleeping right now, but we’ll come over as soon as he’s woken up. Should we floo to your office, or somewhere else?”

“Floo here, that’s fine. We’ll walk to the quarters where the Muggles are being held when you get here.”

“All right. Is it okay to wait for an hour and a half or so? He – he needs the rest.”

Ron nodded. “Sure. We don’t want him falling asleep while he’s here so let him rest. Oh, and don’t forget to wear Muggle clothing – we’ll be walking through Muggle London after all.”

“All right,” Harry said.

They said good-bye and Ron disappeared from view. Harry stood; the cup of tea and the plate both long since empty. He performed a quick cleaning spell, first where he’d spilled the tea and then on the porcelain itself and put them away in the cupboards in the kitchen.

He walked down the hallway and cautiously opened the doors to the Master bedroom. Draco was on the bed, fast asleep. It looked like he had only had to lie down to drift off; he was still wearing his cloak.

Harry strode forth and sat down on the bed, his back leaning on the wall. He was careful as he moved, not wanting to wake Draco up. He placed his hands on either side of the blonde’s face, knowing that while the Healing Warmth wouldn’t make Draco well, it would certainly help.

It was only a few minutes before Harry found the position uncomfortable.

Time out of Place

Sighing, he lay down next to Draco, wrapping his arms around him. It felt good; it felt right, just like the time when he'd woken up after the last vision. He didn't speculate any further than that. For once, his mind was fairly calm. There was the nagging worry in the back of his head about the poison running through Draco's veins and he knew they *had* to find an antidote. Not even going home was all that important anymore in the light of recent events.

Yet still, he felt peaceful as he laid there, his arms wrapped around the blonde, providing as much comfort as he could. He felt he should enjoy it while he could, for the nagging voice told him that he might not be able to do this for much longer. If Snape was correct in his assumptions that hallucinations and paralysis would follow in the wake of the poison, then Draco would have to be taken to Hogwarts. Sooner or later, he would die.

Harry realized that he really, truly didn't want that to happen.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Sixteen Mistletoe

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The Ministry of Magic's head quarters were filled with people walking and running in all directions. Harry recognized very few of them – some were old Hogwarts students, just like Ron, Draco and himself, and others whose picture Harry had seen in the Daily Prophet. Most of the wizards and witches milling around were unknown to him, however, and Ron didn't feel the need to introduce them.

"I barely speak to them anyway," he shrugged. "You don't need to know them." Apparently, the Harry and Draco of this time did not spend a huge amount of time at the Ministry either.

Ron was walking them down the stairs, out the main door and out onto the street, heading for wherever the ex-hostages were being kept, all the while speaking. Harry listened and nodded to what Ron was saying, whilst keeping a close eye on Draco. The blonde was still, unsurprisingly, tired, despite his nap and despite the Healing Warmth Harry had offered. Harry had already made Ron slow down a great deal, so that Draco could keep up in the snow that lay heavy on the ground.

"You wouldn't believe some of the stuff these Muggles told us about using guns," Ron was saying. "There are *so many* different kinds – I don't understand how anyone could ever see the difference between them. On the other hand, they are fascinated with our wands and they don't get how we can tell a difference between them either."

Harry nodded; he knew about the wide variety of guns, as Carl had already told him. There were handguns, rifles, revolvers, semi-automatics... The list went on and on and on.

Ron looked around and then walked into an alley. He tapped his wand to the wall, whispering a password after looking carefully around himself and it moved to reveal a door.

"C'mon," he said, motioning for Harry and Draco to walk inside.

Inside was a small entrance hall where Bill Weasley greeted them.

Time out of Place

“Draco, Harry,” he said, nodding to them before he led them down the hallway. “You will meet the eleven Muggle hostages that were on the field and hopefully you will be able to pick out who was the one that agreed to help the Death Eaters. Do you remember the Muggle from your vision, Draco?”

The blonde nodded. “I remember.”

They were placed in a room with a large glass window, looking rather like the Muggle police stations that Harry had caught a glimpse of when he lived at the Dursleys’ and they watched television. The room itself was small, without windows. It was lit only by candles. In the middle stood four chairs around a table. On the other side of the glass sat the ex-hostages, all under some sort of spell for they looked blankly ahead of them.

“Recognize any of them?” Bill asked.

Harry and Ron stood back as Draco paced back and forth in front of the window. The figures behind the glass were all familiar; after all, he had seen most of them before, first in his vision, then at the site and then at St. Mungo’s.

“The third one from the right,” he said finally.

“Are you certain?”

Draco raised an eyebrow at him. “Yes, I’m certain. What are you going to do to him?”

“Keep him under surveillance, just like the others,” Bill said. “Voldemort may approach him again.”

Draco nodded and Bill left the room. Ron held out a chair to Draco and the blonde sat down. Ron motioned for Harry to do the same. They sat down, Harry next to Draco and Ron on the other side of the table.

“Two of the Muggles have agreed to help us,” Ron said. “They have been informed of parts of the Wizarding world and they have agreed to teach us how to use guns. I want you two to continue training with Mr Hanawalt... for as long as possible,” he added with a look at Draco.

“I’m fine, Weasley,” Draco said, sighing. “I’m not dying just yet. Just a bit tired. Sorry to disappoint you.”

Time out of Place

“You know I haven’t wished for your death for a long time, Draco,” Ron replied. “The Order will be doing everything we can to find an antidote.”

“You know as well as I do that the only person who could possibly find an antidote is Severus. No one else is even close to being able to find a solution. Not even Harry can help me. Still, I’m going to do everything I can to help in the war. I’m not about to sit down and wait for this poison to consume me.”

Harry smiled in spite of himself. It was still the Draco he knew, even after how he’d acted with Dumbledore and Snape. He wasn’t as hopeless as he had appeared at Hogwarts. For that, Harry was thankful.

Ron grinned as well. “Well put, Malfoy,” he said. “Now, let’s get back to the Ministry. We have to walk back as well; they have no fires in here – don’t want anyone to accidentally flood here.”

“Draco, you up to it?” Harry asked.

The blonde nodded. “I’m not a porcelain doll.”

“I know you’re not.”

They walked back through the hallway to the small entrance hall and out the door. The air was crisp and fresh, the sky blue with only a few scattered clouds here and there. The walk back was calm. Ron and Harry spoke about Quidditch – Ron doing most of the talking – with Draco occasionally stating his opinion.

“Want to grab some lunch?” Ron asked, motioning at a Muggle café on the other side of the street.

“Sure,” Harry said. “Draco?”

The blonde shrugged. “All right.”

They sat down at the café. Ron and Harry ordered large sandwiches while Draco ordered a salad. Harry gave him a look and Draco met it squarely. “No use in ordering something I know I won’t finish by a long shot,” he said.

“You need to eat. You’re getting too thin.”

Time out of Place

“I’m not too thin; I’m lean. And I’m perfectly all right, so leave me alone.”

Harry shot him a glare that said, ‘You are most definitely not all right.’ Draco pointedly ignored him.

Lunch proceeded calmly after that. The three young men spoke of Quidditch, of Ron’s work at the Ministry, and a bit more of Quidditch. It seemed that the Ron of this time loved the sport just as much as the Ron Harry and Draco knew did.

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A week passed in which not much happened – Draco went shopping for Yule gifts, despite Harry’s protests that he shouldn’t go anywhere alone in the state he was in. Draco replied by throwing the floo into the fire and disappearing. Three hours later he came back, exhausted but happy, with gifts for everyone. Harry yelled a bit at him, the blonde yelled back, before Draco lay down on the bed and fell asleep, with Harry hovering with close proximity.

The two also continued to take classes with Mr Hanawalt. They were getting better, they noticed with both delight and sadness. It was fun to see how they both became more skilled with each session. Still, there was sadness that they needed to have this competence at all – if it weren’t for Voldemort, the abilities would not have been required.

Severus kept working on finding an antidote for Draco, yet so far he had been unsuccessful. Dumbledore kept them updated; as the Potions Master understood more of what the poison consisted of, he could tell Draco and Harry what it would probably do to the blonde. None of the news was ever any good.

Now it was Christmas Eve and Harry and Draco were about to leave to go to the Weasley Castle, where they would be spending a few nights. The two young men had both shrunk their gifts as well as their clothes, so that they could travel by floo without a problem.

“Are you ready?” Draco asked Harry impatiently as the latter checked through his pockets again to see that he had brought everything he needed.

Finally, Harry straightened up and nodded. “Yup, I’m ready.”

They floo-ed and arrived without any problem at the Weasley Castle a moment later.

Time out of Place

“Harry! Draco!” Hermione squealed happily when she saw them and waddled over to the fireplace to hug them. They hadn’t seen each other since the meeting at the apartment, over a week ago. It seemed Hermione’s belly had grown even bigger since then. She looked about ready to burst.

The castle was decorated even more now than it had been during the Christmas party. Garlands hung around the windows and out in the backyard, the bushes and trees were decorated with lights. The large Christmas tree stood next to the fireplace, just as green now as it had been at the party.

“Look what I found,” Draco said with a grin, pointing upwards. Mistletoe hung right above their heads.

Harry swallowed.

“Oh,” said Hermione, “Just one sec’. I need to get the camera. Need the yearly picture of mistletoe loveliness, after all.”

The raven-haired young man groaned and Draco’s grin became wider. “No getting out of it,” he said.

“You’re enjoying this way too much,” Harry said.

Draco arched a fine eyebrow, but didn’t reply as Hermione returned, camera in hand.

“Okay,” she said happily. “Snog-time!”

Draco didn’t need more of an invitation – he placed his hands around Harry’s neck and pulled him down gently to meet his own lips.

Draco’s lips were soft and warm. Harry stood still for a moment before his brain registered that this was *Draco*, *kissing* him of all things. A part of him screamed at him to pull away, yet two things – he told himself it was *two* things – kept him from doing so. One, Hermione was still standing a few feet away, clicking her camera and watching them. Two – and this one was a very small reason, he told himself –

It felt nice.

It actually felt good to kiss Draco.

Time out of Place

He found himself responding to the kiss, if only just a bit, before he realized just what he was doing and what ideas may get into Draco's head. He pulled away, trying not to let his feelings show on his face. Hermione was too smart to miss any more clues that things were not right for him to look disgusted with himself.

Draco opened his eyes slowly to look at him. He gave Harry a small, content smile, before leaning into his embrace, his head resting tiredly on the raven-haired young man's shoulder. Harry could do little else than wrap his arms around Draco while Hermione was watching.

"Aw," Hermione said, taking another picture.

"You are starting to remind me of Colin Creevy," Harry said pointedly.

"Thank you," she said, smiling and pretending that he'd just paid her a compliment. "Now, your room's ready, so if you want to go put your things away, Ron should be back in time for lunch."

"Where is Ron anyway?" Harry asked, still with his arms around a now half-asleep Draco.

"At his parents'. I can't travel by floo right now, so he went alone to... actually, I don't know what he was supposed to do." She shrugged. "I think they'll be by tomorrow afternoon with the rest of his family. My parents are coming to stay over as well; they should arrive later this afternoon."

"Sounds good," Harry said. "Well, I guess we should settle in."

"Tired, Draco?" Hermione asked. She received only a mumble in response. "Take a nap if you need it. I'm sure Harry won't mind."

"No, I don't mind. I'm getting used to this," Harry said with a sad smile. "Come on, let's go, Draco."

He led his pretend boyfriend down the hallway to the rooms that were his and Draco's. They looked just the same as they had the last time they were there, except for the view out the window that was now covered in white snow. The thick blue mat felt warm and soft beneath his feet.

Draco didn't seem to pay much attention to the room, however. He went over to the bed, closed his eyes and inhaled deeply.

Time out of Place

“I don’t want to be like this,” he said, so softly it was barely more than a whisper.

“I know. I’m sorry I can’t do anything about it,” Harry replied quietly.

He looked over at the bed to see Draco drifting off to sleep yet again.

Harry enlarged their bags and began putting the few clothing items they’d brought away in the closets. As they already had several sets of robes and other clothes at the Weasley Castle, it seemed highly unnecessary to bring all that much, and he was quickly done. At the bottom of Draco’s bag, he found two books. “Where do you want these?”

The blonde opened one eye to see what Harry was talking about, then mumbled, “Over on the table’s fine.”

Harry nodded. As Draco closed his eyes once again, Harry stole a look at the books. They were both diaries. One was worn and old, the other one very new.

The Boy Who Lived set the books away on the table in the corner, never even trying to glance into either diary. It would be far too much of an intrusion into Draco’s life for Harry to ever forgive himself – or for Draco to forgive him, for that matter.

He stood by the window, watching the beautiful scene; the large field, covered in untouched snow and much further away, the dark looming forest, with only its top of white. The rest of it was dark, black like the Forbidden Forest at Hogwarts was. The sky was blue, an icy cold colour with a few specks of clouds here and there. He saw a lone bird fly off, away above the forest and he realized that he himself hadn’t flown since the time he and Draco stayed here the last time.

He listened to Draco’s quiet breathing, even and steady now that he was asleep. He didn’t dare to turn around to look at the blonde; he knew that if he did, he would think of the kiss they had shared and if he thought of that, then he would wonder why it hadn’t felt wrong. Why it felt perfectly all right when his own lips met pale pink ones. Why he, despite how much he tried to tell himself that he was, was not disgusted by it.

He dared not turn around, even as Draco began mumbling in his sleep, muttering incoherent sentences to the cast of his dreams. Instead he searched his bag and when he had found what he was looking for, he left the room.

Time out of Place

He enlarged the broomstick once he was outside the bedroom. He was thankful that he had thought to bring it along; flying did seem to be just what he needed right now and the Weasley Castle's grounds seemed as inviting as ever.

"I'm going to fly some," he told his very pregnant friend.

"I'd recommend some more clothes, Harry," Hermione replied. "It's chilly outside."

"Yes, ma'am," Harry said, mock saluting her.

She frowned at him. "I'm serious. It's enough to have Draco sick – we don't need you down as well. Ginny especially wouldn't be happy."

Harry threw his hands up. "I know, I know. I'll put another cloak and some gloves on. Will that satisfy you, milady?"

Hermione nodded. "I'll call you in when lunch is ready. Although you may not get any if you continue to act like that towards me."

Harry just grinned at her.

A few minutes later, Harry was soaring high up in the air, the wind blowing in his hair and his nose red from the cold. Hermione had been right when she said it was chilly – Harry's breath crystallized itself in front of him when he was still in the air. Soon, however, the Gryffindor was warm from doing loops and racing through the air. He wished for a moment that there were birds he could compete with, but forgot about it after a while, realizing there were plenty of ways to enjoy himself on his own.

It was almost an hour later when Hermione called to him from the porch that it was time for lunch. Harry landed, his face and body sweaty and tired, yet his mind in pure ecstasy after flying again.

The lunch was nice and uneventful. Draco had been woken up to join them and Ron had arrived home whilst Harry was out. Ron told them that his parents and siblings would definitely join them the next day, with their respective families.

Sirius and Remus would also arrive, most likely during the afternoon.

"Hopefully they won't come at the exact same time as my parents," Hermione said.

Time out of Place

Harry grinned. “That could get messy if they all tried to get out of the fireplace at once. I am, of course, assuming your parents will be arriving by floo.”

Hermione nodded. “No way for them to find the castle otherwise, but you know that,” she said, a bit pointedly. Harry just shrugged and smiled at her, hoping she would forget any suspicions she may still harbour. After the last operation, she seemed to have decided that they were either who they were supposed to be, or very close to it – after all, they had proved that they were on Dumbledore’s side, and Dumbledore himself wasn’t suspicious.

The afternoon passed in the same calm manner the morning had. Draco sat down in the living room after finding a book he thought looked interesting. Harry sat down after taking a shower, with a book he *knew* he would find interesting – ‘*Quidditch of the world, fifth edition*’ by Avihex Phineas. Hermione was in her study and Ron was who-knew-where. Harry doubted they’d find him reading or writing like the three others – neither were Ron’s favourite pastimes.

It was like this, with Draco lying on his stomach, nose in his book and Harry lazily flipping through ‘*Quidditch*’, that Sirius and Remus found them when they arrived at around four in the afternoon.

“Hello boys,” Sirius greeted them. Harry stood to hug them both while Draco stayed on the couch and let the two older men come to him instead.

“How are you two? Haven’t seen you since the last op’,” Sirius said as they sat down.

Harry and Draco exchanged looks for a moment, before the blonde asked, “You do know...?”

Remus nodded. “We know. Severus informed us of your... situation,” he said. “Let us know if there’s anything we can do to help you.”

“There’s nothing,” Draco said. “Except perhaps change the subject, because it’s making me depressed to talk about nothing but it.”

“Of course,” Remus said. “So where are our hosts?”

“Mione is in her study writing some paper, or at least that’s what she was doing an hour ago. Ron is doing – something,” Harry replied.

“Still no babies, I take it,” Sirius said, “Or else there’d be screaming all over the place.”

Time out of Place

“Nope,” Draco said, shaking his head. “No babies yet, thankfully. I wanted to get through another peaceful Yule holiday before the second set of Weasley twins arrive. One pair is quite enough.”

“Oh, I don’t think it’ll be a calm holiday,” Sirius said, “Not with the whole Weasley family coming here.”

“You’re right,” Draco said, sighing dramatically. “I guess we are just doomed to the Christmas Chaos.”

“Well, you could always leave if it doesn’t fit your needs, Malfoy,” came the reply from behind the blonde. Remus and Harry – the two who’d see Hermione come into the room – grinned at her while Draco’s cheeks turned a bit red.

“Sorry, Hermione. No more complaining, I promise,” he said with a grin.

“I’ll believe that when I see it,” Hermione muttered as she went to hug Sirius and Remus.

“Still no babies, huh,” Sirius said and received a glare from the pregnant young woman.

“You look beautiful,” Remus said smoothly, giving his lover a look as he embraced Hermione.

“That’s what Ron tells me. I say I just look fat,” Hermione said with a sad smile.

“Oh, but it’ll be worth it, don’t you think?” Remus asked.

Hermione’s smile widened. “It will definitely be worth it.”

Ron came downstairs a few minutes later, joining the group. He showed Sirius and Remus to their rooms – apparently they weren’t sleeping in their usual ones, as all the Weasleys and Hermione’s parents were supposed to fit into the Castle. Harry didn’t think it would be that hard; after all, the Castle was huge.

“Mum and dad are bringing Crookshanks,” Ron said when they came back to the living room. “They didn’t want to leave him alone during the holidays.”

“I haven’t seen him in so long,” Hermione said wistfully. Harry realized that neither had he; the ginger cat hadn’t appeared once in the two months they had now been here. He

Time out of Place

wondered why Mr and Mrs Weasley took care of him now, but did not ask the question – there was no need to increase the suspicions Hermione already harboured.

Sirius however, had no such qualms about asking. “Why doesn’t Crookshanks live with you, Hermione?”

“Didn’t I tell you?” Hermione said, slightly surprised. “One of the girls in the Order is allergic to cats – yes, she is a Muggleborn – and so when Dumbledore made the Castle the Order’s second headquarters, we could no longer have him here. I still wanted to be able to see him though, so we asked Molly and Arthur if they would take him. They did, and he’s been living there since.”

“I haven’t seen that cat in such a long time,” Sirius said. “My first friend after Azkaban...” He trailed off, lost in memory.

Just then, the fireplace gave a small sound and in the next second, the flames turned green. A moment later a woman in her early fifties stepped out, closely followed by a slightly older looking man. Harry noticed that Hermione was the splitting image of her mother; the grey hair and the lines on Mrs Granger’s face were the only differences.

Mr Granger was quite short, although still taller than his wife. He had short grey hair, which had thinned out on the top of his head and the same kind brown eyes as his daughter.

“Mum! Dad!” Hermione exclaimed and hugged them happily.

“Hello sweetheart,” her father said, kissing her forehead. “You look beautiful.”

Hermione blushed a bit and her mother had tears in her eyes. “My little baby,” she said. “All grown up.”

“Oh mum, stop it,” the pregnant young woman said.

Mr and Mrs Granger turned to the rest of the group in the room. “Mum, dad, this is Sirius Black and Remus Lupin,” Hermione presented them. “Remus, Siri’, this is my mum and dad.”

Sirius and Remus both shook hands with Hermione’s parents.

“You look familiar,” Mrs Granger said as she took Sirius hands.

Time out of Place

He grinned at her. “I have that kind of face, madam.”

“Oh, please call me Wendy. I sound much too old with all the madam and Mrs-business,” she smiled.

Ron showed the two Grangers to their room and they came back out twenty minutes later after having settled in. Together they then ate dinner, all laughing and joking together. Harry found Hermione’s parents quite enjoyable, especially as he could understand their references to Muggles and their inventions. Draco on the other hand, had immense problems in understanding what the Grangers were talking about. They didn’t mind stopping the conversation to explain to Draco, however – after all, he was “such a charming young man”.

They all sat and talked for hours. When dinner was done, they moved from the table to the living room and its comfortable couches, where Draco laid down in Harry’s arms and where Hermione snuggled up next to Ron. Remus and Sirius transfigured a Christmas ornament into another couch and snuggled up as well, with Mr and Mrs Granger beside them. Then they continued to talk until after midnight.

When the clock on the wall chimed once to tell them it was one in the morning, Wendy made the by-then very sleepy company go to bed. She fussed like only a mother can do over Draco’s tired form as Harry picked him up in his arms without a word, knowing it would do no good to try and make the blonde wake up to walk to their room.

Harry saw Hermione’s parents hug their daughter goodnight as he walked with the small blonde to their room. Once in there, he set Draco down, performed a quick changing spell on him to get him into nightclothes and then switched clothes himself.

Finally, he lay down on the bed. He glanced tiredly over at Draco, feeling the need to be close to the blonde. He wondered if it was their Heart Bind and the fact that Draco needed healing, or if it could possibly be something else... After their unexpected kiss, he didn’t know what to think. It had felt good, after all, and not just any sort of good, but really *good*.

Was he gay? Could he possibly be gay? Could it be that he was falling in love with his enemy? Was that even possible, for Harry Potter to love Draco Malfoy?

His thoughts returned once again to the fact that this was the future. He figured, however, that this was *a* future, rather than *the* future. It could be like this in seven years – it could also be completely different, if someone somewhere made a different choice during one of the seven years.

Time out of Place

Still, if this was the future... Then he did love Draco. If this was the future, then he would, sooner or later, fall in love with the blonde.

Why not now?

He frowned to himself. He could not just *choose* to fall in love with someone all of a sudden.

But it wasn't all of a sudden. He had been falling in love with Draco Malfoy for weeks, maybe even months. As their relationship had been forced to go through changes since coming here, they had both come to understand and accept each other. They could spend time together without insulting one another; in fact, Harry enjoyed spending time with Draco. As he had realized earlier, if he had to choose between the Draco he now knew and the Hermione and Ron at home, he wasn't so sure that he would choose the latter anymore.

Why not now?

It had felt good to kiss him, and no matter how much he tried to tell himself that he had only stayed in the blonde's embrace for Hermione's sake, he couldn't. It had been a reason, but not the only one.

It had just felt good. Somewhat awkward for him at first, yet still good. In fact, the more he thought of it, the more he realized that it had been *wonderful*.

Why not now?

He wanted to do it again. To feel those soft lips on his own, experience their warmth and wonder... What would Draco's tongue feel like? It had been a long time since the last time Harry kissed – it had never been a very good experience, nothing like those walking-on-clouds and just wanting more, more, more, that the other boys in the Gryffindor common room spoke of.

Malfoy had felt good.

Why not now?

He asked himself the question again, why not now? And all of a sudden, he could come up with no reasons why not. It might be that he had no choice at all in the matter, of course, seeing how it was fully possible that he had already fallen in love with Draco, but he wanted to tell himself that he was in full control.

Time out of Place

Making up his mind, he moved slowly closer to the blonde who'd been occupying his thoughts. His high hopes and dreams fell to the floor as he saw Draco's pale face, thin and sickly with his eyes slightly sunken in. His heart went out to the other boy and he stretched his arms around the boy, pulling his body closer. Draco weighed hardly anything in his arms, as he had noticed earlier when Harry had carried him to their room.

Their room.

Something about those words sounded right in Harry's ears, and even more so when Draco sighed softly into his arms, curling up next to him.

Harry held him protectively, having finally made up his mind.

Definitely now.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Seventeen Voices of the past

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Harry awoke slowly as he felt Draco stretch beside him. He remembered the night before, his thoughts and his actions. A slight nervousness set in as he knew that a confrontation would follow when the blonde discovered just how close together they had been sleeping, this time without a vision to blame it on. He held onto Draco, making no move to try and get away from him as he'd done on occasion before. If he were to tell Draco of his feelings, he would do it properly.

He wondered what exactly his feelings were. He didn't *love* Draco, at least not yet. However, he was quite sure that he was *in love* with the other boy.

Draco sat up slightly, looking disoriented. His gaze stopped on Harry and the grey eyes caught a confused look.

"Good morning," said Harry softly. "Sleep well?"

Draco frowned. "Yes," he said. "Very. What are you doing?"

Harry smiled at him. "I was sleeping."

A delicate eyebrow rose at him, yet the grey orbs still looked perplexed. "Harry..." he said warningly.

"All right, all right," Harry said, pulling himself up to a sitting position, so that he was facing the blonde. "I was thinking yesterday."

"Oh? This must be the fi—"

"Shh," Harry said, placing his fingers on Draco's mouth. "Don't say it, not now."

Draco stared at the fingers that were just barely touching his mouth, and then moved his gaze to Harry's green eyes.

Time out of Place

“I carried you in here last night. I don’t know if you remember,” Harry started again. “When I’d put you to bed, I started thinking about... everything. I probably shouldn’t go into the details, ‘cause that would be a trip into my brain, and you wouldn’t understand, because I hardly understand it...” He trailed off, trying to collect his thoughts again. He did not need to ramble right now.

“I thought about you,” he said finally. “Your words, your actions - your kissing me. And I – I realized that it – it felt good. And I liked it. And I like *you*.”

Draco was still staring at him, looking like he didn’t believe what he was hearing. At that moment, no sign of sickness was anywhere on him; only nervousness, wonder, fright, expectation – Harry couldn’t name all of the emotions that were playing on the pale face.

“I won’t say that I love you,” Harry said, his voice so quiet it was barely more than a whisper. “I don’t know if I do, not yet. It’s all too soon. But... I think I have fallen in love with you... Somewhere on the way, I don’t know exactly when or where, but I think I have...”

He trailed off again, waiting for Draco to process the words he had just uttered. When the blonde didn’t say anything, he asked, “Draco?”

The Slytherin then shook his head to clear it and met Harry’s eyes again.

“It’s just – I mean,” he said, his voice no louder than Harry’s had been. “Wow.”

Harry smiled at him, and Draco grinned back. “What do you say we try that thing again?” Harry asked.

“What thing?” the blonde asked, frowning once more.

“Kissing,” Harry said and bent forward.

His arms snaked around Draco’s slight form, pulling him closer. Their lips met, a bit awkwardly and unaccustomedly at first, but they learned quickly. If Harry had thought their first kiss was good then this one was absolutely *amazing*. His head spun as he pulled the blonde into his arms, Draco following without ever breaking the contact.

Draco’s tongue soon begged entrance to Harry’s mouth and Harry allowed it, his thoughts only on the Slytherin before him and what said young man was doing to him. So this was what was it felt like – walking on clouds and only wanting more, more, more...

Time out of Place

They finally broke, coming up for air. Both boys' cheeks were flushed, lips looking swollen after being so thoroughly kissed.

"I'll second that 'wow'," Harry whispered to the blonde.

Draco didn't respond; he just leaned forward onto Harry's shoulder, sighing happily. Finally he whispered, "Thank you."

It was almost forty-five minutes before the two young men managed to get out of bed. By then, Draco's usually finely groomed hair was a mess, almost rivalling Harry's unruly mop of black hair. Harry shrugged as Draco pointed this out to him and tied his hair back in a ponytail. The blonde, however, combed through his hair – constantly being interrupted by Harry, who seemed to definitely have come to terms with being in love, stealing kisses. Not that Draco minded, most definitely not. He welcomed the kisses with unmanly giggling.

"Merlin, I am such a woman," he joked as Harry put his arms around him.

"Yes," Harry said, "But you're *my* woman."

Draco laughed, and another kiss followed.

"Why did I wait so long to do this?" Harry asked.

"Don't ask me – if I had been the one to decide, we would have been here a year ago. Well, not *here* here, but – oh, you know what I mean."

Harry nodded. "I do know what you mean. Sorry 'bout taking so long."

"Well, isn't there a Muggle saying about these things – 'good things come to those who wait' and whatnot."

"I'm impressed," said Harry, "I didn't expect you of all people to know any Muggle proverb – especially not after last night's performance with the Grangers. You really don't know what an electric toothbrush is, do you?"

Draco glared at him. "It doesn't sound all that comfortable – something jumping around in your mouth trying to clean your teeth. There are spells to do such things."

Harry rolled his eyes. "You just won't admit your shortcomings when it comes to Muggles."

Time out of Place

“I’m a pureblood!” Draco exclaimed. “I grew up with a fully trained witch for a mother and a senior Death Eater for a father. We had house elves that did everything for us. I’ve never done anything like a Muggle, not even brushed my teeth, no.”

Harry moved closer to him, placing his arms around the smaller boy. “I know,” he said. “It doesn’t matter. It’s just fun to tease you,” he added with a smile.

“Oh sure, tease the sick blonde. It is so much fun,” Draco said sarcastically with a pout.

“Well, it is,” Harry said, and bent in to steal another kiss. “Merry Christmas.”

Draco grinned up at him. “This is the best Yule gift I’ve ever received.”

“I’ll second that,” Harry said. “Should we go out and say good morning to the rest?”

“Can’t we just stay here? So much nicer...” he mumbled, leaving a trail of kisses down Harry’s neck.

“There will be presents out there,” Harry said.

“I told you – I already got the best one.” At Harry’s look, he added, “Fine. We’ll go out and be social with Weasley and – oh Merlin, the rest of them are coming today, aren’t they?”

Harry nodded. “Sometime around noon, I think, after the gift opening. Why, do you mind?” he teased, earning another glare.

Eventually they did make it outside their room. They were met with the delicious smell of breakfast, which made their stomachs growl. They walked through the living room into the kitchen, where Ron, Hermione and the Grangers were preparing breakfast.

“Good morning,” Harry said happily to them.

“Good morning, boys,” Mrs Granger said, “And merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas to you too!” Draco said, grinning.

Hermione eyed them. “You two seem in an awfully good mood,” she said.

“Well, let’s just say that we had a most *wonderful* morning,” Draco winked.

Time out of Place

“I do *not* want to know,” Hermione said with mock disgust. She broke into a smile and hugged them both. “Merry Christmas!”

“To you, too,” Harry said.

It was another half hour before Sirius and Remus came downstairs to join the six others for breakfast. Apparently, they had also had a most wonderful morning.

The presents were waiting for them underneath the Christmas tree. However, Hermione wouldn't let them open the gifts until breakfast was over and the table cleaned up. Finally, she was satisfied and let the boys go loose over the presents. Harry and Ron took it upon themselves to act as Santa Clauses as the others sat down – Draco on one of the couches, Sirius and Remus on the other, Hermione in the rocking chair and the Grangers on Christmas ornaments that Ron transfigured into chairs. When everyone was seated, Harry and Ron began.

“Merry Christmas to Remus from Sirius,” Harry read, picking up a first present.

“For me?” asked Remus, sounding very surprised. “You got me something?”

“Of course,” Sirius replied, kissing his lover.

“Ahem.” Harry cleared his throat as the kiss inevitably became deeper. Sirius growled at him.

“Don't mind him,” Remus said to Harry, accepting the gift.

Apparently it was custom to wait until all the gifts had been given and then open them, for Remus put the un-opened present away and Ron picked up another one.

“To mum from Hermione,” Ron read from the next gift, and gave it to Mrs Granger.

They continued like this, back and forth until the last gift was gone from under the tree. Everyone had received at least three gifts; Harry's own pile was quite impressive.

“Okay, I guess you're all free to open –”

The rest of Hermione's words were drowned out as Ron, Harry and Sirius began tearing away paper from their gifts. Their lovers and better halves stared at them as they acted as

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three-year-olds, opening present after present. Finally, Hermione sighed to herself and began opening her own gifts.

Harry watched Draco the entire time out of the corner of his eye, noticing when nobody else did how the blonde was getting more and more tired by the minute. He was opening his gifts slowly, never tearing the paper off as Harry had been doing, but instead peeling the tape off carefully before removing the wrapper.

Harry stood and walked the few feet over to him and was just about to put his hand on Draco's shoulder when the blonde whipped around at him and screamed,

"I haven't done anything father, I promise!"

His eyes were wide and frightened and disturbingly unfocused. The room was suddenly silent.

"Draco?" Harry asked quietly.

"Please don't hurt me, father," Draco said, his voice and posture revealing that he was close to panic.

Harry bent down before him and gently took his hand, focusing on giving Draco the warmth of his healing abilities. The blonde shrank back as Harry touched him and tried to turn away, his hands and body shaking.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Draco," he said softly. "It's me, Harry. Draco, can you hear me?"

Slowly, Draco turned back. He blinked rapidly, trying to get his eyes to focus on his surroundings again.

"H-Harry?" he asked uncertainly.

The Boy Who Lived gave a small smile at him and placed a hand on Draco's cheek. The Slytherin was still shaking and he leaned into Harry's hand. Harry let the hand slide around Draco, pulling him close. The blonde drew a few shuddering breaths, trying to calm down.

"What was that?" he whispered hoarsely, looking up at Harry.

"I don't know. You – you thought I was your father."

Time out of Place

The room was eerily silent as the rooms other occupants watched Harry and Draco. Finally Hermione said quietly, “It’s the poison, Draco. Sev’ said it would make you hallucinate.”

Harry held Draco even closer, trying desperately to draw comfort from Draco’s presence whilst he was at the same time reminded of the poison swirling around in the blonde’s body. Draco in turn clung to Harry, needing the closeness just as much.

“Don’t make me go to Hogwarts,” Draco mumbled. “Please, not yet.”

The severity of Draco’s feelings made themselves known – if one didn’t know already – with that little word. ‘Please’, a word the old Malfoy would never use.

“I can’t promise anything,” Harry replied heavily. “Not yet, but you may have to go there soon, for your own good.”

“I’m dying, Potter,” Draco said, “There is no ‘for my own good’.”

“You are not going to die, Draco,” Hermione said softly from behind them.

“Granger, as much as your positive attitude is warming,” Draco drawled, sounding like his old self again, “There is not much we can do. Severus is working on an antidote, but so far, there has been no progress. I’m sorry, but – I’m not as stupid as to think that some miracle will suddenly happen.”

“Well you’re wrong,” Hermione said defiantly. “And even if you’re not ready to fight for yourself, I know a dozen that are. Look around you, Malfoy – you’re not the same person you were at Hogwarts. You have people who care about you now, even one who’d give his life for you. We are not about to just let you go.”

“Your words are warming,” Draco said, having untangled himself from Harry and was now facing the irritated witch. “Still doesn’t change the fact that Sev’ is the only one who could possibly figure out an antidote, if there is one at all. He’s the greatest Potions Master in the world – but it doesn’t matter, ‘cause even he can’t find an antidote.”

Hermione and Draco glared at each other and Hermione was just about to counter Draco’s words when Mr Granger interrupted.

“That’s enough, you two,” he said as though talking to two small children.

Time out of Place

Draco and Hermione were unfazed; neither moved.

“I will not have you two ruining this lovely Christmas morning by fighting,” Mr Granger said, his voice louder. Harry saw Hermione wince slightly at the tone of his voice and Draco took a small step back.

“Now, you two will sit down and continue to open your presents. Afterwards we will discuss what to do about you, Mr Malfoy,” he added in a softer tone.

The two fighters did as they were told. Hermione backed down to her place next to Ron. Harry wanted to welcome Draco into his arms, but the blonde sat down as far away from him as he could.

Slowly, the mood began to change back to what it had been before Draco’s interruption. Sirius and Remus, who’d been quiet the whole time, began to nervously tear at the paper of their presents. Mrs and Mr Granger followed suit, knowing that the younger people needed something to distract them.

“Thank you, Harry.” Hermione’s words broke the quiet as she held up the book he’d bought for her and the room started to relax again. Remus and Sirius began talking between themselves; Ron spoke to Hermione’s parents.

“You’re welcome. What’s-his-name at the bookshop said you’d like it,” Harry replied.

“Gordon? He always knows what I want,” Hermione replied. Apparently, it was not uncommon for the Harry of this time to be bad with names either.

“I haven’t seen any books here on the subject, so I thought it’d be good.”

She grinned. “I’m sure it will be most helpful.”

Draco still sat silent, his fingers picking carefully at the present in his hands. Harry was worried that the blonde was hallucinating again, but when he looked into the other boy’s eyes, he saw that they weren’t unfocused as they had been, and the worry decreased.

Harry continued to open his own gifts, slower now than before. He’d received a book from Hermione on Potions, most of them with healing qualities.

“Thought you might like to know why those potions of your do what they do, rather than just knowing that they do it,” she said with a smile.

Time out of Place

Ron gave him a gift certificate at the Quality Quidditch Supplies, with the comment, “There’s no use in me buying anything ‘cause then you already have it. This way, you can just go buy it yourself.”

Sirius and Remus had given him a new, beautiful dark blue cloak, which they’d bought when they’d been in France. The fabric was silky and soft, and Remus told him that it had protection spells woven into it.

Yet the one gift he valued more than any other was the one from Draco. It was the first time the blonde had ever given him anything. It was a small golden ring with a lion on it, walking proudly from one side to the other. On the inside, a quote was inscribed in tiny, tiny letters.

*“Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without
and know we cannot live within.”*

It was just what it had done for Draco, Harry knew. Draco had been Draco Malfoy before he fell in love with Harry, but then love had taken that away, leaving the boy with only Draco. Suddenly he was not his father’s son, nor the heir of the Malfoy name; instead, he was only *Draco*. Harry knew that it had not only been falling in love with him that had changed the blonde, yet he knew that a large part of it was just that – because love really does take off the mask that we wear in everyday life.

Draco was still that Malfoy when he wanted to be – in fact he had just shown that side to Hermione. However, now Harry knew that; he knew it was only a mask, a protection. Harry knew it was what Draco needed to have on to survive, especially right now when everything seemed to be upside down. Underneath it, though, when Harry was alone with Draco, the blonde could be just himself.

“Thank you,” he said, and he knew that Draco heard it, despite not showing it.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Eighteen The best proof of love is trust

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They cleaned up and everyone was free to do whatever they felt like. The Weasleys would be arriving before lunch, and then they would eat sometime around one in the afternoon.

Harry picked up the gifts he'd received and followed Draco to their room. The blonde was still quiet, his face tired and withdrawn. Draco set his newly received gifts on the bedside table, and then laid down on the bed, sighing softly into the pillow. Harry watched him with concern.

"Harry?" Draco's asked softly.

"Yes?"

"Thanks for the gift. It's lovely." He turned his head from the pillow to look at the Boy Who Lived, fingering at the silver chain around his neck that Harry had given him. There was a tiny silver dragon on it as well and Harry had known in the moment that he saw it in the shop that it was what Draco was going to get.

"You're welcome," Harry said. "I'm glad you like it."

"I'm sorry I'm so moody," he said. "I wish I could blame it on PMS or something, but..."

"Don't worry about it," Harry said, moving up on the bed to sit next to where Draco was lying. He touched the side of the blonde's face gently. "You have a reason."

Draco sighed into Harry's touch. "I'm going to fall asleep soon."

"You do that; it's fine," said Harry.

"Will you stay with me?"

The voice was so small that had Harry not known for a fact that they were alone in the room, he would have believed it was someone else that had spoken.

Time out of Place

“I’ll stay for as long as you want me to,” Harry said, and they both knew that he didn’t just mean right now.

Draco smiled. “Night,” he said, his voice nothing but a whisper.

Harry bent down and placed a kiss on his forehead. “Good night, dragon,” he said.

*

When the many Weasleys – Harry didn’t know how many there were now –, their better halves, girlfriends, boyfriends, children and cats had arrived several hours later, the house was filled with activity. Draco did his best to stay awake and alert, yet he kept close to Harry at almost all times.

The house was packed. Harry and Draco found themselves thankful that they always had their own room at the castle. The Weasley Castle was much like Hogwarts however, with secret rooms here and there and everywhere that suddenly appeared when Hermione touched a certain stone in the wall, or when Ron whistled the right tune.

Percy was there with Penelope and their children. Draco took it upon himself to take care of young Pearle as soon as the child’s mother would let him. Harry thought it was adorable and told his boyfriend so. Draco only took the time to stick his tongue out at Harry, before returning his full attention to the baby. Peter, Percy and Penelope’s other child, was happy to play with his new toys that he’d been given earlier in the morning.

Harry became involved in a conversation with the twins about their latest products. It seemed their shop was growing; their products were high on demand despite the war being fought – or perhaps just *because* the war was there. People needed to laugh now more than ever.

Hermione’s parents were talking with Ron’s parents. They seemed to get along perfectly well despite the fact that Mr and Mrs Granger were Muggles. Harry hadn’t overheard any of their conversation, but he would be willing to bet that Mr Weasley was asking about some Muggle contraption or other.

Bill and Charlie were talking with Sirius and Remus.

Time out of Place

Ginny was with Neville on the couch, talking in hushed voices. Harry saw Ron move towards them and he moved wisely away, as he knew that an interrogation would follow, as well as threats, if he knew Ron as he thought he did. No one dated his little sister without Ron's permission, or at least that's what Ron liked to believe.

Hermione was on the other couch, watching everyone interact, smiling contently with one hand on her swollen belly. She caught Harry's eye and smiled at him.

Draco had disappeared with the youngest Weasley. Harry went back to their room and there they were; Draco cuddled up with Pearle lying beside him. Both looked fast asleep. Harry smiled at the beautiful picture they made.

"She needs to sleep just as much as I do," Draco said sleepily.

"I didn't mean to wake you," Harry said.

"You didn't," the blonde replied. "I was awake. I was just watching her sleep and resting myself. Can't be up too long."

Harry lay down on the bed, on the other side of Pearle, facing Draco. The baby looked peaceful.

"She's beautiful," he said, touching Pearle's face with feather light fingers.

"I know."

Then they lay in silence, with Draco eventually drifting off to sleep. Harry watched his boyfriend and the baby, his mind on only them and nothing else. At that moment, nothing else existed. No poison, no we're-in-the-future, no war, no Voldemort – only Draco and Pearle.

*

The rest of the holidays went by quickly. Harry and Draco stayed for two days at the Weasley Castle, getting spoiled with all sorts of wondrous food, and playing in the snow. They had a rather large snowball fight in which everyone but Hermione, Penelope and her two children was involved with. The fight lasted for almost an hour, before the two ladies called them inside for dinner. By then, they were all cold and tired – but oh so happy.

Time out of Place

However, despite the fact that Harry loved all of the Weasleys dearly – they were after all like a second family to him – he appreciated the calmness of their own apartment when they arrived back home. That was one thing he would miss when they came back to their own time: his own apartment. He would be forced back to living with the other boys in the dormitory – not that it was bad; it was just more comfortable to be on his own.

That was, if they ever did get back home.

As it happened, they had been in this future for over two months now and the possibility of their going home had not increased. They had come up with the grand total of nothing in all the times they'd been to the library. And neither had Hermione, obviously, or she would definitely have voiced her suspicions by now. Harry wasn't about to tell her about their situation just yet, though. Or ever, if he had a choice.

New years and the rest of the holidays came and went calmly, with one exception. Draco once more found himself hallucinating, scaring Harry to no end. It was a few days into January and they had been talking calmly, sitting on the couch in the living room. Both had been completely content with just holding each other, when Draco suddenly took a sharp intake of breath and shot out of Harry's arms.

"I'm not going to do it!" he screamed; his eyes suddenly wide and filled with unshed tears. His wand was out, pointed at Harry. The grey eyes had the same unfocused, glazed-over look as they'd had at the Weasley Castle.

Harry stood slowly, not knowing if he would be perceived as a threat or if Draco could see him at all.

"You are not going to do what, Draco?" he asked.

"I'm not going to join him!" Draco's voice was panicked, his hands shaking.

"Draco, please put the wand down," Harry said slowly, as though talking to a child.

Draco didn't reply; didn't react at all to Harry's words, which made him wonder even more if the blonde could hear him at all. Slowly, he continued forward, his own wand out.

"*Accio wand*," he said softly, and Draco's wand, which he hadn't been holding on to hard enough, flew out of his hand.

Time out of Place

The blonde whimpered as he felt the wand disappear from his hands, and mumbled, “No, no, don’t hurt me, please.” He shrank back, moving back all the way until he was pressed to the wall. Harry, with Draco’s wand in his hand, felt much more secure, and he cautiously moved closer. When he could reach Draco, he pulled the other boy close, holding him tightly.

“I’m not going to hurt you, Draco,” he mumbled, as the blonde fought against his hold. “It’s me, Harry. Can you hear me, Draco?”

He received no answer, but a few minutes later, Draco stopped fighting against Harry. He just stood there, shivering, until all his energy had drained out of him and he slumped against the Boy Who Lived. His head lay still against Harry’s shoulder and Harry knew that if he were to move, the blonde would fall to the floor, as his legs would not be able to support him.

Draco mumbled something incoherent when Harry picked him up and clung closely to him when Harry wanted to set him down on the bed, leaving him to sleep. The blonde’s pale fingers would not let go of Harry’s shirt and the raven-haired boy didn’t mind staying. He wrapped his arms around the smaller boy and held him tightly. It wasn’t until they were lying there, on the bed, that he realized the severity of what had just happened – and that they would now, most likely, have to take Draco to Hogwarts’ Infirmary.

The blonde occupying Harry’s thoughts stirred and opened his eyes, blinking rapidly. When he realized where he was, he also seemed to realize why and he turned his head away from Harry. Harry felt the sense of shame come off Draco in waves and when he tried reaching out, the blonde moved away.

“Draco...” Harry began.

“Don’t, Harry. Don’t tell me everything’s all right, or that it will be okay,” Draco said, cutting him off. “It’s not going to be okay at all.”

They sat in silence, a few feet away from each other. Finally, Harry said, “Tell me about it. Tell me how you feel, please, Draco. I don’t know how to make it better, or what to do at all, if you don’t tell me...”

Another bout of silence followed, where Harry listened to the other young man’s breathing and hoped that Draco would open up to him.

Time out of Place

When Draco began, his voice was small, quiet and without hope. “It’s strange,” he said. “There are times when I can really *feel* the poison course through my body, spreading, absorbing me. It eats me from the inside, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, I can do to stop it.

“And then there are other times when I forget it even exists.” He gave a small shrug. “Usually, that happens when I’m with you. I don’t know if that is because I happen to forget *everything* else when I’m with you, or if it’s because you’re my Heart Mate in this *wonderful* future of ours, or if it’s because you’re a Healer... I don’t know; it could be either, it could be all, it could be something completely different.”

He fell quiet, collecting his thought before he continued.

“Both this and the first illusion have been about my father. They aren’t just hallucinations... they’re memories...” His voice was so small that Harry had to strain to hear him. “The first one was... I can’t have been more than five or six years old at the time. I had spoken without permission at our dinner reception. My father became... angry... and he...”

“He hit you,” Harry finished for him when Draco was unable to.

Draco, who’d been turned away from Harry the whole time, spun around to look at him now. His face was completely clear, not an emotion in sight. Still, behind the well-kept façade, Harry could sense the storm, if only from the Heart Bind. He knew that Draco wasn’t as uncaring about the fact that his father abused him as he liked to think he was.

Silver eyes met green for a short moment, before Draco looked away again.

“It was the first time he did so,” he said. “Or at least I don’t remember any time before that.

“This... the memory I just had... it was when I was about ten. Rebellious and angry with my father and that was the only time I went against him. He taught me never to do that again...”

His voice died off as he stared into space, his mind somewhere completely different than his body. Harry wondered for a second if Draco was hallucinating again, until the blonde began speaking again.

“He put the Cruciatus Curse on me for the first time that night. I screamed until my throat was raw; I’d never experienced that sort of pain before. Then he forced water down my throat and I nearly choked on it. He stayed only long enough to be sure that I didn’t choke;

Time out of Place

then he left me on the floor. Thing is,” he said with contempt, “That the Malfoy Manor has stone floors that are ice cold. So while he wouldn’t murder me – I assume that would have made him look bad in front of the Ministry – he had no qualms about leaving me there to get sick, which is just what happened. I was a small child; I have always been for reasons that don’t belong here and which I’ll tell you about later...

“I caught pneumonia and almost died. Mum took care of me best she could; the house elves did the rest. Still, even with their magic, they say it was a close call. Father didn’t mind if I died from pneumonia or any other illness – if I died from anything like that, he would only get the Ministry’s regrets about his loss.”

Harry wanted desperately to take Draco in his arms and hold him until all evil, bad thoughts were banished, yet he knew he couldn’t. Draco wouldn’t allow him to do so, not even now when their relationship had developed to something beyond simple friendship.

“I didn’t die, to his great disappointment,” Draco said, and his voice was hard, stronger now than when he’d begun. “The punishments became worse after that. Everything I did was wrong, no matter what. He made me fear him, made me follow his every order. Made me believe I was evil, just like him – perhaps I am, but then again, maybe not... He made me hate Muggles, made me hate everything and everyone but rich purebloods like my own family. Most of all, he made me hate you. He still wanted me to befriend you, yes, but only because that would mean power – power over you, power for himself, power for Voldemort... He still made it quite clear that I should hate you.

“I guess a child’s heart – a child’s body – cannot hold that much hate, for it broke, as you can see.”

He looked up again, his eyes and the feelings radiating off him speaking volumes more than the mere words did.

“I was his servant. Do anything wrong, you get punished. Do anything right, you still get punished, for you are not supposed to be able to do anything right.

“I don’t hate my father; I’ve told you that before. I cannot be happy that he is dead; he was still my flesh and blood; he is still my father. However, I can say that I don’t care. I don’t care that he died, or that you – or the Harry of this time at least – killed him. I just... don’t care.”

With those words, he finished his tirade and stood nervously from the bed. Harry followed him, eyes never leaving the small, pale body of the young man he’d grown to lo– like.

Time out of Place

Admire. Want. His arms slipped around Draco and pulled him close. Draco let himself be embraced and surrendered to Harry.

“I can’t do anything about your childhood, no matter how much I want to,” Harry said softly. “But I am glad that you told me. You don’t always have to be strong.”

“It would be nice to be strong sometimes,” Draco’s muffled reply came from somewhere in Harry’s neck.

Harry smiled, pulling away from the blonde. “You are strong. You were only a child when all of this happened and your father is a full-grown man and a fully trained wizard. You couldn’t fight him.”

“I didn’t even try,” Draco said, his voice full of self-loathing. “I only took it, took it, took it...”

Harry sighed, knowing that it wouldn’t be easy to make Draco see reason.

“What good would it have done, Draco?” he asked. “You would only have gotten another beating, and quite possibly even have died from the injuries. What good would that have done? No, I’m not finished,” he said, holding up a hand to quiet the blonde. “You did do the right thing. You joined the good side. You joined Dumbledore. You joined *me*. Isn’t that much better than dying when you were little, when you were too young to fight or understand at all?”

“I still could have tried!” Draco cried at him, raking his hand through his hair.

Then Harry did the only thing he could think of – he pulled Draco to him and kissed him thoroughly. The blonde was surprised at first, but found himself quickly kissing back with just as much ferocity as Harry did.

When they broke apart, they were both panting.

“That’s a very good way to settle arguments,” Draco breathed. “Let’s do it that way from now on.”

Then a wave of energy surged through them both and they locked gazes. Their thoughts seemed connected, as though they had performed the *Audiosis* spell. They both knew exactly what had just happened, even though it had never happened to them before.

Time out of Place

A moment later, the room was empty. The two Healers were on their way to the Weasley Castle, for it was the wards of self-inflicted pain that had gone off.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Nineteen I have not yet begun to fight

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Harry was scared – really truly scared.

Hermione was on the bed in her and Ron’s bedroom, her face twisted in agony as another contraction came. Draco was beside her, one hand holding hers, the other on her sweaty forehead.

Harry was by the fireplace, trying to get a hold of Ron, who naturally seemed to have disappeared. A midwife from St. Mungo’s would also be arriving in a few moments; she said she only had to collect her equipment before floo-ing to the Weasley Castle.

“Aargh,” Hermione screamed as a contraction wracked through her body. “Where *exactly* is that midwife with my pain relievers?” she asked through gritted teeth.

“She’s coming,” Harry replied.

“And where is the idiotic boy who did this to me?”

“Ron should be here soon,” said Harry, turning back to the fireplace where he could see Ron’s empty office. “Ron!” he yelled, hoping that the redhead would hear him, wherever he was. He wondered how in the world his best friend had missed the wards going off.

“Aargh!”

“Um, Harry, these contractions are coming closer and closer,” Draco said with a worried face. “Maybe we should – I don’t know – do something?”

Harry gave a final, hard look at the fireplace, then terminated the connection before running to Hermione’s side again.

“Okay,” he said. “You do know I don’t know anything about childbirth, right, ‘Mione?”

“Just get these babies – argh! – out of me,” Hermione shouted in his ear.

Time out of Place

“Um, right,” Harry mumbled, going half-deaf from the shouting.

Just then, a soft ‘pop’ was heard and the midwife from St. Mungo’s came out of the fireplace. Harry and Draco both breathed a sigh of relief as she took over. She helped Hermione stand and remove her underwear and then walk around in the room for a bit, before the contractions came even closer. She also gave Hermione a potion to drink, which would reduce the pain. Then, when Hermione found that she could no longer walk around, she lay down on the bed, all the while muttering about her husband, who was nowhere to be seen.

The contractions were coming closer and closer – and Hermione was getting closer and closer to hysterics. She screamed at the midwife that she was not going to give birth to her children when her husband wasn’t there.

“Ron!” Harry screamed into the fire, having set the connection up again. Draco was still by Hermione’s side. He wasn’t saying much, only following the midwife’s instructions, his face even paler than normal.

“Harry? What’s up?” Ron asked, his voice cheery.

“Where the bloody hell have you been?” Harry swore. “Get over here now – Hermione is about to give birth to your twins!”

Ron paled and his eyes widened impossibly. Less than five seconds later, he came out of the fire with the same soft ‘pop’ that the midwife had arrived. He ran to Hermione’s side, and took her hand.

“How is she doing?” he asked the midwife.

“She’s in the last stages – she’s going to have to push in less than a minute,” the midwife said.

What followed had to be one of the strangest, most memorable but at the same time scariest moments of Harry’s life. Hermione screamed with each contraction and pushed with everything she had. Draco sat behind her, his hands on each side of her face and Harry and Ron sat on each side of her.

A child was actually being delivered to the world, Harry thought with fascination. He was seeing a life begin.

Time out of Place

“You have a girl,” the midwife announced happily and Ron beamed at Hermione.

“You are so good, Hermione,” he said to her, kissing her forehead lovingly. “She’s absolutely beautiful.”

The tiny baby took several gulps of air, before it began wailing loudly. The midwife motioned for Harry to come and take the baby and wrap it in one of the towels that lay on the table beside the bed. With shaking hands, Harry took the newborn child in his hands.

The girl had the same flaming red hair as the rest of the Weasleys had. Her face was covered in blood and other liquids, and she was still screaming. It sounded so small, yet at the same time so very loud, for such a little being. She had ten tiny fingers and ten tiny toes, Harry counted, and she looked perfectly healthy to him. He placed her in a red towel and dried her off with the wipes that had also been placed on the table by the midwife.

Behind him he heard, “And a boy!”

He turned to see Ron’s huge grin, and he thought that it was lucky the redhead had ears – otherwise the smile would reach all the way around.

The midwife handed the boy to his father and Ron took the baby in his arms. His face was a mixture of incredible pride and nervousness. He handled the boy like he was made of porcelain, walking over to where Harry was holding his baby girl.

“They’re beautiful...” he breathed, his eyes wide.

Harry nodded, “They really are.”

He walked back with the girl to Hermione. The midwife was helping her push the placenta out and as soon as she was done, Harry placed her baby girl on her chest. The small one found its way to Hermione’s breast and began sucking milk greedily. Hermione looked a bit startled as the baby began, but then she just smiled softly at her child.

Ron brought over their boy and sat down next to Hermione.

Harry took Draco by the hand and they left the room, knowing that the family needed time for themselves. The midwife left them as soon as she had checked both the babies and their mother.

Time out of Place

“That was... incredible...” Harry said, his mind still not completely coherent after what they’d just seen and been through. He sat down on the couch in the castle’s living room and pulled Draco with him down.

“Definitely one of the coolest things so far,” Draco agreed.

Then they sat in silence, revelling in the miracle they’d just witnessed.

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During the following few days, Draco and Harry spent several hours each day at the Weasley Castle, getting to know the newborn twins. Hermione and Ron had yet to find names for them, so for now, they were just ‘baby girl’ and ‘baby boy’. Draco suggested that they’d name them that. Hermione was not amused.

The energy Draco had given Hermione during labour had, however, rendered him even weaker. Another hallucination had followed, when they were at home, and Harry was getting worried about the frequency with which they were coming. This time, it had been almost an hour before Draco was back to his normal self completely. Harry couldn’t help but wonder if the hallucinations weren’t taking Draco with them, little by little, away from Harry and into insanity.

Draco was no longer allowed to train with Mr Hanawalt. Harry refused to let him touch a gun; neither knew when the next hallucination would hit. It was bad enough that he had his wand still – a gun could and would be lethal if Draco suddenly began to imagine things. Draco would still come with Harry when he trained, though, for he didn’t want to be left alone any longer. Draco was scared of the hallucinations and what they did to him.

When they were at the Weasley Castle, Draco would lay down with the babies on a big blanket on the floor and he would watch them sleep there. They were too small to really play with; the only thing they did was eat, sleep and make a mess. Harry refused to clean that mess. Instead he opted to sit on the couch and watch the twins and Draco sleep on the floor, for Draco always fell asleep as well. Harry would never leave Draco alone with the twins, in case of a hallucination.

One evening, when the twins were a little over a week old, Harry was doing just this – he was sitting on the couch, with Ron and Hermione on the other couch and they talked quietly between themselves, watching the babies and Draco on the floor. Hermione had the book

Time out of Place

Harry gave her for Christmas in her lap – *Practical spells and potions when you have small children in the house* by Linala LePuzzle. Draco was fast asleep and had been so for at least an hour.

“Decided on what to call them yet?” Harry asked.

Hermione looked up from her book. “We have, actually,” she said.

“Well?” Harry asked expectantly when she didn’t continue.

She looked at Ron and he said, “We’re naming her Ariel and him Leo.”

Harry looked at the babies thoughtfully. “She looks like an Ariel,” he said. “And he definitely look like a Leo.” He smiled at them.

“So we have your approval?” Hermione asked.

“Definitely.” Then he stretched and said with a yawn, “We should be going home, I think.”

Hermione smiled at him and picked up her daughter from the floor. Ariel made a small sound, before she settled in into her mother’s arms. Harry still hadn’t become used to how natural it looked for Hermione to hold a baby in her arms.

“I need to put these two to bed too,” she said, bending down to give Harry a kiss on the cheek. “So I’ll see you – when? Tomorrow?”

“I think we’re coming for a little while then too. Draco is getting very attached to your children,” Harry smiled.

“So I’ve noticed,” Hermione said, her voice soft. “You are free to come over as much as you want.”

Harry smiled at her and stood up. “Good night, Hermione.”

Ron stood and picked his baby boy up from the blanket as well. He still looked a bit awkward with Leo in his arms; not as much of a natural as Hermione, yet it was still a cute picture with the two flaming redheads. Harry smiled at him.

“Good night, Ron,” he said.

“See you tomorrow.”

Time out of Place

Harry nodded, and watched Ron leave the same way Hermione had. He was left with Draco on the floor, still deep asleep.

Harry touched his shoulder, shaking him lightly. “Draco?” he said softly. “Draco wake up.”

Suddenly, the blonde on the floor moaned and Harry became aware of a slicing pain going through him. He bent to his knees, the pain growing stronger every second.

A vision, he knew. Draco was having a vision.

“Draco!” Harry said through gritted teeth. “Draco wake up!”

The blonde began to writhe back and forth on the floor as the pain assaulted him. He grabbed Harry’s shirt and yanked him down with surprising strength, all the while crying. His breathing became ragged, shaking.

“Don’t kill him... please...” he mumbled, clinging closer to the Boy Who Lived.

“No!” he suddenly screamed, his tone heartbreaking and Harry wanted nothing but to comfort, yet he had no idea of how. The pain surged through him and hot white flashes passed through his mind.

...Hogwarts...

Draco hid his face in Harry’s shirt, his body shaking, spasms shooting through him. He cried and screamed, and pulled and pushed at Harry, seeming to want to both leave and come closer at once.

...Albus Dumbledore...

Another flash through Harry’s mind and he saw the Headmaster’s body, covered in mud and blood. He let out a scream of his own at the sight of his mentor, lying dead on the ground.

He felt a cloth pressed to his face, but it did nothing to relieve the pain. He gripped Draco tighter, feeling the blonde’s body arch as the vision sent another jolt of pain.

...Death Eaters... and dead bodies, sprayed on the ground...

He screamed again and then his mind did the only thing it could do – it shut down.

Time out of Place

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His head felt heavy and his body as though it was on fire, despite the cool wet cloth on his forehead. Harry groaned as he woke up and tried to move. A hand held him still.

“Don’t move, you need to rest,” Hermione said to him softly. “And you’ll wake Draco up – he needs to rest even more than you do.”

Harry opened his eyes to look at her. Draco was curled up at his side, clinging desperately to him. On his cheeks were traces of dried tears.

“You’ve been out for hours,” Hermione said. “It’s two in the morning.”

“Sorry to keep you awake,” Harry said and then continued without waiting for an answer, “I need to speak with Dumbledore as soon as possible.”

“Shouldn’t you wait until Draco is awake?” Hermione asked.

Harry shook his head. “Get him here, please. This is too important. If Draco doesn’t wake up by himself, I’ll give him a wake-me-up potion.”

Hermione nodded and called for Ron. He appeared in the room a moment later, mighty relieved that Harry was awake again and then walked off as soon as his wife had given him the instructions on getting the Headmaster.

“It was that bad, huh?” Hermione said with a pained expression. “I thought you would never stop screaming...”

She trailed off, continuing to bathe Draco’s forehead with the cool cloth. He didn’t stir, didn’t move at all. He just lay there, his breathing heavy and ragged and Harry couldn’t tell whether he was sleeping or unconscious. He could have been going in and out of unconsciousness for all that he and Hermione knew. All that Harry was certain of was that Draco was not in pain any longer – he would have felt it otherwise.

Less than ten minutes later, Albus Dumbledore entered Harry and Draco’s room.

Time out of Place

“I hear Mr Malfoy had another vision,” he said gravely, sitting down on a chair next to Hermione. Ron opted to stay standing at the end of the bed.

“He did,” Harry said. “It was one of the worst ever. I know you probably want to hear what he has to say, but I’ll tell you the little I saw before I wake him up.”

Dumbledore nodded, “Very well. The parts of the visions that you receive have often been the most important bits. Go on.”

Harry nodded. “The first thing I saw was Hogwarts. I don’t know what was wrong with it, but there was *something*. Then... the next thing I saw – we saw...” Harry broke off, as the picture of Dumbledore’s dead body on the ground came back to haunt him.

“Harry?”

“It was you, sir. The Death Eaters had killed you,” he said, his voice shaky.

If the Headmaster felt anything about the news, he didn’t show it. He sat in silence, contemplating Harry’s words, his expression never changing.

“Did you see anything else?” he asked after almost a minute of silence.

“Several others, dead, Professor,” Harry said quietly. “Dead bodies, on the ground, with Death Eaters walking around there.”

“Do you know who it was?” Dumbledore asked.

Harry shook his head, but a soft, slightly muffled voice came from Draco’s still form.

“There were too many to name,” Draco said. “But amongst them were several Weasleys, Rubeus Hagrid, Neville Longbottom, Severus Snape... All dead. The Death Eaters had taken over Hogwarts, making it their new headquarters and they were killing anyone and anything alive that wasn’t on their side. So, to add to that list, I would assume that the rest of the teaching staff and any student left at the school would be... dead.”

He stopped talking and the room fell completely silent.

Draco gave a short, forced laugh. “I’m sorry I can never bring anything but bad news, Professor.”

Time out of Place

Harry squeezed his eyes shut at the words and held Draco closer. The blonde hadn't moved since he woke up, only turned his head slightly so that the people in the room could hear what he was saying. Through their Heart Bind or perhaps with his Healing Powers, Harry felt how drained Draco was. There was no energy left in him to pick himself up and change his position.

Dumbledore didn't reply to Draco's sarcastic comment; he sat still in his chair, looking very thoughtful. Finally, he turned to Ron.

"Mr Weasley, if you could please get in touch with your sister," he said.

Ron nodded and left the room without a question. Hermione still sat next to the bed, looking just as deep in thought as the Headmaster had.

"Is there anything else you can tell us, Mr Malfoy?" Dumbledore asked.

Draco looked up at him, still without moving. "Nothing about the vision," he said. "However, I can no longer feel my legs."

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Twenty It all comes crumbling down...

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“What do you mean you can no longer feel your legs?” Harry asked dumbly, his insides turned to ice with his boyfriend’s words.

Draco seemed to shrug, although he still hardly moved at all. “I can’t feel my legs anymore,” he said. “I can’t move them, can’t feel them.”

Hermione stared at him, her eyes wide and filling with tears. She wouldn’t cry though, Harry knew that. She knew, just as well as well as Harry did, that they would have to be strong.

“Oh my,” Dumbledore mumbled, his blue eyes watching Draco with concern. “Of course, the vision would have been a shock to your system and this far into the poison’s work, it would kick into even higher gear because of it.”

“What do you mean?” Harry asked, his mind slow with shock.

“He means that the poison took an even greater hold of Draco whilst he was weak from the vision. It paralysed him,” Hermione explained to him. She then stood and walked over to the other side of the bed and reached for Draco. “I’m going to pinch your legs, and you will tell me when you feel anything, okay?”

Draco gave the smallest of nods.

Hermione began with Draco’s feet, pinching each of Draco’s toes, then the inside of his foot, his heel, up to his ankles, his shins, the knee pits, the knee, and the front and back of his thigh. Draco didn’t say a word throughout the process, but Harry could hear his breathing become uneven as he noticed just how much of his body he couldn’t feel at all.

Finally, when she touched his hips, he felt her hands on his body again and he told her so. His voice was thick when he said, “No need to continue up, Granger.”

Hermione didn’t glare at him for using her last name; instead her eyes were filled with something akin to pity. She sat back down on her chair.

Time out of Place

Ron came back into the room just then, a crying Ariel in his arms. Behind him followed Ginny with the other baby. Ginny looked tired, as though she had just woken up – which she probably had – yet there was still an aura of confidence and control around her as she conjured up a chair to sit on, next to Hermione. She handed the baby boy in her arms to Hermione and then turned to Harry and Draco on the bed. Harry still held the blonde close in his arms, afraid of what would happen if he let go. He never wanted to let go. Draco in turn just laid there, his eyes closed. Harry wondered if he'd drifted off to sleep again.

The Headmaster recounted the vision Draco had just had to Ginny and her eyes widened.

“They are strong enough to think that they can take over Hogwarts?” she asked.

“They have been getting a lot stronger,” Hermione said. “In the last few weeks, there have been disappearances among the Muggles that no one can explain, and the newspapers have reported about the increase in shootings lately. There have been three murders in the wizarding community that have seemed all too much like Voldemort’s doing for it not to be. The victims have been tortured, shot, and then returned to somewhere where they knew the bodies would be found.”

“Why haven’t you told us?” Harry asked, hearing the news for the very first time.

Ginny looked slightly guilty. “We felt it was better that you concentrated on finding a cure for the poison, rather than to worry about things that you couldn’t do anything about anyway.”

“That we couldn’t... You hide news about three wizards being murdered because you think that we couldn’t deal with it?” Harry asked, raising his voice. His nerves had broken completely with Ginny’s words, and he felt himself and the world around him break down. That was, until he felt a warming sensation inside of himself and a familiar voice that said,

‘Calm down, Harry. Don’t be upset, it won’t help.’

The voice was weak even inside his head, but Harry maintained the link with Draco. He took a deep breath to calm himself.

‘Don’t give me your energy, Draco,’ he told the blonde, *‘You need it much more than I do.’*

He sensed Draco’s smile, but received no response.

Time out of Place

Ginny, Hermione and the room's other occupants – save for the babies – watched the two boys on the bed with interest. Harry blushed slightly when he finally looked up at them.

“We didn’t do it to deceive you, Harry,” Ginny said. “We did it because we think that your energy is better spent on finding the antidote.”

Harry offered her a very small smile. “I know. Sorry for blowing up at you.”

Ginny returned the smile; hers filled with soft sadness and worry. Then she turned to Dumbledore and in that moment, she became Ginny In Control. The Headmaster smiled at her and said,

“I will be sending owls to every parent of every student at the school. Within a day, all the students that wish to leave will have left. I will not allow anyone under the sixth year to stay, it is too risky.”

“Good,” Ginny said. “I will contact the Order and see to it that they all arrive at Hogwarts tomorrow. If Voldemort thinks he’s strong enough to walk onto the school, then we will have to meet him with an even stronger force.

“Sirius Black and Remus Lupin will be in charge of getting the Order completely organized and informed of exactly what is happening. Oh, and could you send a few owls to the giants and ask for their assistance?”

Dumbledore nodded. “I will do so immediately.”

“What about us?” Harry asked, gesturing at himself and Draco. “I’m not going to leave him, not now.”

‘Why thank you Potter. Feeling responsible for me?’ was Draco’s sarcastic, thought reply to him.

‘As a matter of fact, yes,’ Harry responded.

Ginny looked thoughtful. “I will need you at Hogwarts, Harry.”

Harry had known that that would be the reply he’d get – not only because he was the only Healer now that Draco was no longer ‘available’, but also because he was the Boy Who Lived and despite that seven years had passed from the time he was used to, he was still looked upon as the Saviour of the Wizarding world. He *had* to go face Voldemort in what

Time out of Place

they all knew without having to think about it, would be the last battle against the Dark Lord.

“I’ll go with you,” Draco said, lifting his head ever so slightly.

“You are *not* going to a war site when you can’t even walk,” Harry said. He was irritated with Draco for even suggesting it.

“I can drink one of the strengthening potions. I am sure they will make me stronger. Then I can *help*.”

Harry met Draco’s gaze, the grey eyes pleading with him to let him come as well.

“You’ll get killed,” Harry said, his voice thick with emotion.

“I will die anyway,” Draco said, his voice even, with an underlying hint of anger. “This will just be a bit sooner – and maybe a bit less painful.”

“Draco, why don’t we take you to St. Mungo’s instead,” Ginny suggested weakly.

“And what, leave me there to die instead? St. Mungo’s can do nothing for me. And don’t you think that when the Dark Lord is finished with Hogwarts he would come immediately to the biggest Wizarding hospital in England? And in any case, I am *not* leaving Potter here to face that bleeding Dark Lord by himself.”

Draco was getting angry and with that anger, he seemed a slight bit stronger, for he raised his head to glare at Ginny. She met his eye, her own gaze never wavering. Finally, she sighed.

“If you really want to come, I know that no one will be able to stop you,” she said.

“Damn right you can’t,” Draco said with a small grin.

“I will prepare Madame Pomfrey for your arrival,” Ginny continued. “You will be in the Hospital Wing until something happens.”

“But –”

“No, that’s not arguable,” Ginny said. “Otherwise, you’ll suddenly be off somewhere alone and you’ll begin to hallucinate, and then what? In the Infirmary, there will always be someone to keep an eye on you.”

Time out of Place

Draco glared at her, hating the feeling of being a baby that needed looking after. Still, he didn't say anything.

"Hermione," Ginny said, turning to her sister-in-law. "You are under no circumstances going to go."

Hermione nodded. "I know. I can't, not right now, no matter how much I would like to."

The young redhead turned to her brother. "Ron, you can chose if you want to come or not. These babies – they need their father," she said softly.

Ron only nodded, but didn't say anything. Harry saw him tighten his grip around his daughter slightly, holding her protectively.

A few minutes later, the general plan had been discussed. Dumbledore and Ginny left, leaving Harry and Draco with Hermione and Ron and their children.

"Go to bed, 'Mione," Harry told her softly from the bed. "Won't do you any good to fall asleep on that chair."

Hermione smiled at him. "I guess I should go to bed..."

He caught the look on her face and said, "It will be all right."

She looked concerned, her smile suddenly pained. "I know it will be," she said, though the words lacked conviction. She stood up, her little baby boy still in her arms and kissed first Harry then Draco on the cheek. Draco, who was already back asleep, smiled slightly at her touch.

"Good night, 'Mione," Harry said.

"Good night, Harry."

*

Morning came, with Hermione waking them up all too early. Ginny had said that they needed to leave for Hogwarts as soon as possible. Apparently, both she and the Headmaster

Time out of Place

were convinced that the attack would happen soon. Therefore, the Order was being gathered with great urgency – and even greater secrecy.

Harry went home to their apartment to pack. He packed one bag for himself and one for Draco. He picked out clothes and boots that looked comfortable and useful, he grabbed his Invisibility Cloak – which he hadn't noticed until he went through the wardrobe that day – and their wands. He also packed the new guns that Mr Hanawalt had supplied him with. One for himself, one for Draco, although he doubted that he would ever let the blonde touch the weapon, just like he wasn't sure that he should allow Draco to have his wand.

He also packed several bottles of healing potions. There was the Galena potion – used for cuts and bruises, broken bones, and other smaller injuries – which was the most common of the potions Harry had. The Keyahla potion, a bit stronger than the Galena potion, was used for more severe injuries like internal bleedings and head wounds. The injured person needed to drink the Keyahla potion, while the Galena potions was poured onto the cut. Last, the Salusta potion, for the most severe injuries. The Salusta potion was just like the Althidia potion – only Healers could use it. The Salusta potion required a combination of the potion and the Healer's energy.

There were a few other potions that he packed, but he found that he didn't have that many at home. Hopefully, Severus could brew some more.

He also packed three spell books, filled with Healing spells. Harry and Draco had both memorized several of the spells, but there were still many more that they didn't know. Thus, the books came with him to Hogwarts.

He took the ring he'd gotten from Draco for Christmas and placed it on his finger. A warm sensation filled him briefly as he admired the way it looked on his hand and he smiled softly to himself.

He added a last few things to the bags before he cast the feather light spell and then a size-reducing spell. The bags were now small enough to fit in the palm of his hand and so Harry left the apartment. Just before he stepped into the fire, he looked around the living room. He couldn't shake the feeling off that this was the last time in a very, very long time he would see the apartment.

At the Weasley Castle, there was lots of activity. Only Draco looked like he was being lazy; he lay still on the couch in the living room.

Time out of Place

Several of the other Weasley siblings had joined Hermione, Ron and Draco at the Castle. Bill was there, as were Fred and George with their respective girlfriends. Ginny was obviously not there – she was at Hogwarts, trying to set this operation in order.

“Hello Harry,” Bill said, shaking his hand. “Bad circumstances, but still nice to see you.”

“Yeah, you too. So you’re coming to Hogwarts as well?”

“I am. Actually, everyone is coming,” he said, motioning at Ron as well. Harry frowned slightly – he definitely didn’t like that Ron was leaving his family. Then he looked at Hermione and he realized that it was a choice that they’d made together.

“So, Ron’s coming,” Harry said softly.

“Yes. Seems like no one can stay out – not even your boyfriend,” Bill replied with a small smile.

Harry shook his head. “He wanted to come. Says he’s going to die anyway... I couldn’t tell him no. Maybe if he can fight someone else, he can fight for him self a bit.”

Bill smiled reassuringly at him. “I’m sure it will be okay.”

“Is Charlie coming?” Harry asked, deciding to change the subject to avoid an emotional breakdown. He didn’t have time for that now; he had to be strong.

Bill nodded. “Bringing a few dragons with him as well, I believe,” he said.

They continued to talk for a bit longer, before Hermione called their attention.

“You need to leave now,” she said to them. “Dumbledore made a schedule of when you could floo to Hogwarts, so that not everyone would come at the same time.”

She stood by the fireplace and Harry saw her fighting tears. Ron stood next to her with his children in his arms, both the babies asleep. He held them closely, kissing their heads and also fighting tears. Then he put the children in their cribs and held Hermione. They kissed and Hermione’s tears finally fell. She sobbed into her husband’s shoulder and he cried too. Still, she was resolute – he needed to go.

Harry stood by the couch, where Draco was lying. He shook him awake gently as the first wizard left. With a soft ‘pop’, Fred disappeared. Angelina followed quickly, and then others.

Time out of Place

“Wake up, Draco,” Harry said.

The blonde’s eyes fluttered open. “It’s time?” he asked.

Harry nodded gravely. “You don’t have to do this.”

“But I do, Harry,” replied Draco. “I do need to do this.”

“All right,” Harry sighed softly. Then he swiftly picked Draco up in his arms. He felt Draco tense for a moment and he knew that the blonde felt uncomfortable with showing his weakness so clearly. Still, there was nothing they could do about it, so finally, Draco just relaxed.

Harry bent to kiss Hermione on the cheek before he stepped into the fire and she cried harder.

“Hogwarts, the Infirmary,” Harry said clearly, after throwing the floo-powder into the fire. The flames flared green and the world around them dissolved. Harry held Draco close, as the world flew by quickly. Then they were thrown out, right into the Hospital Wing.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Twenty-One May you live every day of your life

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Madame Pomfrey was there, together with a large group of other wizards and witches, some of which Harry recognized and many more that he didn't. Among the ones he recognized was Minerva McGonagall, the Head of the Gryffindor House and Professor in transfiguration. George Weasley and Katie Bell had also come here instead of to Dumbledore's office.

"Mr Malfoy, Mr Potter," Madame Pomfrey said, running over to them. "We have a bed ready."

She led them quickly over to the bed that had been prepared for Draco and Harry lay the blonde down. He let out a sigh when Harry stopped touching him.

Severus Snape made his way over to the bed, surprising Harry. He hadn't seen the Potions Master.

"Mr Potter, Mr Malfoy," he said. A flicker of concern crossed his face as he saw the pale, thin body of Draco. The blonde had lost weight in the past few weeks and the dark circles under his eyes made him look even worse. His cheeks were hollow, his skin translucent. Blue veins beneath were visible here and there.

"Any success?" Harry asked Severus.

"I have only managed to conclude which ingredients were in the poison, but no, I haven't had any success in finding an antidote." The Potions Master was grave, and... self-loathing? Harry hadn't realized just how much Severus cared for Draco, but it was written clearly now, on the normally blank face.

"I will, of course, continue trying," Snape continued.

Draco gave him a small smile. "It will be fine, Sev'," he said. "I'll be fine."

Time out of Place

Severus stretched out a pale hand and touched Draco's cheek gingerly. "You were always the brave one," he said, his voice softer than Harry had ever heard it before. He wondered if the Snape he knew had been exchanged with an alien at some point.

He turned to Harry, his face once again clear. "I have made several strengthening potions," he said. "However, it is not advisable that you drink more than very little at the time. They make you stronger for a few hours, but when they wear off, you will be even worse off than before. They are both addictive and deadly."

"How much can he take for it to not be dangerous?" Harry asked.

"A few drops only," Severus replied. "Anything more will be –"

He was interrupted as Draco began screaming. His scream was high pitched, sounding panicked, and Harry knew immediately what was happening.

"He's hallucinating," he told Snape, running to Draco's side. The blonde flailed wildly with his arms, his eyes once again unfocused and wide with terror. He whimpered as Harry pushed him down. It was easier this time, when Draco couldn't move his legs, he noticed with sadness.

"Get away from me!" Draco screamed at him and Harry felt the blonde's whole upper body arch in an attempt to escape.

"Draco!" Harry tried, but to no avail. The boy only continued to fight against him, crying and screaming at him.

Madame Pomfrey ushered the group of people out of the room, closing the door. Only Severus and Harry were allowed to stay. He gave her a calming potion without a word and she forced it down Draco's throat. He coughed as he tried to get away from the liquid, but Madame Pomfrey held the bottle to his lips until he drank. He coughed again as he swallowed wrongly and this time, blood came up with the potion. All three onlookers' eyes widened.

A minute later, the potion took effect and Draco's struggling lessened until he just lay whimpering on the bed, still trying to escape Harry. Tears fell down the side of his cheeks and onto the pillow. Harry stayed beside him, still holding him down, still giving Draco of his own strength. He bent down and placed a gentle kiss on the blonde's sweaty forehead, whispering a soft apology.

Time out of Place

“Has he coughed up blood before?” Madame Pomfrey asked when Harry straightened. Harry shook his head in answer, not trusting his own voice.

“I am sure that I don’t need to tell you that he is getting worse for each second passing, now do I?” Madame Pomfrey asked and Harry shook his head ‘no’ again.

“He’s... dying,” Harry said, his voice no more than a whisper. “I can feel it, inside.”

“You would feel it, Mr Potter,” Madame Pomfrey said. “Mainly because of the Heart Bind, but also because you are a Healer.”

Harry hardly even heard the words. He said softly, “It feels like I am fading away as well and there is absolutely no way for me to stop it...”

With that, Severus Snape had had enough. He marched over to Harry and grabbed him roughly by the shoulders. “I will not have you giving up, Potter, not now,” he said. “Especially not now when we need you more than ever.”

Harry’s eyes widened at Snape’s hard tone; he hadn’t heard it that hard since he arrived in this future. Yet with the growling voice, his determination returned. It grew inside of him, and he realized that Severus was right. He couldn’t give up now. The other witches and wizards that were going out to fight the war needed him as backup in case they were hurt – and more than anything else, Draco needed him. He needed him to be strong, when Draco himself could not be so any longer. It would be stepping on Draco and everything he had worked for, if Harry just lay down to die as well, without a fight.

He looked up and met Severus coal black eyes. His own green eyes were sparkling with newly awoken intensity.

Just then, the door to the Infirmary flew open. Ron stood there, his face as red as his hair.

“They’re here. The Death Eaters are here.”

*

Running down the stairs with a semi-conscious Draco in his arms, Harry tried to pull himself together. However, with one sentence going through his mind again and again and again, he found it a very hard task to accomplish.

Time out of Place

They were under *attack*.

Ron was in the front, having just turned around the moment after he'd uttered the words to the chocked few people in the Infirmary. Behind him, the group of people that had been forced out of the Hospital Wing when Draco had had his vision, were running. None of them were anyone Harry recognized, but Harry knew that they all belonged to the Order and that they were all probably old students of Hogwarts.

Madame Pomfrey was still in the Infirmary. She was going to get all the medical supplies she could down from there. Ron had informed them that they were not allowed to use the floor-network; apparently, the Death Eaters had cursed it somehow, which meant that no one could know for sure where they would end up.

The Death Eaters had also sealed off the castle with wards so strong that even Dumbledore couldn't break them. No one could enter and no one could leave.

They were trapped.

Harry caught a brief glimpse of Hogwart's surroundings through one of the windows as he continued his flight down the stairs. The grass fields were filled with tall, hooded creatures, moving about like ants in an anthill. Every single one of them looked like they had a purpose, one certain thing they were supposed to do. Wands raised in one hand, guns in the other.

And the first shot rang off.

The pain was distant, but Harry could still feel the hurt as someone was shot in the shoulder. He heard Draco cry out weakly and wince slightly. In his weak state, he would feel any sort of pain. Harry on the other hand, wasn't weak, nor was he close enough to the victim for it to really pain him, but it slowed him slightly. Only Snape, who was right behind him, noticed.

"Move on, boy," he said, his face set, thin lips pressed together. He placed a hand on Harry's shoulder to keep him going.

When they finally, after what felt like an eternity, reached the entrance hall, the all stopped for a moment.

'Bang!'

Time out of Place

Harry fell to his knees with the sudden pain, only barely able to hold on to Draco, who was whimpering in pain as well. A second person had been shot.

Snape had someone come and take Draco away from Harry and then he grabbed Harry by the arm and hauled him up to a standing position. Ron came running over.

“Ginny said to get to the Hufflepuff common room,” he said. “They’re taking Draco there already. Come on!”

“What about them?” Harry asked, grasping his stomach in pain, where the bullet had entered the injured person. Whoever it was, he or she was dying; he could feel it...

Ron shook his head at him, “You can’t. You’ll get killed!”

“I need to help those people!” Harry screamed back at him, the pain intensifying. Severus was the only reason he was still standing. “We can’t lose them, not this early on...”

Ron looked between Harry and Snape, chewing on his bottom lip before nodding. “If you take the Invisibility Cloak,” he said. “And only because I know I won’t be able to stop you.”

“Fine,” Harry said and pulled the Cloak out. He’d retrieved from his bag before they fled the Hospital Wing. He pulled it tightly around himself, and gave Ron a small smile before disappearing completely. Ron gave him a weak grin back and then he was running down the hallway after the group of people who were going to the Hufflepuff common room.

Harry ran outside, the Cloak tightly around him. It was a bright day, the sun low on the horizon as it was only the middle of January. The nice weather served only to make the contrast of the invaders bigger. The Death Eaters did not seem to be in complete order yet, as the siege had only begun. Still, they were a much greater number than the Order hiding inside the castle.

Harry spotted one of the victims as he hid behind one of the bushes. It was a man and he was dying – Harry could feel the energy drain out of him.

He ran over the field, moving swiftly despite the uneven terrain. The pain grew as he moved closer, but determination kept him moving. A few feet away from the victim he skidded to a stop. He stared at the man on the ground, all energy leaving him.

It was Fred Weasley.

Time out of Place

Suddenly, Harry realized with a sinking sensation that if Fred Weasley was out here, shot, then the other person that Harry had felt being injured was most likely either Angelina or George. Probably Angelina, as George had been inside before.

“No,” he cried softly and dropped to Fred’s side. He placed one hand on Fred’s forehead and the other one on his stomach, where the blood was welling out like in some bad horror movie.

When he felt the redhead stir slightly, he whispered, “Don’t move, Fred. Just lie still, completely still...”

There were Death Eaters moving around them, none of them stopping to do anything to what they assumed was a dead body on the ground. Harry had to be very careful as he placed his hands on Fred’s body, that his hands were still covered by the Cloak.

He removed his hand from Fred’s forehead, still whispering every so quietly to the other man that he needed to stay completely still. With his free hand, he fumbled by his belt for the Salusta potion. It was the one for the most severe injuries, and it needed the Healer’s Warmth to work. Harry hoped it was the right one to use on the injured man. For despite his attempts to heal Fred with his mere touch, the man seemed to be losing his battle.

He took the lid off the bottle with his teeth and poured five precious drops onto Fred’s stomach, where the wound gaped wide open. Then he instantly placed his own hands on top of the wound and concentrated on giving Fred as much energy as possible.

It took only a few moments for the potion to work; Harry could see the bullet pull out of the wound, pressed out by the body, and the tissues sewed itself together neatly, leaving only a faint red line in its place.

“When I say so, you need to get up and run,” Harry instructed Fred as quietly as possible. “Get your wand and your gun out; you will need it. I will cast a Notice-me-not spell on you, as well as a silencing spell, but they won’t get you far. Get inside and go to the Hufflepuff common room. Understand?”

Fred gave him the faintest of nods.

Harry performed the two spells he’d mentioned, and then looked around them for the best possible moment for Fred to make a run for the entrance to Hogwarts. The Death Eaters were milling around them, however, making it close to impossible to see an opening at all.

Time out of Place

They were all around them, inching closer and closer to where Harry was sitting on his knees next to Fred. The Invisibility Cloak wouldn't save him if a Death Eater accidentally bumped into him.

"Now," Harry said, and Fred was on his feet within a second. It was only about a hundred feet to the entrance, but it seemed like an impossible distance. Harry watched him go with great trepidation.

The Death Eaters noticed his flight despite the spells and began shooting and cursing him. Fred managed to deflect both bullets and spells, however, and the entrance to the school opened for him magically when he reached it. When the door closed behind the redhead, Harry drew a breath of relief. Several of the Death Eaters cursed – and others turned right to where Harry was sitting.

"Potter or Malfoy must be around here!" a Death Eater screamed at his comrades. "That Weasley boy was healed!"

Harry's eyes widened. He rose to his feet and began moving backwards slowly, careful not to bump into anyone anywhere. When he'd removed himself far enough from the area where the Death Eaters were looking, he turned around and ran towards the bushes where he'd hid before.

From there, he spotted the other victim, now much more tightly guarded. The Death Eaters knew he would try to get to him or her next, and they were expecting his arrival. They all wanted to deliver Harry Potter to their Lord, and thus were now hungrily spying around the fields towards the Forbidden Forrest, for the young man in question.

Harry sneaked closer very, very slowly. It pained him to waste such precious seconds as he knew that the person on the ground was badly injured, just like Fred had been.

Then, suddenly, a band of Order members came running out the entrance, wands and guns in their hands.

The Death Eaters around the injured person scattered as they tried to take out the large group of people that they'd just been presented with – there were at least forty people in the group.

Harry seized the opportunity and ran towards the injured person. He barely avoided the Death Eaters around him; they were dangerously close.

Time out of Place

When he came closer, he saw a female body on the ground and he knew that he'd been right in assuming that Angelina was the other injured person.

She lay on her back, her body completely stiff. The Death Eaters had placed a body-bind curse on her as well, after shooting her. Harry could feel the pain in his own shoulder and promptly placed his hands there. He opted not to take the body-bind off until he'd healed the young woman, as that would have revealed him to the Death Eaters around them. Instead, he just placed the vial of Keyahla potion to Angelina's lips and she drank obediently.

The wound healed without a problem, when Harry combined the healing potion with the Healing Warmth.

He then told Angelina the same thing he'd told Fred: to get to the Hufflepuff common room. Only this time, Harry would be running with her, towards the relative safety within the Hogwarts walls.

He looked around himself, and found the war going on right in front of him. He felt the pain inside of him, as people were hurt. The Healer's instincts didn't separate the injured Death Eaters from the Order members, however, so there was no way of knowing who'd been hurt.

Then suddenly, three people were around them, all three members of the Order. They cast the counterspell to the body-bind, and Angelina quickly stood. Flanked by the three others, and all of them with wand and guns ready, they ran towards the entrance.

Harry ran after them.

Shots rang out around them, echoing in Harry's mind. He blindly pressed on to get inside of Hogwarts, the doors oddly far away. It felt like he was moving in slowmotion, and the gates weren't getting any closer.

Then there was a sharp pain by his shoulder blade and he was thrown forward, to his knees.

"That's Potter!" someone screamed, and Harry realized through pain that the Invisibility Cloak had been pulled down.

"Harry!" someone else yelled.

Then someone caught him as he fell forward, unconscious.

Time out of Place

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## Chapter Twenty-Two The Life of Althidia

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He awoke to the warm, wonderful feeling that he knew as Healer's Warmth. Only, his brain supplied, no one should be able to give it to him except Draco...

Draco?

He opened his eyes to find himself in what he assumed was the Hufflepuff common room. It was decorated in yellow and black, with large sofas, low tables and a big fire in the corner. The whole room was filled with people, all looking pale and serious.

"About time you woke up," Draco drawled. He sat next to Harry on a chair.

"You – you're up? How?" Harry asked.

"Strengthening potion," Draco replied simply, before bending down to kiss Harry lightly. When he straightened back up, he said, "There are others that need our help."

Harry nodded, as everything that had happened in the past twenty-four hours came back to him. From the vision, to leaving for Hogwarts, to the siege and how he'd gone out to heal Fred and Angelina amongst hundreds of Death Eaters.

He stood, still slightly shaky. Draco sent him a wave of strength through their Bind and he was steadied. Then he and the blonde both set to work on the other injured witches and wizards around the room. Draco hadn't taken enough strengthening potion to be able to walk himself; he was carried or levitated around the room by Remus Lupin.

Harry also recognized Susan Bones, Lavender Brown, Dean Thomas, Padma and Parvati Patil, Colin Creevey – he'd grown! – and several others. Colin Creevey's little brother, Dennis, was hurt. Harry rushed over to them and surveyed Dennis' injuries. Madame Pomfrey was trying her best to heal the young man, but it didn't seem to be working, for Dennis' face was ashen and his breathing uneven and hollow.

Time out of Place

Harry felt the tightening around his lungs, but it wasn't a bullet wound; instead it was a curse. He informed Madame Pomfrey of this and she began trying counterspells as Harry placed his hands on Dennis' chest, concentrating hard on relieving the trouble the young man had breathing. It became a bit easier and a few minutes later, Madame Pomfrey found the right counterspell. The curse was lifted and within moments, Dennis awoke.

Harry was already on his way to the next victim when Colin threw his arms around his younger brother in a happy hug.

It was a depressing sight, all of the injured members of the Order. Harry felt the pain and worry radiating off all of them and at times, the only thing keeping him sane was the strength he received from Draco.

'Don't give it to me, you need it more,' Harry told him as they were working on different people across the room from each other.

'I'm fine,' Draco told him back.

Harry didn't answer; he didn't need to. His feelings were openly conveyed for Draco to read.

Members of the Order kept arriving and leaving the room. There were about forty witches and wizards out at all times, reporting and trying their best to fight off the Death Eaters. So far they had had little success in doing so, but at least the Death Eaters hadn't entered the building yet. They had surrounded the whole castle however; no one could leave and no one could enter.

In the middle of it all sat Ginny, keeping track of them as they came and left. Harry heard the instructions from her and Dumbledore to the Inner Circle through the necklace. The Headmaster and the young Weasley also filled him in on what had already happened.

"All too many of the students are still here, as we were not able to send them off before the siege," Dumbledore was saying, "Voldemort has somehow managed to break my wards and set up his own around the castle, so we can't leave and no one else can get in. The children are forced to stay here."

"The floo-network is also cut off," Ginny continued, "So we can't contact anyone. We tried sending off owls, but they were killed as soon as they were spotted."

Dumbledore said, "So far, I have sent off Remus and Minerva to take the remaining students under sixteen down to the dungeons, as well as any child over sixteen that wants to

Time out of Place

go. They have barricaded the door with the strongest magic possible, and I have placed my own wards from the outside. Their orders are not to open until someone from the Order comes down to say it's safe to come out.

“Sirius went with them to collect any student over the age of sixteen that is willing to help us fight. He should be back shortly.”

“Hannah Abbott is taking care of the Muggles that are here,” Ginny said. “They are up in one of the dormitories, as we don't want them going out yet. The Death Eaters have yet to make an actual attack on the castle; so far, they have only surrounded us. The Muggles that are here are all trained with guns and will be wearing bulletproof vests. I will be giving out as many such as possible of those to the wizards as well.”

There were two girls sitting in the corner, transfiguring small objects into bulletproof vests. They were handed out to the occupants of the room after being covered with as many protecting spells as possible.

Throughout it all, Harry kept an eye on Draco. The blonde continued to drink of the strengthening potions, something which Harry knew that he would be paying dearly for as soon as they wore off. It worried and scared Harry, and he wanted to tell everyone that Draco was *not* up to doing any of this and he shouldn't have to do it. Yet he took one look at his boyfriend's face and he knew that trying to stop the blonde from doing what he was would be impossible.

He was healing a young woman, eighteen or nineteen years old. He guessed she was right out of Hogwarts. Out of Hogwarts, into the war... It was not a future and he wished fervently for it to be over with this battle.

Ron came to sit next to him. He was fastening his own protective vest around himself. Another vest was in his hand: Harry's.

“How's she doing?” he asked, as Harry continued to work on the young woman.

“I think she'll be okay, in a few minutes. I gave her some Keyahla potion.” He sighed. “She'll be okay,” he repeated softly, although his eyes weren't on her anymore.

“He'll be okay,” Ron said, seeing whom Harry was looking at. “He's strong.”

“I know he is,” Harry said, closing his eyes, adding in his mind, ‘But not that strong.’

Time out of Place

They sat in silence. Ron began putting the vest on Harry, carefully so that Harry wouldn't have to take his hands off the young girl. The colour was returning to her face, but she still had some way to go.

"I asked him to be Leo's godfather," Ron said.

Harry gave him a weak grin, "Mione told me you would. What did he say?"

"He stared at me at first, as though he couldn't believe it. And then he said, in that lovely drawling voice of his, 'Are you sure you want a Malfoy as his godfather?'"

"What did you say to that?" Harry asked.

"I said, 'Yes, but really, the only thing I want is your money.'" Ron grinned, and Harry allowed himself a small smile. "He just growled. And then he agreed."

'BOOM!'

The castle's walls shook and a few people in the room screamed, as what sounded like a bomb went off somewhere close by. Ron quickly finished the work he was doing on Harry's vest and stood as Dumbledore spoke to the room.

"It has begun..." the Headmaster said sadly. "Everyone, to the Entrance Hall. We shall give our guests an appropriate welcoming."

*

The Hufflepuff common room was almost empty, save for Madame Pomfrey, six injured wizards, the injured young woman – and Harry and Draco. Harry had stayed behind after the rest of the Order had left with Dumbledore; he needed to finish healing the girl before he joined the fighting. The other injured wizards Madame Pomfrey would take care of; their wounds were not life threatening.

Draco was on the other side of the room, healing one of the six wizards. He looked tired; his eyes were getting more and more unfocused. When the wizard before him was healed and awake once more, Draco fell back on the bed himself, his body drained of energy.

Harry ran to him.

Time out of Place

On the table a few feet away from the bed stood the strengthening potions Snape had produced for Draco. Harry picked up the strongest one, the Imara potion, and unscrewed the cork.

Draco's breathing was laboured, his face ashen. His eyes were closing, as though he was falling into unconsciousness. Harry placed the vial to the blonde's lips and poured it into his mouth. It was more than what was healthy; more than what was possible for the body to take in, but Draco was dying; Harry could feel it. The other boy swallowed automatically. Within moments, his eyelids fluttered open again, the grey orbs once again focused.

Neither said anything, but both knew that what Harry had just given Draco was a deadly amount of the Imara potion. Still, both knew why and they didn't have the time to discuss it.

Draco stood unsteadily, his eyes widening as he realized what that meant. His legs were working once more.

"We should go," he said quietly.

Harry nodded. They made their way through the common room, over to the door.

Just before they reached the door, Harry stopped Draco. "Put this on."

He held out his Invisibility Cloak. Draco stretched out his hand – Harry saw how his hands were shaking – and took the fabric in his hands.

"So this is how I was able to see only your head in Hogsmeade," he mumbled, stroking the fabric gently.

"It isn't big enough for the two of us, so you have to take it. There's a bigger chance of you making it than me. I can always fight the Death Eaters, but you are too weak."

"Harry," Draco said, his voice soft and unlike the Malfoy Harry had known for six years.

"I have the strength to fight them, but I don't want you even trying," Harry continued, not hearing or just ignoring Draco.

"Harry..."

Time out of Place

When the Boy Who Lived still continued speaking, his voice trembling slightly, Draco grabbed hold of Harry's cloak and drew himself up to meet Harry's lips. Harry stopped speaking and closed his eyes, sharing his desperation with Draco in the kiss. His arms circled Draco's waist as the blonde's hands ran through Harry's messy black hair.

When they broke apart, Harry was startled to realize that he was crying. Harry Potter, crying – he hadn't cried in years...

"Shh," Draco said, drying Harry's cheeks off with his thumbs. When Harry saw Draco's eyes, so filled with love and devotion, his walls broke completely and he sobbed into Draco's shoulder.

"It's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair..." he mumbled again and again.

Draco knew they didn't have much time to get out there; the Imara potion would only last a couple of hours at most. After that he would be helpless and – dead. Still, nothing could make him pull away from Harry at that moment. However, a few minutes later when the sobs had subsided, Draco had no choice.

"Harry, c'mon," Draco said, pulling away slightly. "We have to go."

Harry nodded, and tried to dry his cheeks with the back of his hands. He looked embarrassed of how he'd acted and Draco just had to pull up and kiss him again.

"I will never leave you, Harry," he said softly. He held Harry's hand up, and fingered the ring on his finger. "I will not leave you."

Harry touched Draco's necklace, and nodded. "And if you do, I will come after you."

Draco smiled slightly at him. "I've managed to stay around for six years. Little things like three months in some future and some poison won't change that."

Harry nodded and Draco could feel how he was trying to convince himself of the words. When he spoke again, his voice was raw with feeling and he held his hand on the side of Draco's face, savouring the touch. "We need to go."

Draco nodded and kissed Harry one last time.

Harry pressed something into his hand. "Your wand. You may need it. And this," he continued. "You know how to use it."

Time out of Place

The blonde nodded, taking the gun. He set both the gun and the wand in the holders on his belt. Then he swept the Invisibility Cloak around himself and began making their way up the stairs to the Entrance Hall. Harry stayed closely behind him, making sure the other boy didn't stumble and fall. The staircases and the hallways they passed were eerily quiet, but they could still hear the yelling from the outside. Guns went off and Harry began to feel he pain inside of him as he neared the injured people outside. He knew Draco was feeling the same and kept even closer to him.

Then they were in the last corridor before the Entrance Hall and all Hell broke loose.

Suddenly they were surrounded by Death Eaters, and wizards and witches of the Order. He felt Draco's presence draw away, towards one of the people on the ground. He felt the pain and the distress among the people around him. It was not only Order members, but Death Eaters as well, that lay injured and even dead on the ground.

He narrowly dodged the Cruciatus curse that a Death Eater sent his way. He sent the Stupefying spell back and then, with another whip of his wand, he bound the dark cloaked man with magical ropes.

He felt naked without the Invisibility Cloak. Still, it felt better that Draco had it rather than himself.

“Potter!”

There could be no mistake who that voice belonged to. Severus Snape stood by a body on the ground, protecting it from any attackers.

Harry ran to his side, trying his best to avoid attracting attention to himself.

The body on the ground belonged to a student of Hogwarts, a girl of Slytherin, judging by her colours. It was all that Harry had time to register, before he began healing her. She was unconscious from a spell, rather than a wound, so the only thing he could do was offer her Healer's energy until she awoke. It proved rather difficult, as he tried to keep track of what was happening around him at the same time as he was working.

They were losing and he knew it. He could feel it inside, feel the hope drain out of the people around him. They knew that they were outnumbered. They knew that they were going to die.

Time out of Place

The girl on the ground stirred and as soon as she did so, Harry was gone from her side and by the next one's. Someone always kept watch for him, so that he wouldn't have to both Heal and defend himself.

He found no tears when he discovered the first person that wouldn't respond to the Healer's energy; the first person that was dead. He didn't have time to mourn the young man, an unknown face to Harry, but someone with a family and friends. Instead of mourning those people's loss, he was already on his way to the next victim, hoping he could do better with that person.

There were hundreds of people on the fields outside Hogwarts. Most of them belonged to the enemy side, Harry knew. No more than eighty or ninety of the Order's members had had time to Apparate or Floo to Hogwarts before the siege.

"Harry!"

He turned when he heard his name being called. A second too late, he realized that it was no friend that had called, but a Death Eater. The Cruciatius Curse hit him in the back, and he fell to the dirty, muddy ground, screaming in agony. Blind hot fire spread through his body and he could do nothing but helplessly writher on the ground.

Then he couldn't even do that much, as a Death Eater placed a binding spell on him. His body froze, his face still twisted in pain.

"Well, well, what do we have here?"

A dark figure appeared above Harry and the raven-haired boy could imagine the grin hid behind the mask. At the same time, he felt Draco's presence somewhere close, through the Bind.

'Don't, Draco. Get out of the way.'

'Why?'

Harry couldn't answer, as the Cruciatius Curse drew all of his energy out of him. He wanted to scream, wanted to claw, wanted to leave his own body. The binding spell wouldn't let him do anything at all.

He couldn't see Draco, but he could still feel the other boy move away. Just then, Harry realized with a start that they had performed the *Audiosis* spell without saying the words.

Time out of Place

The Death Eater ended the Cruciatus Curse, but kept the binding spell on Harry's body.

"The grand prize," he hissed at Harry, circling him. "My Lord will be most pleased."

Harry wasn't listening to the Death Eater's ramblings about becoming the closest of Voldemort's men; instead he tried to keep track of where Draco was, at the same time as he tried to think of a way out of the situation. His mind came up blank.

'I can stupefy them,' Draco said in his thoughts.

'No! They are too many, and it won't do any good. Draco, leave me. Go heal the ones that need it.'

'I'm not about to leave you and your Gryffindor bravery, you git!' Draco screamed at him in his head and followed the sentence with a string of curses, which Harry assumed were directed towards the Death Eaters and their Lord, rather than towards Harry himself.

Suddenly, Harry heard, "*Stupefy!*" from somewhere above him, and knew that Draco had done just what Harry had asked him not to.

One Death Eater went down. Then he heard, "*Crucio!*" and the world exploded in pain once again. A scream passed his lips despite the binding spell; it hurt too much. Too much...

"Someone is here, with some sort of invisibility spell," a Death Eater screamed.

"Find him!" the Death Eater above Harry yelled back. "I am quite sure that it is our young Mr Malfoy," he added, his narrowed eyes back on Harry. Ending both the binding spell and the curse with a short word and a wave of his wand, he yanked the Boy Who Lived up from the ground.

"My Lord didn't want you harmed," he hissed in Harry's ear. "He said he wanted to give you *special treatment.*"

The Death Eater handcuffed Harry magically. A loud 'bang' followed, and Harry knew that Draco had used his gun at one of the Death Eaters. He closed his eyes, his body and head tired after giving so much Healing Energy to the others and from the Cruciatus Curse. He saw the Death Eaters draw their own wands towards where the bullets had come from and he heard them begin cursing at the empty air.

Time out of Place

'Stop... Draco... Go... to... the common room,' Harry managed to tell Draco, before the world went black with the help of a Death Eater's curse.

*

When he awoke the next time, he felt a burning around his hands. He was tied up to something; a pole, perhaps, although he didn't know and couldn't tell. He was unable to turn around as magic bound him.

He was bleeding from several wounds; he could feel the thick liquid drying, hurting him even more. He forced his eyes open, knowing that he needed to do so. He needed to see the hell around him.

He felt a presence around him – Draco? His heart told him it was his Heart Mate, and Harry cursed him for not listening to what he'd said. *'Go to the common room.'* He wondered how many ways the Slytherin could interpret those words. Still, he was too weak to maintain a link; his head was foggy and unfocused, just like his eyes were, he noticed.

The sky was filled with clouds, making the surroundings appear dark and grey. It was somewhere in the middle of the afternoon, where the sun had not set yet. In the distance, Harry saw Hogwarts looming, and for the first time in his life, the many towers looked dark and uninviting.

"Harry Potter. We meet again."

Harry looked away from the castle – his safe haven – to the snakelike man before him. The dark cloaks swished forebodingly around him. Thin, inhuman fingers were pressed against each other, the sickly pale skin contrasting horribly against the black cloaks. He looked just as Harry remembered from his fourth year and from every nightmare he'd had since. The flat nose with its wide nostrils, and the hideous eyes, glowing a harsh red, were fixed on Harry.

"Voldemort," Harry spat, gathering all the strength he had.

"Oh, still so... feisty. Why, Harry? You are going to die," Voldemort hissed again.

Harry didn't reply; he only glared at him. Suddenly, he felt a stabbing pain shoot through his body.

Time out of Place

“You see here, this is what happens if you go against me,” Voldemort continued. He gestured at the other Death Eaters, all carrying bodies in their arms. Despite it all, it was a wonderful feeling for Harry that it hurt, for it meant that at least some of the many people were still alive.

“There is no chance for you, young Potter.”

Voldemort stepped aside slightly, as two Death Eaters walked forth with someone between them. The long, greyish white hair was dirtied with mud, his robes torn and greasy. Harry saw blood, lots of it.

“No!” he screamed, knowing exactly who it was, and knowing full well that he was dead. He had seen it before, in Draco’s vision, and to see it for real made him want to retch.

Albus Dumbledore had finally fallen; the one wizard who Voldemort had always feared, was gone. Harry felt the hope vanish, zippering out of him like water down a waterfall.

He could see the telltale red of Weasley hair as well, and he saw that it was one of the elder brothers, but he didn’t know which one. Bill or Charlie, he thought, his throat suddenly dry and his stomach filled with lead.

Further away, someone was still bleeding, still hurting, and Harry’s heart leapt, as he knew that that person was still alive. The person, a girl, sighed softly, and Harry hoped that the Death Eater who’d put her down didn’t notice that she was still alive.

”You see, this is what happens, young Potter,” Voldemort continued. “You try and you try, but in the end, it isn’t worth anything. There is no good and evil, Harry, only power.”

“You killed my friends!” Harry screamed, tears threatening to fall at the sight of Dumbledore still on the ground, face down.

“I did,” Voldemort said simply. “And now I’m going to do the same to you, the thing I’ve waited for, for almost twenty-five years. Say goodbye, Potter. *Avada –*”

“NO!”

The wand was roughly pulled out of Voldemort’s grasp and flew through the air. The Cloak slipped away from Draco’s form, and he became fully visible. Both Voldemort’s and his own wand were in his hands, pointing at the Dark Lord.

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“Ah, young Malfoy,” Voldemort hissed at Draco. “I was wondering why my Death Eaters hadn’t captured you. Seems you got a hold of Mr Potter’s Invisibility Cloak... Very impressive. But you don’t think I actually need a wand, do you?”

Harry wanted to scream at Voldemort to take him instead, but he knew that there was no instead. There was only death, and it would come for both of them.

“*Crucio*,” he said and a black light shot from his fingers to engulf Draco.

Harry felt the rage building inside of him at the sight of his love, withering back and forth in pain, screaming. He felt the burning sensation inside himself as well, but it was pushed down as the fury rose and became greater and greater for every second passing. An inhuman strength found itself inside of him. His mind was focussed on Draco, with the other bodies and injured people just adding to the strength. In his world, only Draco and Voldemort existed – one of them he loved, the other one he hated.

He pulled against the magical binds keeping him set to the pole and suddenly, they let go.

Voldemort bent over Draco and picked up the two wands.

For a millisecond he stood dumbly, realizing that he was free, before the rage took over once more and he rushed towards Voldemort. He pushed the Dark Lord to the ground, grabbing his own wand and pointing it at Voldemort’s heart.

Before the Dark Lord had time to react, Harry had screamed the words at him. At just the same time, Draco managed to pull his gun, and a bullet went off.

“*Avada kedavra!*”

‘Bang!’

A light shot from his wand, connected with the bullet, and together, they hit Voldemort’s body, right where his heart would be, if he had one at all. The Dark Lord arched up, shuddering, before it fell finally still. Then black light began seeping through his body, first from only a few places, then more and more, until his whole being was engulfed in the light. A white light followed, blinding Harry.

When the light disappeared, so had Voldemort. Nothing remained where he had been but burnt, black grass.

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The world seemed to stop in its tracks, to look to the spot where he'd been, and then to glance over at Harry, who stood there, completely still, staring at the now empty ground. He could feel his own heart, beating rapidly against his chest, and hear his breathing, heavy with shock. Around him, the world awoke again, as the Dark Lord's wards around Hogwarts came crashing down. Witches and wizards, all of whom had been denied access to the area since Voldemort took over the school, came running over the field.

Within minutes, the injured witches and wizards had been taken care of, and people were crying and hugging and screaming and laughing. The remaining Death Eaters tried to escape, but without their Master around, they had no chance. The angry population of the wizarding world soon had them all in custody.

Harry stood frozen on his spot still, his limbs having completely forgotten how to move. He watched the people around him reunite with each other and felt oddly detached. Until...

"Harry..."

The weak, small voice came from the ground. A weak cough followed, sounding harsh and horrible to Harry's ears. He whirled around and ran to Draco's side.

He was on his back, his face dirty and tired, with the gun that had shot the killing bullet at Voldemort next to him. There was a small amount of blood on the side of his mouth and more came when the blonde continued to cough, his weak body shuddering with every movement.

Harry knew without a doubt that Draco was dying.

One look in his eyes told him that; the facts only strengthened the knowledge. The energy potions had worn off with the Cruciatus curse and now he was fading away, second by second, with the light in his eyes. His body was weak, fragile, and his face so pale it looked translucent.

"Draco," Harry mumbled, picking the other boy up in his arms. Draco's head leaned on Harry's chest and Harry held him closely, trying to warm and heal him even when he knew that there was no chance.

"I'm sorry... that I didn't listen..." Draco said, his voice no more than a whisper.

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“Shh, don’t think about that, not now,” Harry whispered back, stroking Draco’s hair out of his face. “You are going to be all right.”

“I love you, you know that, right?” he asked, touching Harry’s chest with a shaking hand. The fabric was torn and Draco seemed to suddenly see something. He pulled the fabric away weakly, showing the tattoo on his chest. The ‘D’, circled by a snake; a tattoo Harry hadn’t understood until now. The ‘D’ was right above his heart, for Draco – well, Draco as his heart. He may be a snake, but he was still always there, for him, supporting him and loving him... Always there...

“You have one too,” Draco mumbled. He ran his hand over the tattoo, and said softly, “Pretty...”

Then he guided Harry’s right hand to his own shuddering chest and pulled away the dirty fabric there. A tattoo was there, on Draco’s chest as well, but his was a capital ‘H’, with a lion guarding it.

Harry felt his throat tighten up, his eyes filling with tears, as he realized that he was about to lose the one person he really, truly loved. He knew he had never uttered the words to the other boy and even in this second, when Draco was dying in his arms, he had a hard time telling him. He knew he had to; knew that he would never forgive himself if he didn’t.

“I – I love you,” he said to Draco, touching his cheek gently.

The grey eyes lit up when he heard the words, and he whispered, “Don’t be a nancy, Potter... Don’t cry...”

Still, Harry knew it was futile, and for the second time that day, he let the tears fall freely down his cheeks. Draco held him, but Harry could feel his arms loosing the hold as he grew weaker and weaker. With the last of his powers, the dying young man pulled himself up to meet Harry’s lips.

They kissed, and it was a kiss filled with love and promise. They both tried their best to memorize it; the feeling of the other’s lips, soft and warm, as they both knew that they wouldn’t be feeling it again. There was promise in the kiss, though neither knew of what it promised. Both refused to let it be a kiss of goodbye.

Around them, a crowd had gathered, watching the two young men say their heart-wrenching goodbye. No one tried to do anything, as all of them knew of what had happened with the

Time out of Place

poison, and they all knew that Draco would die, for even the greatest Potions Master in the world had not found an antidote to it.

When they finally broke apart, Draco's eyes were no longer focussed; instead Draco looked as though he was blind, his eyes searching and unclear. When he noticed this, Draco pulled himself closer to Harry and then stopped moving completely. He stopped trying to fight the war against his own body, stopped fighting the fight he knew he would never win. For the first time in his life, Draco Malfoy truly gave up.

"Go on... and live... Harry," he whispered, finally surrendering to unconsciousness.

Harry held him close as the breathing became ragged, feeling the faint heartbeat slow.

Just then, when he sat there with his hand on Draco's chest, he remembered the vial hanging on his belt; the last one, the only one he hadn't used yet. The Althidia Potion and suddenly it hung heavily on his side. He fumbled to get it without dropping Draco – he still to this moment refused to let the other boy go.

He fought to remember the text he'd read months ago, when he had first realized Severus Snape's position as the greatest Potions Master in the world.

The Life of Althidia...

Ever so gently, he laid the unconscious Draco down on the ground. He kept one hand on Draco's chest, feeling each fading heartbeat. The seconds were precious, and he knew that it wouldn't be long until Draco's heart beat for the last time.

He concentrated on their Bind and let Draco go completely when he felt the faint energy from Draco. He could now tell how the energy was diminishing, and it would be easier to tell when he was about to go completely.

He bathed his hands with the Althidia Potion, making sure that he didn't spill one drop of it.

Then there was a final sigh, and Harry felt Draco's heart pump the blood one last time. Time slowed down, and the only thing in his world was Draco. With only one thing in his mind, he placed his hands on Draco's chest.

A strong surging pulled him forth, into Draco. A bright shining light came from both their bodies, although Harry hardly noticed, as he was so concentrated on the task at hand. The light erased their surroundings; the witches and the wizards, standing around them

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disappeared. Like a large mouth eating the setting, the world was replaced by first light, then total darkness.

The world became quiet, with only the sound of breathing disrupting the silence. Harry noticed none of it, however; the only thing going through his mind was,

Live, Draco, live...

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## Chapter Twenty-Three It's all coming back to me now

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It was pitch black, all around them. For a moment, Harry was worried that he might have gone blind, but then he could see his own hands as he felt his way through the darkness and he discarded the idea. Yet it was still completely black, all around him and he was alone.

Or so he thought.

“Harry?”

He turned around at the sound of his love’s voice and his eyes widened when saw Draco stand there, his body fully healed and his eyes alive. Harry ran to him, surprised at how light his body felt, and took Draco in his arms, his mind on nothing but the blonde before him. They met in a searing kiss, hungrily devouring each other. Their tongues fought in a war of dominance, with Draco seeming to come out the victor. When they parted at last, they were both panting heavily.

“I thought I’d lost you...” Harry mumbled into Draco’s hair.

“I told you, I’m not going anywhere away from you,” Draco replied, holding Harry just as close.

“Never leave me,” Harry said. Holding onto the blonde tightly. Then he looked around them, and asked with a frown, “Are we dead?”

“Don’t know,” Draco admitted and added, “I hope not. This place is too boring to spend the rest of eternity here.”

Harry glared for a moment at him, but his heart was light. There was no way that he could ever be unhappy as long as he was with Draco, whether they were dead or alive – or something completely different.

Draco took his hand, and began walking. They walked for what Harry believed to be several minutes – he wasn’t sure; they could have gone forever, or just started walking, for all that

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he knew. Still, no matter how long they continued to walk, they were greeted with nothing but inky blackness.

“Hello!” Draco suddenly shouted into the darkness.

The sound didn’t echo. In fact, it just sort of died down, as soon as it left the blonde’s mouth. The blonde in question didn’t look very happy about the fact that no one answered his yelling.

“This is boring,” he concluded a moment later.

Harry smiled slightly at him and sat down on the ground. It was an odd feeling, he decided, to sit down in all this blackness. It felt sort of like sitting on nothing, as the dark just continued on beneath him, as well as above and around him.

“Then stop doing it,” he replied calmly to Draco. “I can think of several things that I would rather be doing with you right now.”

The blonde sat down next to him, and Harry wrapped his arms around the smaller body. “Oh really?” Draco asked, looking up at him coyly.

“Yes,” Harry said, and grinned as their lips met again. “Oh yes...”

They were both about to lose themselves in one another when a sound rudely interrupted them.

“Ahem.”

They broke apart and turned around to see what had made the noise.

About fifty feet away – although Harry couldn’t be sure at all that that was the distance, as the darkness had no points of reference at all – stood two young men, both very familiar. One tall man with a mass of unruly black hair tied back in a messy ponytail, with his arms around a smaller blonde.

“But – you’re us!” said Draco, frowning.

Harry could see them now, as they stepped closer. It was indeed their mirror images – their older selves, not the younger. Harry had become used to the image of himself as twenty-

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three years old in the past three months and it was all there on these two people. From the hair to the eyes to the body and even the scar on the other Harry's forehead.

"Well, that is almost right," the other Draco said with a small smile. "I am you, seven years into your future."

It was then that Harry and Draco looked down at themselves. Both took a sharp intake of breath as they saw that they were back in their sixteen-year-old bodies. They were smaller, skinnier, and both missing the long hair and tattoo. Harry knew that it wouldn't be long before they would both have the two latter back; it represented them too much now for it to not be there.

"I know you're full of questions," the other Harry said, interrupting Harry's train of thought, "But please, just let us explain for we haven't got a lot of time."

Draco was about to ask something anyway, but Harry put his hand over his boyfriend's mouth, stopping him. Draco glared at him, but the Boy Who Lived ignored him. He nodded to their other selves to continue.

"You were taken to the future because the fates felt your relationship was progressing too slowly. It's quite complicated to explain, but it has happened many, many times before; Draco and I were both taken when we were your age, so that our relationship would progress as it should."

"It happens every seven years, in a never-ending circle," the other Draco continued. "In seven years, you will be in our place, giving your younger selves this same speech and your younger selves will have gone through the exact same thing that you just have."

Harry and Draco both stared at their older selves unbelievably. It had certainly sounded like English, those words that the elder Draco had just said, but neither of the younger had understood a word of it.

"What happens now, then?" Harry asked after several moments of silence, deciding that perhaps it didn't matter if he didn't understand.

"You will be returned to the right time," the other Harry replied. "You won't remember everything that has happened; we can't have you know that much of the future. You will get back to your own time and as far as I recall, you will be fairly disoriented. You will, however, remember your love for each other."

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“In seven years, when this has happened again, you will get your memories back on what happened in these three months,” Draco said. “Just like we just have.”

“Where have you been?” the younger Draco asked. “I mean, while we lived in your bodies, where were you?”

His older self gave him a small smile. “We’ve been here. Time doesn’t exist here in this realm, so to us, we’ve only been here for a few moments.”

The older Harry looked at the younger pair and said, “Now, we have to leave you, and you have to go back. You will be returned to three days after you left, so you will wake up in the Hospital Wing. You’ve been unconscious for these three days.”

“You won’t remember anything of the conversation you’ve just had with us either,” the other Draco said. At their startled looks – and annoyed, as far as Draco’s look went – he added, “You will remember in seven years, when you’re in our bodies. We will be returned to our own bodies now.”

The other Harry smiled at them. “Oh, and congratulations Harry – you caught the snitch.”

“Hey! Wait,” Harry said, but they were fading away, and didn’t respond. More to himself than to his older self, he asked, “Did Draco survive?”

Draco smiled softly at him. “We’ll find out in seven years, Harry,” he said, taking Harry’s hand in his own.

“Seven years...” Harry muttered. His voice was devoid of malice, however; he moved closer to Draco, his heart beating rapidly in his chest. They wrapped their arms around each other, drawing and giving support.

“Farewell, Harry, farewell, Draco...” were the last whispered words heard from their older selves, before they faded away completely. The darkness surrounded them again and the two boys found themselves holding on to each other even tighter. Some part of Harry recognized this, although he didn’t know from where. The feeling grew stronger when a wind blew up from nowhere, ripping at their clothes. They shut their eyes tightly and concentrated only on holding on to the other, when a force stronger than anything they’d ever experienced before, ripped them apart and threw them away from each other.

Suddenly, Harry was alone in the darkness. He had no time to ponder, however, because something shook the darkness and a light blinded him.

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He felt no more.

*

Harry's head throbbed.

He flexed his hands and tried to move his legs, but noticed that all of his muscles were throbbing painfully. He moaned pitifully and the very next moment, he heard footsteps. A strong sense of déjà vu surrounded him and it became even stronger when someone said,

“He’s waking up!”

Madame Pomfrey, he knew; he’d listened it enough times before.

“Harry?”

Now that sounded like Ron – although not like Harry was used to, a part of his brain said. It was Ron, but not quite... He couldn’t put his finger on it.

Slowly opening his eyes and taking in his surroundings, unclear without the help of his glasses. Glasses? Did he need glasses still? Of course he did, he’d always needed glasses. Right?

“Good afternoon, Mr Potter,” said Madame Pomfrey with a small smile, handing him his glasses.

He saw both Ron and Hermione stand next to Madame Pomfrey, their eyebrows knitted with worry. Harry was puzzled; Hermione and Ron looked exactly as they should – yet at the same time they didn’t. It was the same strange feeling that he’d had when he heard Ron’s voice.

“I imagine you’re quite sore,” Madame Pomfrey continued. “That fall was awful, and I am so glad that neither you nor Mr Malfoy suffered any permanent damage. That sport...”

Madame Pomfrey continued to mutter about what a horrible sport Quidditch was, but Harry had stopped listening.

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Mr Malfoy...

Draco...

“Where’s Draco?” Harry asked, his voice sounding strange and off to his own ears. He tried sitting up, but Hermione placed a hand on his shoulder and held him down.

“He’s over there,” she answered, pointing at the bed next to Harry. “He’s still unconscious. Has been, for three days.”

“You’ve been unconscious for these three days.”

Where had he heard those words before? They seemed distant, like a dream of sorts. His feelings for the boy on the bed beside his, however, felt like anything but a dream. Strong and raw, they were, and Harry knew without a doubt, that he loved Draco. He expected himself to be revolted, but found nothing but warmth in his heart. Something told him that he had already fought too hard to be with Draco once – although he couldn’t remember, for that was another dream – and he did not need to do it again.

This time when he tried to get up, he didn’t let Hermione stop him. Instead he stood, on unsteady feet, and stumbled over to the bed where Malfoy – no, *Draco* – lay. His head was spinning and he wondered if he would faint, still he managed to reach the bed.

The boy on the bed matched the sheets in colour; white. Dark circles were beneath his eyes, a heavy contrast to the otherwise so pale skin and his cheeks sunken in. His breathing seemed uneasy, heavy yet at the same time hollow. He looked small and fragile. An image flashed before his eyes...

He was holding Draco tightly and the boy – or young man, for Draco was no longer a boy – looked up at him.

“Go on... and live... Harry,” he said, and then the eyelids closed over the grey orbs as Draco gave into unconsciousness.

“No!” Harry said loudly, shaking his head at the image before his eyes. He saw the reality before him; the pale, small boy, and he knew that he had to do something.

...Healer’s energy...

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Harry didn't know what the voice in his head was, or how he knew what to do, and he didn't care. His body, no, his whole being, told him to put his hands on Draco's chest and forehead, to heal him. He wanted nothing but to see those eyes open and looking at him again, even if it was only to glare at him. Still, he knew that Draco wouldn't glare.

Somehow, he just knew.

He felt the energy pass through his own hands, into Draco's body and saw the immediate effects it had. The blonde boy's breathing evened out into something that seemed more like sleep than unconsciousness. Then, with a final push of energy – Healer's Warmth, he knew – Draco's eyes opened slowly.

His eyes were unfocussed at first and as he tried to gain focus, he looked around himself wildly. Harry thought he looked even more vulnerable than before.

"Harry?" he asked finally, when his eyes stopped on the Boy Who Lived.

Behind him, Harry heard Ron mutter about why Malfoy suddenly called Harry by his first name. Hermione replied to him that she didn't know – and then she went on about how Harry had just healed Malfoy.

Harry himself knew without knowing why the blonde called him 'Harry' rather than 'Potter'.

"Are you okay?" he asked softly, pulling a lock of blonde hair out of Draco's face. He wondered how it would look if it were long.

"Sore," Draco replied, seeming to know just like Harry did, what was happening, without actually understanding at all. "You?"

"Tired," Harry replied. "I just did something to you... healed you, I think... It was a bit tiring. I should probably sleep some more..."

"You are welcome to share my bed anytime," Draco grinned at him.

Behind them, they heard Ron gasp in shock at the genuine smile on Draco's lips. Neither Ron nor Hermione moved to interrupt the two boys on the other bed, however.

Harry blushed slightly at Draco's words. "For now, I think I am content in just doing this," he said and bent down to meet the blonde's lips in a soft, promising kiss. Memory flared as they embraced and they remembered the relationship that had grown in three months when

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they'd been somewhere else than here. They remembered nothing of the surrounding circumstances; anything that wasn't related to their relationship had fallen away in a white fog.

But when they broke apart, Harry caught a glimmering around Draco's neck. He moved his fingers and found a silver chain with a small, silver dragon on it.

Draco's brow furrowed. "I remember... but not really, at the same time," he said. He in turn took Harry's hand in his own, touching a golden ring that had suddenly found its way onto his finger. Harry looked just as confused as Draco had.

"There's something about it," he said softly. "But I can't quite recall..."

Draco's grey eyes met Harry's green. "I think I love you," he said.

"I think I love you too," Harry said and bent down to kiss Draco again.

One day, the two boys would regain their memory of exactly what had happened in the three months they'd spent away from this reality. But for now, they were perfectly content just re-discovering each other, feeling and touching anything and everything. Harry moaned into the kiss and Draco followed, deepening it, tongues battling for dominance with none coming out the victor and neither caring one bit.

Behind them, Hermione conjured up a chair for Ron to sit down on, just before he fainted.

~~~ Fini ~~~

*But when you touch me like this  
And you hold me like that  
I just have to admit  
That it's all coming back to me  
When I touch you like this  
And I hold you like that  
It's so hard to believe but  
It's all coming back to me*

-- "It's all coming back to me now" -- Celine Dion --

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Time out of Place

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