

Resimesdra

# **Bittersweet Symphony**

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# Inhaltsangabe

Vorerst leider nur auf Englisch: der letzte Teil der "Splinters"-Serie, Fortsetzung zu "Sailing on a Sunken Dream": Harry and Draco both think they have finally moved on to live their own lives. But then, one morning, Draco finds that strange letter in his mailbox...

## Vorwort

Thanks to the lovely Lady\_aubrey for an excellent beta!

Thanks to the wonderfully inquisitive Thekla and the talented Solvej for all your brain-prodding ;) You're awesome, but you know it. :-\*

Chapter title borrowed from The Verve.

# Inhaltsverzeichnis

1. Bittersweet Symphony

# Bittersweet Symphony

Thank you, Thekla, for being of such great help at finding a title! :-\*

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I had jumped off the edge of a cliff, and then, just as I was about to hit bottom, an extraordinary event took place: I learned that there were people who loved me. To be loved like this makes all the difference. It does not lessen the terror of the fall, but it gives a new perspective on what terror means. I had jumped off the edge, and then, at the very last moment, something reached out and caught me midair. That something is what I define as love. It is the one thing that can keep a man from falling, the one thing powerful enough to negate the laws of gravity.

Paul Auster, "Moon Palace"

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It is a bright, if freezing morning in January when Draco steps out of the door to get the newspaper and finds the letter in the mailbox. It's an elegant envelope, blood red, and it feels heavy in Draco's palm. The inscription is in fine silvery script.

Draco stands and stares at the letter in his hand. He doesn't know for how long.

Eventually the door flings open and a young man pokes his head out of it. "Drake? God, baby, what are you doing out there?"

He rushes out and puts a cloak around Draco's narrow shoulders. "You'll catch the cold of your life if you're not careful! And even though I very much enjoy the thought of pampering you a bit, I'd still hate to see you suffering!"

Draco, suddenly shaken out of his silent reverie, hesitantly smiles up at his dark haired lover. "Thank you, Mark. It's not necessary, though; I'm not cold."

"Baby, it's mid January and it's absolutely freezing! How could you possibly not... hang on, what's that you got there?"

Draco tries to hide the letter behind his back. "Nothing."

Mark looks at him pointedly, and eventually Draco gives in. "Alright, here you go. It's just a stupid letter anyway."

Mark takes it from him and reads aloud with a frown. "We're getting married." He looks back at Draco. "Who's that from? Friends of yours?"

Draco shrugs. "I suppose. I haven't opened it yet."

It is true, he hasn't opened the letter yet, but he damn well knows whom it is from.

That bastard.

“May I...?” Mark looks at him, his fingers curiously playing with the envelope.

“Sure.” Draco is pleased to note his voice sounds steady, despite the mad rushing of blood in his ears. “Go ahead.”

Mark rips the letter open and pulls out a card. It's self made, with a photograph of the happy couple sitting on the cover. Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley smile into the camera, holding hands, their fingers entwined.

“Harry Potter and Ginevra Weasley,” Mark reads. “They very cordially invite us to their wedding next Saturday in Ottery St Catchpole, and... Drake? Draco, honey, are you alright? You're white as a fucking sheet!”

Draco, quite frankly, is not alright. He's probably never felt less alright than he does in this very moment.

“He invites me to his wedding,” he says, voice lacking strength. “The fucking asshole has the nerve to invite me to his goddamn fucking wedding.” He laughs then, a shaky, breathless laughter without any humour to it.

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Draco is nervous as hell when he stands at the doorstep to a neat little house with a neat little front yard in a neat little suburban area of London. He's thought of so many things to say to Harry, has thought them through and then knocked them on the head and started all over again. His mind is so cramped it feels fit to burst, but when he tries to get a grip on one single thought to see it more clearly, his brain seems completely empty at once.

He has felt that way since he got Harry's card two days ago, two days during which he couldn't eat or sleep, during which he couldn't stop thinking about Harry, Harry, Harry. Two days that have effectively destroyed any hope left in Draco that one day he might be able to live a normal life, a life that isn't haunted day and night by the one and only Harry Potter. It is inescapably clear by now: Draco will never ever get over him.

At least this is the way he feels when he finally gives in, when he surrenders to the overwhelming power of addictive, desperate love, and goes to see Harry again.

This is why he's now shivering in the cool January breeze, pressing the doorbell at a door that has a sign reading Harry Potter and, right below, Ginevra Weasley on it. Draco scowls at the name plate, wanting to tear it away with his bare hands. Harry certainly hasn't wasted any time. It was only six months after their last meeting in the park that he and Ginny (even though she doesn't want to be called that anymore - she's Ginevra now) got back together. And now, Bob's your uncle, there's the wedding. How fucked up is that.

Draco has every intention to enlighten Harry about that, even though he doesn't exactly know what and how he is going to tell him. He fully relies on his Slytherin wits here, and - honestly - anything else wouldn't work anyway, since he's so bloody nervous he couldn't remember a word of a speech, had he prepared one.

Hell, he doesn't even know what he's expecting. For Harry to say goodbye to his fiancée and run off with him? Well, perhaps. It is possible, or isn't it? After all, this is Harry Potter we're talking about. Unlikely decisions are second nature to him.

The question is whether Draco really wants that. Does he want to go back to where they were? Does he want to take it back to ground zero; can he take it all again? Truth is, he doesn't know. He doesn't know

whether he's willing to take up the challenge for a second time; all he knows is that he has to see Harry now, no matter what.

Draco is about to ring the bell for a second time when the door opens. Harry appears in the frame, looking by all accounts as if he has just fallen out of bed. He probably has, Draco muses, since it is only half past eight on a Saturday morning. Not that eight thirty a.m. is early for a person suffering from insomnia.

All tiredness, however, vanishes from Harry's face when he realises just who his early visitor happens to be. His eyes, which had been narrow with sleepiness only seconds before, become almost comically wide.

"Draco," he says, surprise evident in his voice. "What on earth are you doing here? And at this hour?"

Draco wants to jump him. And not necessarily in a good way. "You damn well know why I'm here!"

Harry unsuccessfully tries to stifle a yawn and then slips his glasses on, blinking several times as his eyes adjust to the visual aid. "No. Actually, I have no idea what you're talking about."

Draco is about to hiss a nasty reply (probably one that is meant to insult Harry's intelligence), when another door opens inside the house and a sleepy woman's voice can be heard.

"Harry? Darling, who's that?"

"No one, baby," Harry calls over his shoulder, the words causing a chemical burn in Draco's ears. "Go back to sleep, lovey."

But Ginny appears to be a naughty girl. She traipses down the stairs and joins Harry in the hallway. "Why, good morning, Mal- Draco," she says, smiling a smile at Draco that makes his bile rise. "To what do we owe the early visit?"

"Ehm..." Draco's eyes trail to the girl's bulging middle section that even the roomy nightshirt cannot hide. The little lady's up the duff. Harry has knocked her up, the irresponsible prat!

Ginny – Ginevra – is still looking at him expectantly. Draco has no idea how much she really knows about his relationship with Harry, how much they all know. He certainly hasn't let on more than absolutely necessary, but you never knew about Harry. It is entirely within the realm of possibility that he has told them everything, every little detail, starting with how Draco looks when he comes, and Draco already starts to hate him because of that. But it is just as likely that Harry hasn't told them anything at all, that he's kept their secrets to himself, and Draco feels the hatred abating.

He barely has time to realise how pointless this shadowboxing of emotions is when Ginny sighs and steps aside. "Why don't you come inside? I'll make tea and we can have breakfast together. I'm certainly not willing to freeze my arse off out here."

Draco wants to say no, he'd rather drop dead and get buried by the garden gnomes than enter Harry's new square house and, by extension, his new square life – but he finds that his body is nodding assent on its own account.

He wanders through the hallway, trapped in between Ginny and Harry, and when he passes the door leading to the living room, he could swear that Harry's eyes are lingering on his rear. But when he throws a coy look back at him over his shoulder, Harry appears to be all interested in a hideous painting on the wall.

The Potter-Weasley residence looks pretty much like one would expect it to. Mrs. Weasley's influence cannot be overlooked, even though Ginny, seeming to have slightly better taste than her dear mother, has

managed to mitigate some of the major stylistic crimes. For example, she has reduced the amount of tacky trash to an absolute minimum. Harry's presence isn't detectable in the furniture, nor in the decorations. But that's hardly a surprise to Draco since he can tell from experience that Harry couldn't care less about the place he lives in. He's fine with everything as long as the roof isn't leaking – and he probably wouldn't mind even that as long as he can still put a pot under the hole to catch the water.

Draco, inexplicably, feels him himself smile at the thought. Mark is a very tidy person. He never lets his dishes go uncleaned and he would most certainly never step on the carpet while he's still wearing shoes.

Sometimes, all this tidiness unnerves Draco.

Harry and Ginny, Draco realises with faint amusement, don't even have a carpet. The floor in the living room is tiled, apart from the fluffy carpet under the couch and the couch table. Wise decision, that, considering Harry's messy nature.

“You two just sit down there; I'll go make tea and fetch some scones. Oh, and we should still have some of my mother's tea cakes left.”

Draco flops down in the armchair, relieved because he has a feeling his legs won't keep him up much longer. He's never been one to easily stomach stress. Harry, however, seems hesitant.

“I don't know, baby. Shouldn't I help you with the plates? I mean, in your condition...”

“Harry! Please, I'm pregnant, not invalid, okay? Sit down and entertain our... guest.” And with that she rushes off to the kitchen.

Draco feels a vague flash of sympathy for the young woman stirring in his chest. It's obvious she means to give them some privacy, and Draco can't help admiring her for the way she handles the doubtless awkward situation.

Harry stands a little longer, eyes going from the couch to the now closed kitchen door and back.

“Well, sit,” Draco, despite the nervous pounding of his heart, finally says in a generous manner, as if the house and therefore the couch inside were his instead of Harry's. And surprisingly, Harry sits down opposite from him.

“So,” he says, and then there is another moment of uncomfortable silence during which Draco's eyes stray and wander through the living room, not knowing where to focus and linger. Then, Harry continues. “Rumour has it you have a new boyfriend.”

“So what if I do?” Draco doesn't ask how Harry knows. It is most irrelevant, isn't it? “Mark is a nice guy, you know. He even talks to me,” he adds pointedly.\*

Harry shrugs. “Good for you, I suppose.” There are a million questions in his eyes, but he doesn't ask one of them.

Draco bites his lip. “So, you and Ginny, huh?” he finally asks.

Harry's eyes narrow. “What about us?”

Draco rolls his eyes. “You're about to open an esoteric restaurant with a modern chill-out launch. You're getting married, dickhead. Everything back to normal then, I take it?”

Harry shrugs, averting his eyes. “Ginevra is a good girl. And we’re having a baby in April. You know how much I always wanted a family, don’t you? I’m happy, Draco. For the first time in my life I feel I know where I belong.”

Draco’s fingernails dig into the cushion of the armchair. It’s not that he doesn’t know Harry wasn’t happy with him. He’s noticed that much by himself, thank you very much. No, what’s really getting to him is the notion that someone else has achieved what Draco never could, that a stupid little girl has managed to give Harry a reason to live. And all she had to do was let him impregnate her.

But has she suffered as much as Draco has? Has she gone through nearly as many emotional roller coasters with Harry as Draco has? Has she taken all of Harry’s mood swings; has she let him take it out on her when he had a bad day? Does she have a torso full of small scars and old cigarette burns that still hurt from time to time, traces of Harry’s twisted affection? Has she ever spent entire days not knowing what he is up to, whether he’s still alive or already dead? Does she even know what complete, entire and absolute devotion and dependency feel like?

How can it be that someone gives it all, sacrifices himself, and still it’s not enough?

The unfairness of it all makes Draco’s eyes water, blocks up his throat, and he feels he can’t breathe.

Harry lights a cigarette and the familiar clicking noise of the lighter, the sudden smell of tobacco and nicotine Draco hates and loves at the same time – it’s all too much. He gets to his feet and, almost unseeingly, stumbles to the glass door leading out to the terrace, forcefully yanking it open. The sharp, icy air is like a hard slap in his face, but Draco welcomes the sting. He breathes the coolness in, draws it deep down into his lungs, trying to ignore the pain in his trachea as the cold, dry air angers the sensitive mucosa.

He knows that Harry is standing behind him, even before his hand hesitantly touches his shoulder.

“Draco?” Harry’s quiet, hoarse voice. “Are you okay?”

No, you fucking wanker, I’m not! Do I bloody look okay to you? I’m fucking devastated, I’m destroyed, I just want to crawl somewhere and die, and you possess the fucking nerve to fucking ask me whether I’m fucking okay? Fuck you!

But he doesn’t say any of this; he just gives a weak nod. Why people say they’re okay when it’s plain to see that they would like nothing better than find a window to jump out, Draco has no idea.

Strong arms sneak around his waist and the scent of cigarettes, so very Harry, completely fills out Draco’s perception.

“You never called,” Harry whispers in the shaved hair on Draco’s neck. “You said you would, but you never did.”

“Didn’t take you long to get over it, though,” Draco says bitterly. His nails leave aching half moons in the palms of his hands.

Harry doesn’t reply, but Draco can feel him breathing on his sensitive skin, and it feels like Harry is trying to breathe him in.

“Stop that,” he says, his voice shaking. It takes an enormous amount of self-discipline to say the words, because right now all he wants is to turn around and press his body against Harry’s.

“Draco…”



“Don’t!” Fresh tears are accumulating in the corners of his eyes and Draco feels his restraint crumble. “Why did you send me the fucking invitation, Harry? Why? Are you just incredibly thick or are you really that cruel?”

“I... Draco...”

Draco whirls around and glares at his ex-boyfriend. “I tried so hard to get over you. Merlin knows I did. And then... Fuck, I might even have succeeded at convincing myself that this was just a trick to get me back. And to think I was willing to give in this time... God, I’m so bloody stupid!”

Harry stares at him, confusion obvious in his green eyes.

“But now that I’m here... Fuck you, Harry! She’s pregnant! She’s going to have your child, and you will never... you can’t possibly think about leaving her like this. What did you think when you put that goddamn card into the mail, Potter? Huh? Did you think at all, I wonder?”

Draco is vaguely aware that this outburst of emotion is getting him nowhere – worse, it doesn’t even make sense. Harry is looking at him as though he’s contemplating whether he should make a call to St. Mungo’s, and Draco sighs.

“Just... just get out of my life, Potter,” he says tiredly. “Be happy with your wife and kids and garden gnomes, but leave me the fuck alone, okay? I can’t take any more of this, I really can’t.”

He brushes past the other man and heads for the door.

Harry is calling his name, Ginny is calling Harry’s name, but Draco doesn’t stop. He walks out in the open and Apparates straight away.

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Harry stands there, staring at the door that Draco has just slammed shut after him. He feels numb; not in a good, comforting way, but in a tired, dead way instead. He knows he should feel something else at this, but he just can’t. He knows, though, that there are emotions inside him, crawling beneath a layer of ice which they just can’t seem to break.

“Harry? Love, what on earth was that all about?”

Ginny. His wonderful, perfect little Ginny, who wants to be called Ginevra now – she’s grown up, somehow, in all ways Harry has not.

He looks into her big brown eyes and shrugs. It pains him to do so, since he knows Draco’s little visit should mean everything to him – but it doesn’t. Nothing matters anymore, not since Harry has stopped hoping for Draco to call him.

Why does he come to see him now? Why now, when Harry is about to end the old life he had and start a new one? Why does he come by to stir up everything Harry tries so hard to forget? And how has he known about the wedding, anyway? Perhaps Ginny has...? But why would she do that?

Harry swallows dryly. “Did you send him the card?” he asks.

Ginny doesn’t even blink, but Harry can sense her uneasiness. “I... does it matter? I found his address in your address book, so I thought I’d invite him. Shouldn’t I have? I’m sorry if...”

Harry shakes his head no. “It doesn’t matter,” he says. “He would have found out one way or the other. I don’t think he’ll come anyway.”

“Oh,” says Ginny, sounding apoplectic – but if Harry would have bothered to look at her, he might have caught the suspicious look she’s giving him. He, however, doesn’t look at her, since he’s too busy staring off in space, thinking about why everything has to be so bloody complicated. And when he turns around, the suspicion is gone from her eyes and she smiles at him.

“So, my darling husband-to-be – since our guest decided to leave early, would you care for a cup of tea and some cake?”

Harry presses a kiss to her forehead and joins her at the table. He doesn’t particularly feel like eating, though.

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The day Harry Potter gets married to Ginevra Weasley, Draco Malfoy stands in front of his mirror. He’s wearing a black suit which he has specifically bought for the occasion. He stares at his reflection for three hours straight, then he goes downstairs and takes a bottle of whiskey out of the cupboard.

When Mark comes home in the evening, he finds his boyfriend drunk and horny as hell, and the two of them end up having wild monkey sex on the kitchen table, during which Draco can’t stop thinking about Harry’s hands on his body, Harry’s breath in his ear and Harry’s cock deep inside him. When he finally comes in a perfect arc of sperm against the wall, he has to bite his lips hard to keep from crying out Harry’s name. He’s never before said it when he came, not even when he actually was with him, but he’s never thought so intently about him either.

In the end, Draco’s suit is ruined, stained with various things that can be found in a kitchen - not to mention the whitish traces of drying sperm all over the expensive fabric – and they do not attend the ceremony at all.

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“You,” Pansy Parkinson says accusingly, glaring at Draco over her sundae, “are so full of shit I can’t believe it.”

Draco sips iced coffee and scowls back at her. It’s a hot day in July and they’re sitting at a table in the garden of their favourite coffeehouse. Even though they’ve chosen a table in the shade of a tree, Draco can feel the skin in the pits of his arms moistening and he takes a discreet sniff to make sure he doesn’t stink. He doesn’t, of course; the deodorant he uses is so ridiculously expensive, it’d better be good.

“I am not,” he retorts, having swallowed the cooling liquid. “What makes you say that?”

“You? Going through your boyfriends like other people do with their underwear?”

Pansy and Draco renewed their friendship when they found out they were attending the same school, both wanting to be teachers one day. Draco is very glad about having the girl back in his life, and not only because there is more than a hint of truth to her words.

And if it wasn’t for her, Draco would spend much time on his own these days.

“Pans, that’s hardly fair!” Draco protests, even though he knows it probably is. “You know how Patrick

treated me! I was absolutely right dumping him.”

Pansy rolls her eyes at that. “Oh yeah, quite the bastard, that guy! Not bringing you flowers and chocolate every day – imagine that!”

“That’s not all there is! Not by a long shot!”

Pansy lifts an eyebrow at her friend. “No? Tell me then; what else did the evil wanker do to you, my poor baby?”

Draco lowers his gaze and stares into his coffee. “I... that’s... private.”

“Oh, come on, Draco! I live right next to you, remember? Most nights, the sound of your bedsprings squeaking rocks me to sleep. When I get up in the mornings, I can’t use the loo because your recent boyfriend or trick or whatever is showering, sometimes I find used condoms on the sofa, and more than once I walked in on...”

“Alright, alright, I get it, nothing’s too personal to share with you,” Draco interrupts hastily, his ears slightly pinkish. He isn’t normally what you’d call a frigid person (hell, no!), but discussing the more intimate matters of his short-lived relationships in a cafe where everyone who cares can actually listen, is taking it a bit far.

“Let’s just say he wasn’t what I was looking for. What I needed.”

“What about Danny, then? Or Andy? Or Mark?”

“Too arrogant, too blond, too... nice” Draco says, counting down on his fingers. “None of them was the right type of guy for me.”

Pansy licks ice cream off her spoon and sighs dramatically.

“What now?” Draco says, irked.

“Nothing, darling. Nothing at all.”

“Don’t you ‘nothing’ me with that face! If you’ve got something to say, say it.” Draco doesn’t know why he’s feeling so defensive all of a sudden, but there’s something about Pansy’s innuendo that’s starting to annoy him.

“Alright, I’ll tell you. No offence, hun, but honestly –“ She lights a cigarette, even though she hasn’t finished her ice cream yet. “I really do think –“

Draco plucks the cigarette out of her hand. “Do you mind?” He stubs it out in the ashtray. “You know how much I hate smoking.”

Pansy sighs again, looking at Draco with her big brown eyes in that sad what-am-I-going-to-do-with-you look that Draco knows so well. “Darling, this is exactly what I’m talking about.”

Now, Draco is genuinely confused. “What? Excuse me, but if I’m not very much mistaken my dislike for smoking has never before been a subject of...”

“It’s not that, stupid.” Pansy pauses. “It’s why you hate it so much.”

“Well, that’s obvious, isn’t it? It is smelly and disgusting and unhealthy and it makes my clothes stink and...”

“I wish I could believe that, Draco. I really do.”

“You can! What’s your problem?” Draco is getting angry now. He hates being talked to in stupid riddles. He’s had enough of that, thank you very much.

“Your problem, hun, is that in all the guys you meet you look for something that isn’t there, that in every period of your life you’re still comparing everything to what it used to be like. Back then.”

Something about the way she says “then” makes the hair on Draco’s neck stand up and salute.

“What are you implying?” he asks, even though he doesn’t need to. He already knows. And he knows she’s right.

“You haven’t gotten over him. All this time and you still haven’t gotten over Harry fucking Potter. And all this while he’s the only one who really treated you like shit, Draco!”

Draco stares into his coffee, and for a short moment everything feels a little too real. The air is just a little too thick and hot, the shade on his back just a little too cold, the chair under him just a little too hard.

“So what if I haven’t? What the fuck am I supposed to do about it?” he asks, wanting to sound cool or at least pissed instead of miserable and pathetic, but failing poorly. “It’s not like I chose to be that way, you know.”

Pansy takes his hand, and after a brief struggle, Draco lets her. It feels good to have someone care for him, after all. It’s not like his various lovers actually gave a shite, really.

“I know, baby. I know,” she says quietly and Draco just hopes he won’t burst into tears any second.

“What has he done to you?” Pansy whispers, and it’s not the first time Draco asks himself the same question.

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When he sees Harry Potter the next time, Draco drops – among other things – a carton with a dozen eggs. It’s not as funny as it may sound, though, since they are in a supermarket at that time and Draco is hyper aware of the curious stares people give him because of his apparent clumsiness.

Harry seems shocked too, but truth be told, he hides it better. There’s a wailing infant with Harry’s black hair and Ginny’s blue eyes sitting in his trolley, and Harry holds a packet of cereals in each hand, looking thoroughly stressed. When he sees Draco, his eyes widen for a second, but he quickly recovers. He puts the cereals in the trolley – where his little child (Draco can’t quite detect the gender yet, but he imagines it is a boy) immediately grabs them and tries to tear the cartons open – and goes over to Draco.

“Need help with that?” he asks, already bending down to help Draco gather together his scattered groceries.

“I can manage perfectly on my own, Potter,” Draco says coldly, his voice finally returning.

Reluctantly, Harry withdraws his hand and straightens back up. “Oh,” he says, sounding confused and a little hurt. “Okay.”

Draco picks up the oranges that have rolled around and the carton of milk that has luckily stayed in one piece, and puts them into his shopping basket. He then makes a big step to avoid the sticky mass of egg white and yolk on the floor at his feet, and tries to unceremoniously get out of Harry's way.

But Harry is having none of that. He grabs Draco by the sleeve and stops him. "Hey," he says in a calm little voice that startles Draco with its unfamiliarity. "Can't I even talk to you?"

"I'd rather not," Draco says, but stays nonetheless, taking a closer look at Harry. He really looks stressed out, Draco observes; there are bags under his eyes and he seems tired. He also appears to have put on some weight, but Draco might just be imagining that.

Harry is looking him over too, and Draco can hardly suppress the smug grin tugging at the corners of his mouth because he knows he looks good. He's trim and fit because he's been working out a lot lately, and the worn-out looking denims and the narrow green shirt he's wearing do nothing to hide that fact.

"Well? What do you want, Potter?" He uses his last name with purpose, taking a sick satisfaction out of the way Harry's face twitches at that.

Harry swallows. "I... can we go somewhere? Like, to a cafe or something? I'd like to, well, have a civil conversation with you again."

Ah, how touching. Like they ever had a civil conversation before!

"That sounds very tempting, Potter, but you know... I'd rather clean up all that egg mess over there by myself than become part of your perfect little family thing. Besides, Pansy is waiting for me, so I'd better be on my way."

There's a flash of something in Harry's green eyes. "So, you're with Pansy now?" he asks, his voice a little strained.

Draco can't help laughing at that, but it's a hoarse sound that is scary even to his own ears. "Don't be daft, Potter! We live together, is all. After all," he adds, looking him blankly in the face, "it's not like everyone can change the way they are to fit their current mood."

Well, that one has hit right home. Harry stares at him, letting go of his sleeve in surprise, and Draco takes up on his chance to leave.

He quickly pays for his groceries, then heads out of the store. He walks until he gets to a deserted alley way; there he drops his shopping bag and leans against a wall, his legs shaking and his breath coming in fast, shallow strokes. He squeezes his eyes shut and prays he won't start crying, even though he certainly feels like it.

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

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Saying that Draco is in a bad mood would be an understatement. He is in a horrific mood. Pansy isn't home. She's out shopping with the girls, and Draco isn't allowed to come because he made a nasty remark about Milicent's broad backside the last time they took him along, which resulted – to Draco's eternal dismay – in his being banned from the shopping club, and now he is doomed to an entire Sunday afternoon spent with his moody self.

He is so not looking forward to that.

In addition to being moody, he's also bored out of his skull, which does nothing to ease his temper either. He's been through each and every channel their TV can receive, he's watched fat housewives praise useless utensils on the home shopping channel, and right now he's standing in the kitchen because he wants to eat something but doesn't know what to pick.

He stands in front of the fridge for at least ten minutes, eyes raking over the various things in there, starting with Pansy's low-fat yoghurts and the mixed pickles Draco loathes with a vengeance. He takes out one of the yoghurts (strawberry flavoured), rips it open and then puts it back in because the scent is not really appealing to him in the end.

He wanders back to the living room, restlessly, and collapses into the armchair. Draco hates being by himself. That's when all the memories come alive, when all the unwanted thoughts creep into his skull and make him all depressive and paralysed, like a dark cloud surrounding his mind and heart.

Pansy's cigarettes are lying on the table.

Without actually thinking Draco grabs the packet, pulls one of them out and lights it. He doesn't intend on smoking it, however—no; he can very well do without yet another addiction in his life. He just puts the cigarette in the ashtray and watches the dim glow at the end, watches the lazy streak of smoke winding its way up to the ceiling. Then he closes his eyes and breathes in the smell, sucks it deep down into his lungs, until he can swear Harry's sitting right next to him, reeking of all the things Draco doesn't like.

It hurts.

It's at times like these that Draco misses Skipper the most. He used to cuddle the little dog, then, bury his nose in his fur, and somehow that helped to ease the pain a bit. But Skipper's not here now; he moved away with Lyle when Lyle moved in with Susan.

Stupid Susan, Draco thinks irrationally, stealing away his friend when he needed him to keep from thinking of Harry, leaving him to deal with his fucked up mind on his own. It's a small wonder Draco started hitting it off with all those guys afterwards, isn't it? After all, everybody needs some sort of distraction.

Draco shifts to a more comfortable position in the armchair and notices with a grunt of irritation that he's slowly hardening against his boxers. Merlin. Something must be seriously wrong with me, he thinks, and then gives in to temptation, running a slow hand over his swelling prick.

Damn. That feels good.

Draco sighs and shakes his head. "Get out of my head, Harry, you stupid fuck," he whispers desperately. "Get out of my system and get out of my bloody life!" He applies more pressure to the bulge between his legs, trying to convince himself that he's not thinking of Harry while he's doing that.

But whom is he fooling?

--

Draco is startled out of a light sleep when the doorbell rings, the sudden noise piercing almost painfully through the wonderful, refreshing silence in his head. Draco sighs and turns around, trying to ignore the annoying sound of the bell. But the person out there proves to be persistent. The bell is pressed again and again, until Draco finally scrambles to his feet and swaggers to the door, swearing as he goes.

It's probably Pansy, having forgotten the keys to their flat again. It's not the first time that has happened, and Draco fully intends on informing her that he's not her bloody house-elf, and if she hasn't enough brains to remember her keys, she's gotta stay outside the next time because Draco is not going to...

All thought is cut short, however, when Draco yanks the door open, the insult ready on his lips, and finds Harry Potter rather than Pansy standing on his doorstep, his finger already resting on the bell again.

"Hello, Draco," is all Harry can get out before Draco slams the door in his face.

No fucking way!

--

Draco spends the next quarter of an hour sitting on the couch, his fingers shaking as he rapidly flips through the channels on their TV. He stops at MTV where some Heavy Metal is played, but not even the loud sound of guitars, drums and bass can drown out Harry's knocking at the door and the constant ringing of the doorbell.

Finally, Draco has enough. He abruptly gets to his feet and almost runs to the door, yanking it open with brute force.

"Fucking stop that, you wanker!" he yells. "What do you think you're doing anyway?"

"What do you think you're doing, not letting me in?" Harry retorts, sounding hurt and confused. As to why he would sound like that, Draco has no idea. After all, it's not like Harry had any reason to be hurt or confused.

"This is my flat," Draco says coldly. "I have every right not to let you in if I choose not to. Which I do, so fuck off and die, for all I care."

He wants to close the door again, but Harry quickly puts his foot in the frame, effectively preventing the realisation of Draco's plan. There's a short struggle during which Draco attempts to shove Harry out of the door, but Harry proves stronger.

"Take your bloody foot out of my door or I'll squash it," Draco finally spits. "I'm not fucking kidding."

"I'm not going anywhere before you agree to hear me out," Harry states, his arms crossed, looking by all means as though he fully intends to see through with his threat. Knowing Harry Potter, he probably does.

Draco sighs. "There's nothing left to say. Why make this harder than it already is?"

Harry shivers and it's only now that Draco becomes aware of the pouring rain and that his visitor is soaked to the bone. "Mind if we discuss this inside? I'm freezing my bits off here."

"And wouldn't that be a pity," Draco says sarcastically. "Yeah well, November is a positively lousy time of the year for stalking someone. You should have chosen July for that," he adds, practically humourlessly.

"Well, ha ha. Didn't know you could be such a funny man, Draco Malfoy," Harry retorts through chattering teeth. "Now come on, let me in."

Hesitantly, Draco steps aside. "I'm afraid there're lots of things you don't know about me," he says calmly and Harry tosses him a curious look as he passes him, but doesn't press the point.

--

“That’s a nice flat,” Harry says, taking a look around.

“I know.” Draco stands right behind him, his arms stubbornly crossed. “Didn’t think it’d make any difference to you, though.”

Harry shrugs. “Well, you’re right. It doesn’t.”

They look at each other for a moment, the expressions on their faces inexplicable. Finally, Draco sighs.

“What do you want, Potter? I’m hard pressed to believe you came here to admire our furniture, so what the hell is it you want?”

Harry licks his lips. He still looks stressed out, like Draco thought he looked when they met in the supermarket a couple of weeks ago. He also seems older. Well, technically he is, but that’s not what Draco means. More like older in the sense of more grown-up. Somehow. Or perhaps Draco isn’t making any sense at all.

“I… Can’t we sit down and have a normal conversation for once?”

Draco rolls his eyes. “Sure, Harry. Sit down; have a biscuit; make yourself at home.” He pauses. “I’d rather skip the small talk if it’s all the same to you. I think we’ve had quite enough of that in our past, yeah?”

Harry shrugs again. “Sure, why not? Let’s get down to business then, shall we? Draco, I want you to come here and kiss me.”

Draco stands rooted to the ground, paralysed. He doesn’t believe his ears. Surely Harry didn’t just say…?!

“Pardon me?!”

“You heard me.”

“I did. I just… fuck, I don’t believe it!” Draco stares daggers at Harry. “Are you out of your fucking mind?”

Harry looks at him, curious, and all of a sudden Draco is hyper aware that he’s only wearing his drawstring trousers and one of Pansy’s t-shirts. He slipped it on this morning because all of his clothes are in the washing and he didn’t particularly feel like ironing. It’s black with a neutral cut, doesn’t look like that much of a girl’s shirt (except from the pink glittery words reading I don’t DO mornings across his chest)– but still it’s a bit small on Draco, exposing just a little too much of his flat stomach.

“I was wondering, since when has ‘fuck’ become such a regular word in your vocabulary?” Harry asks, eyes glued on the bit of skin between shirt and trousers. Draco fights the urge to cover it with his hands.

“Since when do you care about my choice of words?” Draco counters, cheeks slowly reddening.

“Since I’ve started to drop something every time you say the word fuck,” Harry explains, rather nonchalantly. He doesn’t seem embarrassed at all.

“That’s… that’s a fucking lie, Potter! You never dropped something in my presence, no matter how many times I said it!”



Harry appears unimpressed by that. “Perhaps not, but I certainly would have, had I been holding something.”

Draco stares at him, his mind spinning and his heart pounding ridiculously loud in his chest. “That’s... you’re... this doesn’t make any sense at all!” he finally declares, wiping his sweaty palms on his trousers. “What on earth is the aim and purpose of your visit and your stupid babbling, Potter? And better make it a good one, because if you don’t, I’m going to throw you out on your sorry arse faster than you can say wanker!”

Harry’s eyes flicker to the couch table and rest on the packet of cigarettes there. “Since when do you smoke?”

“I don’t,” Draco says irritably, seething over Harry’s obvious attempt at changing the subject. “They’re Pansy’s.”

“Mind if I have one, then?” Harry grabs one of the cigarettes and lights it without even bothering to wait for Draco’s answer. Draco raises an eyebrow at that, but is pleased to note that at least now Harry’s hands are shaking almost as badly as his own.

“Ginevra knows I’m wanking over gay porn,” Harry finally says without warning, his eyes seeking Draco’s and, strangely, evading them at the same time. Draco watches the small cloud coming out between his lips at the words, wondering exactly when some asshole took his life and replaced it with some scurrilous soap opera.

He tries not to look as addled as he feels. “And you’re telling me this because-?”

“Because I figured you should know you’re the reason my wife just threw me out.”

Draco stares at him. “Oh no, don’t you dare make this about me! You fucked up, Potter, you alone, so don’t fucking try and get me into this! Why would I hold any responsibility to what happens between you and your wife?”

“Because,” Harry says and now his green and slightly watery eyes rest firmly on Draco’s, “because I was thinking of you. I always think about you, Draco. I never really stopped.”

Draco shakes his head, not wanting to hear any more of this. “Fuck you, Harry,” he whispers. “Just... fuck you. Who gave you the right to do this to me? Who gave you the right to ruin my life?” He knows he’s close to tears yet again, and who could blame him?

“I’m so sorry, Draco,” Harry says with grave sincerity. “I’m so sorry for everything I put you through. I’m sorry for what I’ve done to you. I’m sorry for...”

“You can take all your lame excuses and stick them up your arse! I don’t want to hear another word; I don’t want you around anymore. Get out!” Draco is fully aware that his voice is high-pitched and choked with unshed tears, but he can’t help it. “I SAID GET OUT!”

“No,” Harry says, stepping closer. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Strong arms close around Draco’s narrow body and the scent of cigarettes and Harry’s cheap aftershave, the smell of defeat, fills Draco’s senses. He tries to struggle, he really does, but he’s so worn out and tired of everything, and Harry’s body is so strong and comforting... and finally, Draco breaks. He caves in, sinking into Harry’s arms, sobbing into the still slightly wet and soft fabric of Harry’s sweater while soothing hands run through his fine hair and chapped lips whisper sweet nothings in his ear.

In hindsight, Draco doesn't remember how it has happened, but eventually they drop onto his bed in a tangle of bodies. Draco presses his heated face into the soft, cool pillows while Harry's hands undo his clothes and continue their journey all over Draco's body. He caresses and kisses the tiny scars on Draco's torso and thighs until Draco forgets everything around him and moans softly into his comforter.

Harry makes love to every single inch of Draco's body, showering velvety kisses on his eyelids, armpits and chest, kissing his way down the flat belly until he reaches the swollen head of Draco's erection which he gently licks and sucks. Draco's eyes flutter shut at the sensation, and he's vaguely aware that Harry has never done this before – but right now everything feels so surreal to him that he wouldn't wonder one bit if it was all just a dream anyway.

When Harry finally enters him, he does it so carefully and slowly that it doesn't even sting. Draco moans Harry's name into the pillow, against Harry's neck and into his own hand as Harry keeps going on forever and ever, whispering constant words of reassurance over Draco's heated skin until Draco can't tell left from right anymore.

They both come with soft gasps of relief and lie together for a long while afterwards.

Harry absentmindedly strokes Draco's hair and face while Draco is just staring up at the ceiling. He doesn't know what to make of this – but perhaps he doesn't even want to know. Right now, in this very moment, everything is perfect. Everything is as it should be, like time had somehow stopped and they were the only people in this world. Thinking about the hows and whys will only tarnish the brightness of this feeling.

Sure enough, Harry soon does his very best to not only tarnish but completely destroy it. He gets to his feet with a sigh and starts dressing. Draco watches him lethargically, his eyes dull and exhausted. "Where are you going?"

Harry stops to look at the man he's just made such passionate love to. "Where do you think I'm going?"

Draco huffs weakly. "Right, I forgot. You don't do answers."

Harry drops down on the edge of the bed to tie his shoes. "I'm going back to my family."

"Of course. I figured that much."

"Then why ask at all?" Harry seems totally absorbed with his shoelaces. He doesn't even look at Draco.

Draco shrugs. "I don't know." And he doesn't. "I thought you said she threw you out?"

Now, Harry turns to look at him. "You thought I only came back to you because Ginevra dumped me?"

Draco shrugs again, helplessly. "Isn't that what you did?"

"No."

"Should I even bother and ask what you mean by that, or would you rather have me crawl somewhere and die noiselessly?"

To Draco's immense surprise, Harry cracks a smile at him, then scoots closer on the bed, affectionately stroking his cheek. "Don't be silly, Draco. I came back because I wanted to."

Draco swallows, and if he hadn't just cried a river, he surely would be able to feel tears swell in his eyes

again. But as it is, his eyes merely sting with dryness. “Then why leave again, you stupid bastard? Why can’t you just stay?”

Harry’s smile becomes sad. “Because I have to go. I have responsibilities, and if not towards my wife, then certainly towards my son.”

Draco sniffs and rubs his eye. “What’s his name?”

“Sorry?”

“Your son. What’s his name?”

Harry smiles coyly. “Julien.”

Draco looks up, startled. “That’s my second name,” he says, surprised.

Harry nods. “I know.”

“Oh.” Then, after a short pause, Draco wrinkles his nose. “You have no sense of decency, Harry. Julien Potter? That’s ridiculous.”

Harry chuckles. “He hasn’t complained yet.”

“Yeah, because he’s a fucking baby.”

“That’s my son you’re talking about! Show a little respect, will you?” Harry looks offended, but he’s probably just mocking. With Potter, who can tell?

Draco gives a hoarse little laugh, then sighs. “But seriously, Potter – how do you think this will go from now on?”

Harry looks stricken. He scoots even closer and takes Draco’s hand, yet again startling Draco with the unfamiliarity of his actions. “I don’t know, Draco. I really don’t.”

Draco huffs, but doesn’t pull away. “I hope you do know, however, that you cannot keep me as a secret little affair, don’t you? I’m not going to be the other woman, so forget it.”

Harry nods. “I didn’t think so.”

They look at each other, tired, spent, sad. Finally, Draco heaves a sigh. “You should go. I bet they’re waiting for you.”

“I... yeah.” Harry makes to get to his feet.

“Just... just out of curiosity.” Draco doesn’t look up at Harry; instead he focuses on his bare toes.

“Hm?”

“The thing you told me earlier. You know, the bit about gay porn.” He pauses, his fingers plucking imaginary lint from the blanket. “Were you even telling the truth?”

Harry, who has been standing, sits down again with a muffled sigh. “Yeah.”

“She really walked in on you while you were at it?”

“Well... not exactly. She found the magazines when she was rummaging through my drawers.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. Things got pretty ugly from there on. She was yelling at me that she should’ve known it wasn’t just a phase, that I couldn’t get over it. I think she called me a lying faggot somewhere along the line, but I didn’t exactly pay attention to what she was saying anymore. I mean – she was right, after all. And so were you.”

“Me?” Now Draco looks up, puzzled. “How come?”

“When we met in the store. You told me I was just faking the life I live. You were right. Just look at me. That’s not who I am.”

Draco shrugs. He wants to ask him who he thinks he is, then. But he’s sure Harry won’t have any reply to that, so he doesn’t. “I don’t know. You always wanted a family; now you have one. Aren’t you happy?”

Harry looks through him, as though he actually has to contemplate it. “I... don’t know. I mean, I love my son, and I thought I loved Ginevra, but... It feels as though there’s something missing. Something important.”

Draco huffs. “You’re always missing something, Potter. That’s hardly news. Do you even think there’s a way you could be happy? And I mean for longer than two hours straight?”

Harry shrugs, unhappily. “How am I supposed to know, Draco?”

“Well, how am I supposed to know?”

There’s a moment of awkward silence. Then, Harry stands. “I should really go now.”

“You should.”

“Yes.”

“Potter?”

“What?”

“What are you going to tell her?”

Harry shrugs. “I can hardly tell her the truth, now can I?”

Draco chews on his bottom lip. “You know you can get a divorce in the Wizarding world too, don’t you?”

“I know.”

“But you’re not going to get one, are you?”

“No.”

“I see.”

Silence.

“Potter?”

“Hm?”

“Don’t come here anymore. I mean it. I don’t want to see you again.”

“But... I...”

“No buts. You’re a selfish asshole and I’ve fucking had enough of you. Now kindly take yourself out of my room, my flat and my life.”

Harry goes without looking back. Draco drops back into the cushions and stares up at the lamp dangling from the ceiling. He feels dead inside.

--

It’s almost two weeks until Harry shows up at Draco and Pansy’s flat again. This time, Pansy is home, and she tells him with many loud and rude words to go back to where he came from. Draco is standing at the window of his room, watching the scene from above, feeling decidedly sick.

The next time, Harry is cleverer. He waits until Pansy leaves the house and then goes ringing the doorbell. Draco tells himself to be strong, over and over again, and still they end up – not in bed this time, but on the couch instead. Draco’s body surrenders awfully willingly to Harry’s touch, and the weak protest of his mind is quickly dampened and then completely drowned out by Harry’s heated kissing and the pleasurable sliding of their bodies together.

There’s not much talking this time, not before and not after their coupling – but when they part it’s with guilty expressions on their faces. And yet again Draco promises himself that this has been the very, the ultimately last time he’ll allow for something like this to happen.

Needless to say, Harry finds a willing companion in him the next week when he stops by again.

“Why are we doing this?” Draco asks when he buttons up his jeans afterwards. “Do you get some sick satisfaction out of fucking with my values?”

Harry grins. “No, but I get some sick satisfaction out of fucking you.”

“Ha bloody ha,” Draco retorts, feeling not amused in the least. He pulls one of his socks out from under the bed. “Seriously. What happened to the responsible family man that left here a few weeks ago?”

Harry tilts his head. “He didn’t just leave like that; he was unceremoniously thrown out.”

“Yeah, because he made it quite clear that he didn’t particularly care for the hot blond he’d just shagged, and that his wonderful family was the most important thing on his mind.”

“I think he made it perfectly clear that said blond mattered a great lot to him, and I also think that he might have said he had responsibilities towards his son, which I think is quite honourable.”

Draco blushes a faint shade of pink. “So you say the blond is still important to him? Even though he’s got that wonderful family waiting for him?”

Harry smiles. “Would you mind if we stop talking about ourselves as though we’re not in the room? Of

course you're still important to me, Draco! Why else would I make such a fool out of myself by coming back for you again and again, even though you made yourself awfully clear about never wanting to see me again?"

"Because you're a stupid closet case and I'm the only bloke you've ever been with? Apart from that, I'm hot and you couldn't do any better," Draco ventures.

Harry seems to consider this. "That may well be," he says slowly. "Or it could be the fact that it took me a remarkably long time to realise how much I actually love you."

Draco gasps and almost bites through his tongue in shock. This is the first time Harry has ever said the words Draco has been gagging to hear for such a long time. He swallows hard, his own words echoing in his skull. Sometimes, love just isn't enough. Sometimes, love just isn't enough. Sometimes...

"What happened to 'sometimes, love just isn't enough'?" he asks, his voice thick with restrained emotions. "It was you who actually made me understand those words." Draco tries to ignore the stricken look on Harry's face at that. "You can't just take it all back and reverse it now."

Harry gulps. "What if I was wrong back then?"

Draco shrugs. "I don't know. Were you?"

"Perhaps."

"Hm. It made sense to me, though. Actually, it was the only way I could explain to myself why I gave you my everything and it still wasn't enough. Believing that we were just not destined to be together, no matter how hard we struggled to love each other, was the only explanation I could get my head around."

"Oh God, Draco..."

Draco holds up a hand. "Don't. It's in the past, I got over it, and I don't need your pity!"

"I wasn't going to pity you."

"Then why Oh-God me?"

"Because I'm so disgusted with myself. I never looked at it the way you just said it, and it sounds absolutely awful!"

"Well, you were absolutely awful back then." He doesn't say that, maybe, he still is.

"I know." Harry looks at him sadly. "I wish I could take it all back."

Draco stares back. "If you could turn back time, Harry – what would you do differently?"

"I..." Harry says and then pauses, thinking hard.

"Would you not leave me, even though we both know it won't get any better? Would you not marry Ginny, I mean, Ginevra Weasley and impregnate her? Or first impregnate then marry, which seems to be more like you. Tell me, Harry. Would you?"

"I..." Harry shakes his head. "What difference would it make?"

"My point exactly." Draco pulls the other sock over his foot. "Stop whining about the things you did wrong

in your past and concentrate on the present instead.” He pauses. “God, I’ve been meaning to say that to you for my entire life!”

Harry shrugs. “Perhaps you should have. It might have helped.”

Draco huffs. “Yeah. Let’s just pretend you would have listened to what I say.”

Harry gives him a wry grin. “You’re right. I wouldn’t.”

Draco is done dressing and gets up. “Would you care for a cup of tea? Pansy brought some pastries; there should still be some left.”

Harry shakes his head. “Ginevra will be home around six. I’d better be there then.” He avoids Draco’s gaze, scuffing his foot over the carpet.

“Of course.” Draco’s voice is icy. “After all, she gave you one more chance, didn’t she? She’s so forgiving, your sweet little wife is.”

“Draco. Don’t. It’s not her fault!”

“I know.” Draco folds his arms. “It’s your fault. You’re not only fucking up your own life but hers and mine as well. And if you’re given the chance you will certainly succeed at fucking up things for your son too.” There, that should have hurt. Good. Draco feels a stab of sick satisfaction in his guts, that makes him want to grin evilly and puke at the same time.

Harry stares at him for a split moment. Then he abruptly gets to his feet. “I think I’d better go now.”

Draco tosses the bottle of lube after him. “Don’t even bother to come back!” he murmurs, not sure whether Harry can hear him at all. He’s vaguely aware that this statement would hold much more meaning if he didn’t say something along these lines almost each and every time Harry leaves.

--

Draco is in the shower when a few days later the doorbell rings yet again. Cursing, Draco turns off the water and steps out of the cabin, carelessly wrapping a towel around his midsection. Stupid tosser. He could at least possess the decency of calling before he shows up!

Draco pads to the door, leaving wet footprints on the tiles, and yanks it open.

“Goddamn, Potter! I told you not to...”

Then he freezes.

This is not Harry Potter standing on his doorstep. This is Ginevra Potter, formerly known as Ginny Weasley, standing on his doorstep, looking up at Draco with watery eyes and angry red spots on her otherwise pretty pale cheeks.

“Is it true?” she asks, her voice high-pitched and close to tears.

“I... what are you on about?” Draco tries. His heart is racing in his chest, blood thundering around his brain so loudly he can hardly hear himself speak. Fuck.

“You know damn well what I’m on about!” Ginevra shrieks. “Well? Is it true? Are you fucking my

goddamn husband?”

“Eh... no?” Technically, Draco muses, this isn't really a lie since he isn't fucking Harry – Harry fucks him. Practically, though, Draco knows that this little detail won't make any difference to Ginevra.

“Don't fucking lie to me, Draco Malfoy! I know how you are! I know how Harry is! I just... I just...” She burst into tears and Draco stands there, staring at the sobbing wife of his lover, feeling helpless and inexplicably angry at Harry.

“Ginny, come on in. Let's not talk about this out here, okay?”

“It's Mrs Potter to you,” she sniffs, wiping her nose at her sleeve which Draco registers with a vague feeling of nausea. “It might be back to Miss Weasley soon, but at this very moment it is still Mrs Potter.” She comes in, however, allowing Draco to close the door behind her.

“I'm not an idiot,” Ginny says when she's seated in the armchair in Draco's living room, a cup of tea clutched tightly in her bony, freckled hands. “I knew you and Harry were together before we... before he came back to me. Everybody knows that.”

Draco nods. His fingers are playing with one of the biscuits on a plate on the table, but he doesn't feel like eating it. He doesn't feel like looking at Harry's wife either, though, so he contents himself with watching the biscuit crumble between his busy fingers. I knew it would come to this, he tells himself.

“Even though he never told me or anybody else,” Ginny continues, staring down into her cup. “Harry never talked about you at all. He still doesn't. Perhaps that should've made me suspicious, because it was obvious that a lot of things had happened between the two of you that Harry should have wanted to talk about.”

Draco shrugs. It's true; he also wanted to talk about the things that had happened with Harry, but apart from some minor details he told Pansy while under the influence of decidedly too much alcohol, he hasn't actually done it either.

Ginevra sighs. “I guess I was just happy to fool myself. I thought he'd gotten over it. I thought he didn't think about you anymore. Hell, I even thought he didn't like blokes anymore, or perhaps I just hoped he loved me enough to give up on them. I thought... well, no matter what I thought since obviously, I was mistaken.”

The biscuit has become fine, sugary sand on Draco's plate and he reaches for another one to toy with.

“I noticed that something was amiss when you came by after we sent out our invitations for the wedding. I was curious as to how you would react to the news, so I sent you the card, Harry never knew – or not until you stood in front of our door, that is. But then Harry seemed to take it all pretty well, and I told myself that perhaps you were the one with the problem, not Harry, and... and... oh, sod it. We don't even have sex anymore, Harry hardly ever looks at me and I found gay porn in his office some weeks ago. How could this not mean anything?” Ginny excitedly stirs her tea. “I'm not entirely stupid, even though you and my dear husband certainly seem to think so.”

Draco contemplates pointing out that he doesn't think that at all, not now that he learns about how inquisitive she can be, but thinks better of it. The second biscuit is gone with the wind and he eyes the plate for a third.

“Anyway.” Ginevra irritably strokes a wisp of flaming red hair off her forehead. “When he was out way more often than usual, I started to suspect he was seeing someone. And when I...” She swallows. “When I found a pair of male briefs with the initials DM in the pocket of his jeans, it wasn't terribly hard to figure out whom it is he's seeing.”



Draco looks up, feeling numb and at the same time confused. So that's where his favourite briefs had been going!

Ginny is sneering at him, as though she's read his thoughts. She probably has. "Oh yes, Malfoy. He's so crazy about you he even nicks your underwear. How does that feel, huh?"

At this very moment, Draco can't tell how he feels. He's tired and annoyed and excited and horrified and edgy – and some tiny little part of him is also quite happy to learn that Harry actually does such sappy, cheesy, wonderfully romantic things like steal his underwear and take it home. This melange of emotions is not something you could classify or even explain – and certainly not to the slightly hysterical wife of your not-so-secret lover.

So he just sighs and shrugs for the umpteenth time. "I don't know. How do you think I should feel?"

Ginevra glances at him, bemused. "What kind of a sick question is that?" she asks, her eyes narrowing in suspicion. "Are you trying to fool me?"

Draco shakes his head. "No. Really, I'm not. It's just... the last few weeks have been incredibly hard for me, understand? I don't really know what to make of everything."

Ginny laughs a short, humourless laugh. "Hard for you? You don't know what to make of everything? Don't make me laugh!"

Draco shrugs again, looking sadly up at her. "You're right. I'm sorry."

She huffs. "You're sorry! Well, now I'm feeling better."

Draco can't bear looking at her, so he entwines his hands in his lap and keeps his gaze fixed on his fingers. "I didn't mean for anything like this to happen," he whispers miserably, but Ginny merely snorts disbelievingly.

She's cut short, however, when the door opens and Pansy comes in. She looks from Draco, who's shrunk in the armchair, to Ginevra's angry form and frowns. "What on earth is going on in here? Really, Draco, I leave you alone for five minutes and you already get your scrawny arse in major trouble. You're insufferable!"

"I'm leaving," Ginny says, struggling to keep her voice steady, ignoring Pansy completely. "But let me tell you that you haven't seen the end of this, Malfoy. I'm not giving up yet. You already had your chance back then; you must have done something to fuck up, and you can't have him back now. He's mine, and I intend to keep it that way." With that, she marches out of the door, almost but not quite shoving Pansy to the side.

Draco still stares at his hands as the door is slammed shut.

"Well," Pansy says after a few minutes of awkward silence. "She's quite a... strong personality."

Draco nods, feeling numb and tired. The whole thing is so fucked up he can't actually believe it.

"You knew this would happen some day," Pansy says softly. "You didn't think you and Potter could keep this going forever, did you? It was bound to blow up in your face, hun. I told you it would never work out."

"Congratulations on being right again," Draco mumbles, before bursting into tears.

Pansy is there in no time, kneeling down next to him and hugging him tightly. Draco lets her; he even hugs

her back, clinging to her narrow shoulders, burying his hot, wet face in her dark curls as he sobs desperately.

“Now, now, darling,” Pansy says, stroking his shuddering back in a soothing manner. “Don’t be such a drama queen over this.”

“You... you don’t understand,” Draco blubbers, his eyes so full of tears he can barely see. “She knows. She fucking knows! This is not one of our rows, this is not me throwing him out, knowing he will be back in a few days anyway, this is it! It’s over!”

“Shhh, love.” Pansy tries to calm him, her hands never stopping the slow motion up and down Draco’s spine. “You don’t know that for sure.”

“Yes I do,” Draco objects, sniffing pathetically. “His family has always been his highest priority. He won’t come back to me when it’s at risk.”

Pansy actually has to bite her tongue to keep from chastising. She’s never approved of the thing, whatever it may have been, Draco and Harry were up to. She’s always known it was bound to go pear-shaped, inevitably breaking Draco’s heart all over again. She sighs silently. Bloody Potter always meant trouble, back at school and today as well – nothing has changed at all. And it’s always been Draco who’s suffered the most because of it. She has told Draco this at least a thousand times and he just doesn’t listen. Now she’s got proof she has been right all along. But right now is not the time to rub it in.

“If that’s true it might be better if he doesn’t come back at all,” she whispers into blond strands of hair. “He does not deserve someone as wonderful as you, Draco.”

Her statement only serves to make Draco cry harder. “I love him, Pansy,” he whimpers, holding on to the girl so tightly she fears he might crack one of her ribs. “I love him so much, and it hurts so bad I just want to die!”

Pansy could tell him now that there are times in life when you can’t get what you want, even if you want it so badly you think you can’t stand it. She could tell him that she once felt that way about a certain blond boy at school, that it nearly killed her when it became obvious that he didn’t even look at her. She could tell him that she seriously contemplated an overdose of her mother’s sleeping draught when said boy came out to his friends in sixth year, because she knew then that no matter what she did she would never ever be with him.

But she could also tell him that she didn’t do it in the end, and that today she’s very proud of herself because of that. She could tell him that she’s happy now, happier than she ever thought she would be back then when she was lying on her bed with red-rimmed, swollen eyes, worn out from hours of crying, thinking that the sun would never shine for her again.

In the end, Pansy says nothing at all because she knows that Draco wouldn’t want to hear any of this. She merely holds him, nuzzling his hair, caressing his back and the back of his head, and she doesn’t even make to get up when her knees are hurting so badly from kneeling on the floor that she thinks she must be suffering permanent damage.

When Draco eventually lets go, smiling at her a little sheepishly, his face is blotched and pale from crying, and his eyes are swollen. “Sorry, Pans,” he says, making to wipe his running nose at his sleeve, which Pansy prevents by handing him a tissue. “Thank you.”

“Oh, don’t mention it.” Pansy gets to her feet, slowly, because she doesn’t really trust her knees to keep her upright.

“No, I mean for being there for me when I act like a smitten little girl,” Draco says, honest gratitude filling

his still slightly shaky voice. “You are wonderful.”

“You’re most welcome, darling. You’re my best friend after all. I care about you.” Pansy drops down on the couch, massaging one of her sore feet.

“Here, let me.” Draco takes the other and starts rubbing it gently, almost causing Pansy to purr. “I wish I’d fallen in love with you,” he sighs eventually, and it takes all of Pansy’s self-control to not jerk her foot away in shock.

Instead she just smiles at him. “Me too. What a pity you’re a silly little poof with less than no interest in wonderful girls such as me.”

Draco, totally oblivious to the tiny little bit of truth hidden behind the humour, chuckles and pinches Pansy’s foot, making her squeal.

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Pansy cancels all her plans for the night, for which Draco is eternally grateful, and they order pizza at the Muggle delivery service a few blocks away. Pansy picks a movie, a silly slap-stick comedy – something entirely love-free – and they curl up in front of the TV together. But by the way Draco almost doesn’t touch his pizza, by the way he laughs at the wrong places or not at all and, last but not least, by the way his eyes keep wandering to the door and the telephone, Pansy can tell he’s preoccupied.

And it’s not a hardship to figure out what he’s thinking about either. Or whom, really.

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Draco never knows how he fell asleep, but at some point he wakes on the couch, his head snuggled up to Pansy’s shirt and one of his feet dangerously close to falling off the cushions and into the pizza, of which about three cold quarters are left. Draco blinks several times, then raises his head, feeling drowsy with sleepiness. There are credits rolling up on the screen, and Draco concludes that he must have missed most of the movie – not that he actually cares about that.

He wonders what has suddenly roused him, and it’s only then that he hears faint voices drifting in from behind the door. Pansy’s talking to someone, but Draco can’t make out whether she’s speaking to someone in person or on the phone.

Anyway, he needs to go to the loo and he doesn’t care one bit if one of Pansy’s friends sees him with messy hair and ill dressed. Yawning he goes to open the door – and freezes at the sight of Pansy, hands on her hips, bitching at one Harry Potter. Draco’s surprised gasp draws their attention towards him and Pansy whirls around, an apoplectic expression on her face.

“I’m so sorry, baby! I didn’t mean to wake you...” She prattles on, but Draco isn’t listening any more. He only has eyes for Harry.

Harry looks back at him, his green eyes unreadable behind his glasses. Then he says, “You’ve got tomato sauce on your chin.”

Pansy watches, stunned into silence, as Draco wipes it away without breaking eye contact with Harry. “Better now?”

“Perfect.”

“You’re here,” Draco says.

Harry nods. “I am.”

Draco’s smile is tired and hesitant, but it’s a real smile nevertheless. Harry returns it.

Pansy looks at them with arched eyebrows, not quite getting the unspoken agreement that has obviously passed between the two of them. “Draco? Exactly what is this? “

Harry smiles. “This,” he says, in Draco’s stead, “is the one thing that can keep a man from falling.”

Pansy still looks at them, still not understanding what’s going on. Finally, she shakes her head, sadly. “You two freaks deserve each other.”

“Yeah,” says Draco. “I guess we do.”

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\*As probably all of you have noticed: This is quoted from “Brokeback Mountain”. That movie was on my mind a lot when I wrote this.

A.N.: So. this is it, the ultimately last part of the “Splinters” series, and if I ever make to write another one, please somebody hit me. ^^ I hope you enjoyed it at least a little - even though it's awfully open-ended again, for which I apologise - but I guess, this Draco and Harry can't really do any better. They are an open end, and that's that. Thanks for reading, everyone! :-\*