

She Drives, He Walks

by Carol Rodrick

After the war, Hermione decides to live in the muggle world. She never expected to find Draco in there as well...

Chapter 01

Chapter 1 of 3

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Hermione sighs. It has been a long day. She can feel her toes tingling inside the shoes. And again, she looks up to the sky, in that early evening. She thinks of her house. That lovely, lovely dirty-white cottage that has been her home for the last six years. A smile goes on her lips, remembering her cozy living room, that marvelous couch full of cushions and her patchwork blanket that she made herself. A very nice place to hide yourself.

Her hand searches inside her purse for the car keys. She presses the button on it, and the black new Beetle near her opens up. She gets in her car, connects the key and takes her shoes off. Driving barefoot was always better for her. She takes off from the university parking lot. Turning on the mp3 player and opening the windows, she drives, feeling the wind on her cheeks. Humming with the soft jazz, she drives calmly, paying attention to everything outside.

And it is in the middle of her way home that she sees him.

Walking in a carefree manner, coming towards her in the street. Not on purpose, she figures, since he turns around and starts walking forward with his back to her. She slows down and looks around. *Ah... Of course. The Piccadilly street.* She always forgets about it. Some of its usual crowd of "male escorts," seeing her slow down, start to get closer to the car. Smiles, open shirts, sweet rough voices promising all her dreams to come true. She blushes and nervously slows down further, not wanting to hurt anyone.

Hoping with all her guts he doesn't notice her there, she shyly starts to ask the boys to step aside. They don't comply. It is not everyday a cute girl wanders around here. She keeps moving, slowly, panicking little by little. She loses an internal scream when a dark-haired man with a cowboy hat touches her hair. Her foot thumps the breaks; her car dies; she is freaking out. For a moment, the blokes freeze with the sudden event, and then they again start to come toward her. The cowboy touches her curls again and whispers to her: "It's all right, love..." while she tries to calm down and turn on her car.

Then, it happens. Someone pushes the cowboy aside and shouts to all the other prostitutes, "FUCK OFF. She's mine; I know her." And he leans on the car window. She stares, stunned in shock, at his grey eyes. He opens the door after a second of staring back. "Move to the other seat, Granger." Blinking, she does so, still in shock. Draco gets inside the black car, screams for the blokes to move out of the way, starts the car and drives off fast, the wheels making a loud sound, leaving marks on the tarmac.

Draco sighs. He looks to the young woman at his side and curses his own actions. He continues to drive the car, thinking about some safe place to stop and let her go. As fast as he can. It surprises him to hear the soft song playing in there; he would never guess Granger would appreciate jazz music; she always seemed to be uptight about everything around her. He finally sees a nice coffee bar, and with relief, he stops the car, parks, and shuts off the ignition. He looks at his companion.

She definitely grew up just fine. A nice tailored skirt that ended just above her knees, a loose, pale pink, long-sleeved shirt that was falling off one of her shoulders. She had definitely learned some grooming charms because her hair had nice, defined curls, her face with light and natural looking make-up. She has turned into a gorgeous looking female. He finishes his inspection and wonders what he looks like in her eyes.

He looks straight ahead and tilts his head. "You know, you can breathe now, Granger."

Nothing happens. He looks at her, at her face, narrowing his eyes. Gently, he takes a grip on her chin and turns her to face him. She recovers from her shock when she feels his touch on her face. Hermione blinks, shivers, and finally finds air. She moves his hand away from her harshly. Malfoy grins after that. "That's more Gryffindor like." She blushes, half furious, half ashamed. Angry, Hermione opens the door and steps out of the car. She feels better outside, away from him. Away from his scent...

Seconds later, he is out of the car also, walking to her side, stopping a few paces from her. He grabs one of her hands quickly, gives her the car keys, and then lets go of her hand. He hides his hands on the pockets on his pants, still feeling the warmth of her fingers. He stares at his feet, only now noticing she is barefooted. He stares at her feet, her nails painted with really small and simple flowers. They look so little and delicate, he feels like kissing them... With that, he lifts his head suddenly and stares at her.

This is all her fault. When he sees her shivering and hugging herself, he smirks devilishly. "You own me one now. Who would have guessed...?"

She looks into his eyes. Such pretty, dangerous eyes. She squeezes her car keys in her hand until they hurt a little. Allowing herself to look at him, she sees what time has made of him. His hair has grown, it ends by his shoulders. Still straight, silvery blond. His face is the same, but more serious, more manly. Wiser. His body is slender, tall, and thin, she can tell; his white t-shirt doesn't leave much to the imagination. He is well toned though. Not too much, just enough for him to look strong but still soft. Tight fitting jeans and pointy shoes. He was so... fucking gorgeous.

This was all her fault, she figures. Stupid, stupid Hermione. Angrily, she reaches her car, grabs her purse, and takes a small card out of it, with her name, address, and telephone. Just like him, she grabs his arm, pulling it out of his pockets, and crushes the card in his hand. She looks at him. "Yeah... Who would? Me, owing you one. Get in touch when you need to." And after that, she releases him, gets in her car, and drives off.

Draco stares at the small piece of paper in his hand. He tucks it inside his pocket.

She drives back home.

He walks back to hell.

Chapter 02

Chapter 2 of 3

After the war, Hermione decides to live in the muggle world. She never expected to find Draco in there as well...

It has been more than a week since they last saw each other. Draco often wonders if the little Gryffindor has lost her courage. He still has her card on him. He knows what is written in it by heart now. Her name, her job as chief librarian on some university, address and telephones. Chief librarian, huh? That is so like her. He often catches himself wondering what the hell she is doing here, in London, and not married with Weasel with a handful of redhead babies. He is very curious.

Malfoy is in his business spot and has been for a while now. Girls (or guys) don't seem too interested in him that day. Or maybe it is because of the bad weather, a storm hunting above them all. Twitching his lips, he leans against a wall. Tiredness falls over him. He is going nuts from his nagging landlord and the fucking dirty neighbors that keep screaming all day. He closes his grey eyes, bends his head towards the wall. My kingdom for a freaking bed, he thinks... until something cold hits his forehead. A second later, rain falls over him, and over everyone in the street.

Draco can't help but smile. He likes the rain. After all those years, he is only able to feel at peace, to feel ~~lean~~, when it rains. He opens his fair eyelashes, staring at the other male whores running around, getting into cars with customers, or fleeing to their homes. Home. That tumbledown flat is not his home. He waits until there is no one else there. Then, he walks forward towards the street until he reaches the curb.

He sits down, pulls his knees up, lets his arms swing, and then leans his elbows against his knees and lifts his head. He closes his eyes, and just... stays there. Feeling that blessed rain on him. He doesn't care that it is cold or that it is getting a bit stronger. He just wants to feel...

The rain is his only excuse to cry and not let anyone notice him. And so, Draco Malfoy cries.

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Hermione rushes into her car, cursing the rain and all those brats that made her walk them to their cars using that freaking huge umbrella. She is all wet; her dress feels like another skin on her. She starts her car and leaves the place. She has too much on her mind to pay attention to her way, and she enters the very street she is trying to avoid. *His* street. When she gets back to her senses, she starts to badmouth herself... but then, though, how silly of her. The sky is falling on the earth; there is no way he would be there.

She relaxes and slows down. After all, it is raining a lot. A few blocks ahead, she sees him. Sitting there, like an angel, his shirt open a bit, glued on him. *What the hell?!* She tries to continue. Tries not to mind. *Tries a hell of lot not to freaking care...*

But she does. She crashes her feet on the brakes, mad with herself.

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Draco had been there a couple of hours already. He hears cars passing by, not minding them at all. He hears another car getting close. He hears the car stopping just after it passes him. He doesn't care. The rain feels so nice. His tears had ended some time ago.

And suddenly, the rain stops hitting his pale face. Confused, he opens his eyes. And stares.

Two dark eyes glance at him. She is leaning a bit over him, blocking the rain with her small frame. Her dress, in some dark color he can't figure out, is soaked and tight around her body. Her hair is pulled up in a twisted bun, half falling apart. She glances over him, biting her lower lip, looking uncertain. Then, she offers her hand to him.

Nothing is said. Eyes speaking for themselves. He feels like crying all over again, something deep in his guts twisting. He takes a deep breath. *Why the hell not?*

He holds her hand and gets up to his feet. She stares at him. Quietly, she leads him to her car. He gets in, and she goes over to the driver's seat. Hermione turns her car on and drives off, hoping she won't regret this. Draco looks at her, hoping the same thing.

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They keep silent in the car. Hermione looks straight ahead at the street, and Draco looks at her, puzzled. It is an awkward situation, to say the least. She bites her lower lip and glances at him. He narrows his eyes. She takes a deep breath. "Want me to take you to your house?" she asks after a moment.

Malfoy tilts his head and moves his eyes to his knees. Does he want to go to his house? "Hell, no..."

He doesn't realise until a second later that he had actually said that out loud, when he hears a soft "Okay..." coming from his side. He moves his eyes to Granger. She looks uncertain.

He can't help himself; he smirks. "Gee, Granger, I'm not going to eat you alive... Only if you asked me to, and paid in advance, of course."

She grins at him and responds between her teeth. "Fine. To my place then, before we both get a cold."

He chuckles with sarcasm. She groans, angry. Silence falls upon them again. She continues driving for about ten more minutes until they reach her home. She parks her car in the gravel turnaround cutting into her front yard as always. Draco takes a look at the house. Granger is already out of the car and running to the door. The rain hasn't stopped yet, but it is softer. Draco gets out of the car and moves close to her. After a few seconds, the door is open. They rush inside and she closes the door.

As soon as they enter, she reaches for the little table beside the door, opens its drawer and takes her wand out of there. Malfoy looks at her questioningly. Hermione sees his stare out of the corner of her eye. "I don't wander around with my wand. There is no need to do so." She casts a drying charm on her and then on him, and then on the floor. She starts walking towards what seems to be her room while ordering a kettle to boil water, summoning some towels, and starting a fire in the fireplace with graceful flicks of her wand hand. Draco gets a hand on a towel and starts to dry himself better. He stands there, glancing around Hermione's living room.

It is... kinda nice. A bookshelf over on one wall, the fireplace with picture frames on top of it, a simple television by its side, a coffee table between the fireplace and a big red couch stuffed with cushions. To the right there is the kitchen, which opens into the living room, and three blue doors against creamy walls. Malfoy feels okay in here. Seems peaceful. He can hear Hermione making noises over in her room, but he doesn't mind. He keeps gazing around and drying his hair.

A few minutes later, Granger walks out of her room and hands him some white cotton sleepwear. She points at the door next to her room. "There, take a shower. I'm fixing dinner." And flees to the kitchen. "I hope you like pasta, because it's the only edible thing I can make." She doesn't look back at him as she states that. She hears only the sound of steps and the click of the bathroom door. She feels relieved at being alone and tries not to think of the person that is in her house right now.

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Draco stares at himself in the round mirror hanging on the wall. He is still slightly wet from the rain. He closes his eyes, and his past comes to him in a flash. He sees his Aunt Bellatrix with a crazy smile on her face, her wand pointing at a girl. And he remembers himself in a corner of that room, feeling disgusted with his relative, and hearing the girl's screams of agony and pain... And he couldn't do anything. He was a coward. He is the lowest worm on the entire earth...

Draco snaps from his past with a shiver. He feels dizzy and has to grab onto the sink to stand. He looks at himself in the mirror. This is a chance for redemption. Then, he snaps his head. He doesn't deserve it. But he could treat her with respect and protect her, silently. Yeah, he could do just that. But he would never admit it to her. Never.

With that resolution, he lays the pyjamas on the counter, starts to undress quickly, and heads to the shower. Five minutes later, he is out of the bathroom, using the white clothing, unsure of what to do.

Hermione emerges from the kitchen. "Oh, you're done? Great." And she grabs his clothes and sends them through the air to... somewhere he doesn't know. "I will take a shower myself. Go and have some tea, okay?" And she paces by him and closes herself in her bathroom. Draco blinks. He scratches his head, and walks to the kitchen. He sits there and pours himself tea, and starts sipping it slowly.

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Hermione tries to ignore the smell of him that has taken over her bathroom. She thinks it seems like some exotic odour of blackberries, tobacco flower and woods, mixed with her soap and shampoo. She waves her hand in front of her face, trying to calm herself. Quickly, she undresses herself and takes a shower. She opens one of the drawers of the bathroom counter and takes out panties, a plain bra, and masculine pyjamas.

She slides the shirt over her head and pulls up the shorts over her legs. She looks at her reflection in the mirror. She likes using male sleepwear. It is loose, simple, and comfortable, and she wouldn't change that because of Malfoy. She feels that he couldn't find the sight of her in that oversized outfit as an invitation to ANYTHING, so she feels safe.

She walks out of the bathroom and into the kitchen. He is there, looking outside the window, with a cup of tea in his hand. Such long fingers... Her head snaps, and she walks to the stove. She takes the spaghetti that she left on there to keep warm and places it on the table. Hermione had cooked it while he was in the bathroom. Malfoy turns his face to her. He looks at her for a while until she stares back at him.

They stand like that for a full minute, until she asks, softly: "What happened to you?"

Draco keeps his eyes on hers. He almost feels like telling her everything. Instead, he replies, his voice low and calm: "I could ask you the same."

The grey eyes don't leave the brown ones for what seems like ages. She fights against the impulse to tell him everything. Finally, Hermione says: "No questions about the past. Deal?"

Draco nods slightly. "Deal."

They sit and eat, quietly.