

Denial (It's Not Just A River In Egypt)

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Scorpius Malfoy was fuming. The letter from home, the reason for his ire, was bunched up in one fist, and he was pacing along his dorm room. *Absolutely impossible!* The nerve of his dad. *The nerve of her.*

As he past his bed for the third time, he threw the crumbled paper into his trunk, thoroughly disgusted. A look at his watch told him that he was going to be late for his meeting with Rose Weasley, a.k.a. the bane of this existence. But considering that Rose had been late to every single one of their previous meetings, he wasn't terribly concerned.

Reluctantly, Scorpius gathered the books he would need and slowly made his way from the Ravenclaw tower towards the library. He had counted on his dad to get him out of this. *And now this.*

Sighing, Scorpius pushed open the wooden doors and entered the library. He gave a curt nod to Madam Pince, the elderly matron of the library, who had already held the reign of the books when Scorpius' parents had been at school and certainly looked old enough to have been there even before the legendary Dumbledore had become headmaster.

Once he reached his usual table, Scorpius immediately ascertained that Rose hadn't arrived yet. *Of course not.* He couldn't decide whether he was glad to be granted another few minutes without her presence or if he was annoyed with her constant tardiness.

Spreading his books on the table, Scorpius didn't waste any time waiting for the illustrious Rose to show up but tried to get started on their project instead in order to be done with the dreaded task as quickly as possible.

However, Scorpius soon found that he was far too irritated to properly concentrate on *the Dragon Root and its versatile uses in healing draughts*. That was the topic Professor Longbottom had assigned them. Why Professor Longbottom, who had been one of Scorpius' favourite teachers until he had committed this atrocity, had decided to force Rose Weasley on him as a research partner, Scorpius couldn't begin to guess.

As far as he knew, he had never once deliberately or otherwise insulted the Herbology Professor in all his six and a half years at Hogwarts. Apparently, the Head of Gryffindor was far more sinister than his cheery exterior suggested. And they said all evil wizards came from Slytherin.

Although, this certainly held true for witches, considering that Rose Weasley was a Slytherin.

At that point, Scorpius gave up on all pretences of work in favour of his favourite pastime enumerating the reasons why he hated Rose Weasley.

The first one was a given. He was a Ravenclaw, she was in Slytherin. Though house rivalry wasn't as strong an issue as it once had been, if the stories his parents had told him were true, it was still expected to show some loyalty towards ones own house and by default to look down on the others. *Everybody knew all the smart students were in Ravenclaw.*

There was also the matter that both Scorpius' parents had been in Slytherin. He could still very vividly remember the fear he had felt when he had written his first letter home from Hogwarts, confessing that he had been sorted into Ravenclaw instead of Salazar's house. His parents' reaction had been far more lenient than expected, though Scorpius strongly suspected that his mother had prevented his dad from writing anything she deemed inappropriate.

Despite the differed opinion about which was the more desirable house at Hogwarts, Scorpius' relationship with his father was a very close one. For that reason, Scorpius had fully expected his dad to be sympathetic and cooperative when he had written to him earlier this week, asking whether he could do anything to get him out of the project with Rose. Instead, he got a reply telling him that Rose had written to his dad as well, gushing about how beneficial the combined project was to both their educational goals.

How *Slytherin* of Rose. His dad must have loved that. Scorpius scowled sourly.

Rose had made it apparent from the start of this learning experience that she was very pleased about being partnered with Scorpius. While Scorpius had received the most O.W.L.s of their year and was likely to repeat this success at the N.E.W.T.s in a few months time, Rose's grades were closer to Troll than Outstanding. She actually needed to pass this research project with flying colours in order to even be allowed to take the N.E.W.T.s. Scorpius didn't like being used as a means of upping Rose Weasley's grades, and he certainly didn't appreciate her determination to stay partnered with him.

Her letter to his dad easily made the list of top three reasons to hate Rose Weasley.

What's more, being partnered with Scorpius gave Rose even more opportunities to pursue her favourite pastime: getting on Scorpius' nerves. The girl positively loved to antagonize him; so much so that Scorpius suspected that if one were to ask Rose about her hobbies, 'taking the mickey out of Scorpius' would be on top of that list. One more reason for him to dislike her.

Then he hated how popular Rose was. She was a regular social butterfly, always surrounded by a flock of friends and never short on a date whether it was for a formal occasion or a mere Hogsmeade weekend. While Scorpius wasn't a loner or ostracized, he certainly didn't have a horde of admirers following him around, like Rose seemed to have, and girls weren't beating down his door either.

Not that Scorpius wanted to be as popular as Rose. He didn't have the urge to constantly be in the spotlight, and he didn't even have the time for a girlfriend. And if he did want a girlfriend, it certainly wouldn't be Rose Weasley. *No, sir!*

Because it wasn't like the thing Scorpius Malfoy hated most about Rose Weasley was that he could never, ever be with her *Not at all!*

Rose Weasley was hurrying towards the library. She was well aware that she was late again and knew that Scorpius would probably be livid by now, but it wasn't like it was always her fault. After all, she did have a busy social schedule and couldn't spare that much time for studying.

She had tried to be on time for their meeting though, not so much because she knew that Scorpius hated her unpunctuality (he actually was at his most cute when angry), but considering that she had no idea if her writing to Mr. Malfoy would prevent Scorpius from dumping her as a research partner, she'd planned on pacifying him by actually showing up on time.

Only Theodor, the Slytherin Quidditch captain, had asked her out, and turning him down gently had taken a lot longer than Rose would have liked. She would have preferred to just tell him to 'bugger off', but Theodor was a very influential member of her house and was best not upset too much.

However, Rose was nothing if not a pro at house politics, and by the time she had left, Theodor was not only okay with the fact that she didn't want to date him, but had also promised to introduce her to one of his contacts in Hogsmeade, who apparently had no moral objections to selling firewhiskey to students. All in all, Rose thought it was worth being late for the study session with Scorpius.

Once she entered the library though, she wasn't so pleased with her ability to obtain alcoholic beverages even in the most difficult circumstances anymore. Scorpius was sitting at his usual table, a very dark look on his face. Rose heart gave a little flutter. The butterflies in her stomach, Rose told herself firmly, were only due to the fact that she feared losing Scorpius as partner and by extension her last chance at passing Herbology. They had nothing whatsoever to do with the crush she may or may not have had on him since fifth year. *Definitely not.*

She still had to take a calming breath before walking over to the table and taking a seat next to Scorpius.

"You're late." Scorpius' greeting was cold.

Rose gave him her best 'I know I screwed up, but please, please don't be mad' smile. She even batted her eyelashes for effect. "I'm so sorry." This tactic had worked wonders on Theodor just a few minutes ago.

Scorpius didn't seem fazed.

Rose tried another angle. She'd heard that brutal honesty was very much appreciated outside of Slytherin.

"Look, I'm sorry. I was going to be on time and all, but Theodor got in the way, and I couldn't get rid of him fast enough."

"Oh well, then," Scorpius replied sarcastically. "Of course planning your dates is far more important than this silly little research project. I completely understand."

Rose had always known that honesty was highly overrated.

"Actually, we weren't planning a date. He was asking me out and I said no. Not that it's any of your business. I said I'm sorry, what more do you want?" Rose was quickly losing her calm. There just was something about Scorpius Malfoy that always got under her skin.

"Well, since you already ask, do you mind explaining to me what the bloody hell you wrote to my father for?" Scorpius asked, clearly having problems to contain himself enough to keep his voice down. A couple of Gryffindors at the next table had already begun to stare in their direction.

"I just thought I'd make sure he knows to consider all the advantages this partnership brings to your education before he gets your request for his help. You shouldn't have told me you planned to write to him about that during our last meeting." Rose grinned at him. She had been rather impressed with her own cunning when she had set out to undermine Scorpius' last way out of this project. It had been a very underhanded and sly plan, and judging by Scorpius' anger, it had worked flawlessly.

"And what, pray tell, would be beneficial in working with *you*?" Scorpius shot back. Rose's smile failed.

"I'm not stupid, you know," she said, her voice having lost much of its earlier vigour.

Rose didn't like to think about it, but her grades were a constant source of disturbance for her. Her parents, especially her mother, expected a lot more. And while they

never outright told her that they were disappointed, but merely suggested she put more effort in her work, Rose knew that they were far more pleased with Hugo's performance at Hogwarts than with her own. Her brother seemed to have inherited many of their mother's talents, including intelligence and application.

While she didn't lack the first either, Rose was honest enough with herself to admit that diligence wasn't her strong suit. She could probably improve her grades if she would put some effort into it; yet, she really failed to see how subjects like History of Magic would become relevant in real life.

One of the reasons why Rose was so adamant about working with Scorpius was that he would make sure that they'd get their work done on time. There was no lazing around when it came to Scorpius and his goals. While she'd never tell him that, she really admired that quality in him.

It stung that he thought her ignorant.

Scorpius had remained quiet after her last comment, looking at her intently. Rose wondered what he was thinking about her, but assumed that she was better off not knowing.

"Shall we get to work then?" she suggested, her voice not having lost that strained sound.

Scorpius nodded and directed his attention to the large book in front of him.

Albus Potter watched his best friend and his favourite cousin from behind the Transfiguration section of the library. In his opinion, those two were behaving ridiculously. Even a blind wizard would be able to see that they were attracted to each other without having to listen to both of them complaining about the other, repeatedly.

For that's been the case ever since Professor Longbottom had assigned them the stupid project. Albus had to listen to Scorpius complain about Rose in the morning when they both got ready in the dorm they shared with four other seventh year Ravenclaws, then he had to listen to Rose complain about Scorpius while he ate breakfast together with her and the rest of his family at the Hufflepuff table (being the only house not currently accommodating a member of the Potter/Weasley clan, Hufflepuff had been declared neutral territory).

During classes, Albus had to endure even more complaining, either from Rose or from Scorpius, depending on who he was sharing that class with. And during the afternoons, dinner, the evenings... complaining, complaining, complaining. Albus was thoroughly sick of it.

It was so obvious, to anyone but them, that they were severely crushing on each other. And while they didn't seem to have much in common on the surface, Albus was close enough to both of them to know that they would complement each other perfectly as a couple. If only they could just stop and see that they both wanted the same thing.

But all they ever did was fight.

And it did not look like things were about to change anytime soon. From his position behind the shelves, Albus could clearly see Rose sneaking a peek at Scorpius while he wasn't looking. Only that git didn't notice because he was too busy reading some boring passage in some no doubt incredibly boring tome about Herbology.

Not two minutes later, while Rose was shuffling through the scrolls of parchment that cluttered their table, Scorpius looked up from his book, staring longingly at Rose for just the fraction of a second. Of course, Rose didn't notice either. Albus sighed. Those two were hopeless, and if he didn't do something soon, he'd have to listen to their bickering for the rest of the year Professor Longbottom had assigned them a long-term research project.

While trying to come up with a solution, Albus watched Rose and Scorpius arguing over some piece of parchment, each of them tugging at one side, muttering muted insults obviously trying to keep quiet and not get thrown out of the library like the other week when Madam Pince had finally had enough of their fighting and banned them from her sanctuary. She had only allowed them back in when Professor Longbottom intervened on his student's behalf. Albus didn't blame the librarian; he knew first-years who behaved themselves more maturely than Scorpius and Rose when they were around each other.

Realising that he had to do something before the situation got completely out of hand, and that didn't just refer to the tug-o-war that was developing in front of Albus' eyes right then, Albus walked purposefully towards the table Scorpius and Rose shared. Both of them looked up in surprise, still holding the parchment on either side, when Albus took a seat.

He cleared his throat. "Listen up," he whispered, though the low tone of his voice didn't hamper the authority with which he spoke. "I've had enough. I'm sure that every single witch and wizard at Hogwarts will agree with me when I say that you two need to get it on already."

Scorpius and Rose just stared at him, their mouths open, parchment forgotten. Albus realised that he needed to be even more frank if he wanted them to get it.

"Here is the thing," he continued. "Scorpius, Rose has had a crush on you since about the end of fifth year." A strangled sound escaped Rose as her cousin blurted out her deepest secret, but Albus ruthlessly ignored her. Scorpius only looked shell-shocked.

"Rose, Scorpius completely reciprocates your feelings." Rose's eyes widened until they had the size of saucers.

"Both of you, DEAL WITH IT!" Reasonably sure that he had not been too subtle, Albus got up from his chair and strolled out of the library. On his way out, he caught sight of Madam Pince mouthing a 'thank you' in his direction. He grinned.

That ought to have worked. If not, Albus decided he could always lock them both in a cupboard until they either killed or snogged each other. And in case even that plan failed, there was always one more solution; though it was so cruel, Albus was resolved to only use it in the most direst of circumstances. But he would not hesitate to write Grandma Weasley if he absolutely had to.

The End

A/N: Written for queenb23more for the smrw_ficafest at lj. Thanks to dynonugget for the beta.

Reviews are love.