

Countdown

by darkpyroangel06

Harry awakes alone on his anniversary, but Draco did leave a note. Harry has to follow the clues to get to Draco at the end.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

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Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter. Everyone knows that I wish I did. And if you didn't know that, you do now. Because I do what to own Harry Potter and everyone/thing included with his name. Oh, I want them badly...

A/N: So, this was supposed to be for my birthday some five months ago. It didn't get finished in that amount of time. In fact, this won't be posted until March, so it will be some eight months ago when all of you read this. Sorry. I'm not a hurry up and write kinda author. I have to plan. And this one took planning, let me tell you. I got the idea while I was sleeping one night. That's when my muses usually talk to me. It's a two-part one-shot. Got that? TWO CHAPTERS!!! I decided I was going to stop it right in the middle of everything. Muah ha ha ha...

Part The First

(Who came up with those sayings anyways? Part the first? Part the second? It sounds weird...)

Harry awoke slowly, as he usually did in the mornings. He tossed and turned for a few minutes before giving up trying to go back to sleep and stretched his arms over his head. He yawned wide and turned to his left, reaching out for the warm body next to him. But instead of the warmth Draco provided, he was met with the icy coldness of an empty bed. It caused Harry to sit up and look around quickly, hoping to see his lover coming out of the loo or up from the kitchen. Reaching for his glasses, it took Harry a moment to remember he didn't wear them anymore. One of the requirements of being an Auror was being able to see, so he had undergone a few medical procedures at St. Mungo's to correct his eyesight.

One mystery solved. But still no Draco. Harry moved the covers back and took a few shaky steps to the door to their bedroom. The shower wasn't running, it was too early for Draco to be at work, and it was the weekend besides, and now that he was heading down the stairs he couldn't hear any footsteps anywhere. This worried Harry. Draco never left without telling him, flooing him, or leaving some type of note. A look at the fireplace showed that no one had flooed in or out. The door was locked with the deadbolt Harry insisted upon. Likewise with the wards and charms which had been placed on the house and property. Harry wandered into the kitchen, stopping suddenly at the sight of breakfast all laid out for him. Warming and cooling charms had been placed in the appropriate places. Cautiously, he sat down and took inventory.

A small glass of milk; a slightly larger one filled with orange juice. He could smell tea, but he couldn't see any. Four fat sausages smothered in maple syrup sat upon the left side of the plate while two sunny-side up eggs with a bit of scrambled egg on top sat at the bottom of the same plate. The top right part held five pieces of chewy bacon, smothered in butter. A small plate to the right of this set-up held some hash browns; a squeezable bottle of ketchup sat just above that. A salt shaker, but no pepper shaker, was nearby. Harry smiled. Only Draco knew about his favourite foods like this.

He liked orange juice, but the acid made him feel really sick sometimes. However, the milk coated his stomach and lessened the feelings from the orange juice, so he drank them both. He hated tea, but Draco drank it every morning. Just the smell of it made him feel better. He loved sausage, but it was tasteless. So he would douse it in

syrup. If he popped the yolks of the two sunny-side up eggs, the scrambled bits would soak it up before it ran on his plate. The chewy bacon was cooked just enough so it was cooked, but he didn't want it crispy and hard. The butter also helped to keep it chewy. And breakfast just wasn't complete without hash browns. Because they were so dry, however, the ketchup was always nearby. Harry hated pepper, and Draco knew this. And salt always varied by food, day, and mood. Like, eggs would have more salt on them than the sausage. But there'd be less salt on the eggs Friday than on Monday.

Draco had been here. That was for sure. No one else knew his eating habits to this degree. Harry dug in, going straight for the sausages this morning. About halfway through the hash browns, Harry froze. His fork clattered to the table. He sat there, stunned, for a moment before moving his hand across the air in front of him. The date was spelled out before him: Monday, July 2, 9:43am. Jaw open, eyes wide, and brain not working, Harry sat in his chair as the letters and numbers faded away again. Today was their anniversary. He was alone on their anniversary. Draco had left him alone on their anniversary.

He slowly came back to his senses and decided it was okay. It was still the morning. There was a whole fourteen hours and seventeen minutes before the day was over. Surely Draco would come home before that. He looked down to pick up his fork and continue eating, but the fork was gone. And so was the food. In fact, all that was there was a table, part of a glass of milk, and a piece of parchment he didn't recognize. He drained the glass of milk, then picked up the parchment.

Harry,

You've finished breakfast now, whether you were done or not. Sorry. Now then, your job is to figure out where to go next. I'll give a clue, and you have to figure it out.

It's been ten years since you started your Auror training.

~draco~

"Ten years since I started my Auror training? What does that have to do with anything?" Harry said aloud. "That could lead anywhere! The training center, Hogwarts, the backyard, the awards ceremony building, the housing station for the first four months. I mean... Draco!" he shouted. "Draco get in here and tell me what's going on!" He waited, but his demand was not met. He sighed, a bit frustrated. But now he knew Draco hadn't exactly left him alone on their anniversary. He thought about the message for a moment. "Ten years since you started your Auror training... Auror training... training..." "He specifically said training. I told him about training at Hogwarts, I left for training from here, I had a party the night before at the Burrow, and I left at the Apparation point just to the west of the Ministry building. There are so many" He cut himself off with a sharp intake of breath.

A memory long forgotten from somewhere pulled him in. *Harry was walking across the land just behind his house when a hand grabbed him from behind and another went over his mouth to keep him silent. He saw his wand go flying away from him and whoever was behind him. While his concentration was briefly held by the wand, he was moved backwards and then turned around and flung against a tree. He brought his free hands up to try and ease the pain he'd surely be feeling when he realized, he wasn't hurting. The shove wasn't meant to hurt. That thought was reinforced by the feel of a body pressing into him from behind.*

"You know, you're supposed to be paying attention. I thought you wanted to be an Auror."

"Not want to be," Harry breathed back, no longer afraid, "will be."

"That's a little assuming, don't you think, Potter? You have to be accepted to these kind of things."

"I have been accepted, Draco." They were quiet for a moment. Harry was pressed face first against a large oak tree while Draco held him there, one arm across Harry's shoulders. Harry started to push back so he could look Draco in the face, but was pushed back against the tree again. "Draco? Draco, what are you doing?"

"Congratulating you." Draco's head lowered to Harry's neck where he attacked it fiercely. There was no softness or romance here. Teeth and lips were everywhere, and Draco was holding Harry's hands behind his back at waist level. He pressed against the smaller body before him, pressing him into the tree just a little bit more.

"Stop it, Draco," Harry said in warning. "If I wanted to be congratulated like this I would have sent you an owl."

"Come on, Harry."

"No. Get off of me."

Draco slowly loosened his hold of Harry's arms and then moved away from the newest Auror-in-training. "Fine."

Harry shook his head to be rid of the memory. He hadn't thought of that day in months, years even. Why was it coming back now? He looked around the kitchen as if looking for the answer. The memory started to come back. He couldn't think of the memory in detail unless it was playing in his mind. It almost had a mind of its own it seemed. "Okay!" he said out loud as the Draco in the memory grabbed him. "I'll go out to the tree!" The memory stopped abruptly. After a moment of trying to figure out just what was going on, he walked out the door and made his way to the trees he'd been walking by in his memory.

He looked around, expecting to see Draco nearby. Instead, he saw wards around a tree to his right. He went to it, passing right through the wards to get to the piece of parchment floating next to the tree. A quick look around proved that Draco still wasn't around. The parchments shimmered, as if instructing Harry to pick it up. So he did.

Took ya long enough. So happy you could find the next clue. However, as I think you've been able to figure out by now, I won't be there to help you. It should be pretty simple. Follow the clues.

It's been nine years since I said I love you.

~draco~

"Nine years since he said he loved me?" Harry repeated. "Well, at least this one is simple. If I'm supposed to go to the place, then he said this at that French restaurant in Hogsmeade. What was it called? Chef Pierre? Chef Francois? Chef something in French! Whatever. I'll find it once I get there." He took off back to the house to grab his cloak before flooing into one of the three shops that allowed free access. He nodded to people he recognized as he left the shop, trying to be polite to them as he hurried away. He wanted to find Draco and go home.

On the street, he paused for a few moments to get his bearings. 'There! That shop there. I remember passing in on the way to the restaurant that night. Was it on my left or my right? I believe it was my left...' Turning to his right, he made his way down the street at a brisk pace to, hopefully, find the restaurant and Draco or Draco's next clue. 'I remember that night. I choked on my pumpkin juice when he said it. And it was as if he'd been saying it all his life; he was almost flippant about it.' He stopped suddenly on the road as the memory washed over him.

Draco had come to Harry's house that evening wearing one of his better cloaks. He instructed Harry to change into the best clothing he had and to be quick about it. Then he led Harry out of his house and into town. Harry continued to question him as they walked, but he got no answers, only trivial talk and such. They walked by many people and shops that both recognized, only nodding their heads to people as they passed. Draco stopped and opened a door at one point, ushering Harry in before him. He spoke with the hostess in some language Harry couldn't understand, French maybe.

She nodded, grabbed two menus, then showed Draco and Harry to their seats where Draco pulled out a chair for Harry to sit in before sitting down himself. After the

hostess gave them their menus, Draco took Harry's and continued with the small talk they'd been enjoying on their walk. A different woman came back to take their orders, but Draco ordered for the both of them in the same language he'd used when they'd first arrived.

"What did you just say?" Harry asked. "What am I going to be eating?"

"Don't worry about it," Draco answered. "It's good. Even you will like it. I've ordered all of your meat well done and lightly spiced. Don't worry about it. I promise, you'll like it. Now then, how goes your training? I haven't heard a word about it since you started."

"What's there to tell? I fight, I train, I sleep a little. Occasionally we eat. We train and train some more. We get up early and go to bed late because we're training. That's all we do: sleep, eat, train, fight, and train."

"Surely you've met some of the other men there?"

"Not really. I've mostly met the women."

"What? Why? They'd didn't place you in the women's barracks, did they?"

Harry blushed and looked down at where his plate would be in a few moments. "They... well, they've never had a gay Auror before, so they've separated me from the other men for their comfort. Some of the guys were talking one night, and I was there as well. We were talking about our lives, our pasts our futures, loves we'd left behind. I talked of my schooling at Hogwarts. And of you. I didn't come right out and say that we were seeing each other, or anything of that sort, but some could tell apparently. One guy, I think Michael is his name, asked if I was gay. I wasn't going to back down and say no. I don't lie.

"I said I was, strongly and proudly, and that if he had a problem with that then he could leave and come back in eight months when my training was done. Because the only way I'm quitting Auror training is if I die. Someone must have left the room and told the older officers because Shaklebolt, Tonks, and another, Kramer I think, came in and asked what was going on. I told them and they asked what the problem was. Michael said that he wasn't staying in a room with a poof and that he wanted me gone.

"Tonks said I was one of the best in the group, and that they weren't going to send me away just because I happened to like men. She said I had good taste in men besides." Harry was blushing something fierce at this point. "Regardless of what they said, Michael and some of the others were adamant about me being gone. So Shaklebolt suggested new rooms for me. They wouldn't be any worse or any better than what I had, and I'd still train with everyone else like normal. They were agreeable to that. Tonks apologized to me for having to move me, but helped move my stuff to a single room close to the women's rooms. Tonks left me there and apparently went to the women and told them what had happened because soon there were eight women in my room, talking to me."

He stopped when their food arrived. "Merci beaucoup," Draco said as the server left the table. "Go ahead."

"Well, one of the women asked if Derek really had abs like he'd boasted a few days ago. And I was shocked that none of them seemed to care and wanted to talk about the other guys. So for a little over an hour we talked about our lives and the guys and stuff. I didn't tell anything personal that might have been told to me because I wasn't going to be like that." He took a few bites of his dinner then continued. "And that's the way it's been ever since. I train like normal with the guys and girls alike and sleep near the women. They don't mind that I'm gay."

"As well they shouldn't. I love you just the way you are," Draco said, reaching for his glass of pumpkin juice.

Harry sputtered and sprayed a bit of pumpkin juice onto the table. "Wha What did you say?!"

"Harry, lower your voice. We're in public. Why are you yelling anyways? I just said that I loved you the way you are."

"Say it again. Tell me that I'm not hearing things," Harry whispered. "Please, just say it again."

"What? That I love you? Okay. I love you."

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it. I don't say things I don't mean. Did you not want to hear it? I won't say it again if-"

"No! No, it's... Don't stop saying it. Please."

"Monsieur Malfoy? Iz everyting to your liking?" a waiter asked, throwing weird looks at Harry.

"Oui, Garson. Everything is perfect."

"Chef Maurice would like to thank you for choosing his restaurant, Monsieur Malfoy."

"Not a problem, Garson. Merci beaucoup." Garson walked away, leaving Harry still staring at Draco with his mouth wide open. "Close your mouth Harry. That's unattractive."

"Chef Maurice, that's it!" Harry said before practically tearing down the street toward the restaurant. Once there, he threw open the doors and ran inside. He attracted much attention as he grabbed the nearest waitress and asked for the mater de between pants. "Excuse me," he said once the man stood before him. "My name is Harry Potter. Was there anything left here for me by Draco Malfoy? I was instructed to come here, and I'm expecting to either see the man in question or receive a parchment from him. Please tell me you have one of those."

"Oui... monsieur," the man said with a sneer on his face. He reached into an inner pocket of his jacket and pulled out a parchment. Harry snatched it from his hand and opened it excitedly. This was getting interesting. He heard the man make a noise of dismissal or something before walking away, but Harry paid him no mind in favour of reading the message.

You remembered. I knew you would. You're such a sentimentalist. Now then, since I'm sure you've ruined any chance for us to ever grace Chef Maurice's again, quietly leave the restaurant.

That was all it said. Harry looked around as if there was something he was missing. He read the note again, but it was the same as before. He looked at the door behind him and then walked out it, looking for Draco. Maybe that was the end and his boyfriend was waiting for him. But no, there was no Draco on the street outside. He looked around before reading the parchment again for answers. However, there were different words on the parchment now.

Now that you're outside, since the parchment will only change if the outside air hits it, I'd like to remind you that it's been eight years since I began my Healers' training.

~draco~

Harry groaned in annoyance. This was just like the first clue. There could be several places this one could include. There was the place Draco told Harry about his acceptance letter, St. Mungo's, the same Apparation point Harry used to get to Auror training, Hogwarts, Malfoy Manor, or a bazillion other places! He looked around the street hoping the answer would appear out of thin air. After a few moments, he realized it wouldn't. Magic couldn't do everything it appeared. A quick look at the note again reminded him, again, of the first clue. 'If the first clue was telling about the place I told him I had been accepted into Auror training, then maybe this one is too. He told me he was going into Healer training... at St. Mungo's. I had just come back from a mission...'

The memory hit him as if it had a mind of its own.

"You know, this is getting really annoying," Draco drawled as they entered St. Mungo's. He had one arm wrapped around Harry's waist, and the other hand kept a firm grip on Harry's left arm. It looked like it had been broken in two or three different places, was severely bruised. The wrist was either sprained or twisted because it was swollen. They approached the reception desk.

"Mr. Malfoy? We're not supposed to see you until Thursday. What are you doing here?"

Both men turned to face a woman in a white doctor's coat. A quill writing on a clipboard was floating beside her. Draco smiled, but never loosened his grip on Harry. "Hello Maurine. I'm here because of Harry. He just got back from a mission and is all banged up, as you can see. Think you could help him?"

"Why would you need to be here, Draco?" Harry asked.

"No problem, Mr. Malfoy," Maurine said with a smile. "Take him on back. I'll be there in a moment."

"You can call me Draco you know."

"Sorry, Malfoy. Rules of the programme." The woman smiled and walked away, clipboard and quill following.

Harry was led past the reception desk and through a few doors until he was sat on a table top-like bench to be examined. Draco was slowly and carefully pulling his robes up and off him, so he wouldn't hurt Harry's arm. Once he folded them and put them aside, he slowly looked Harry over for any other injuries. Meanwhile, Harry was still asking questions. "I don't understand, Draco. Why do you need to be here Thursday? How do you know the woman, Maurine? Why didn't we check in at the reception desk? Are you okay? Is there something I need to know about? Draco, answer me!"

"Mr. Potter, what have you gotten yourself into now?" a female voice asked. Harry looked up to see Maurine standing in the doorway. "That arm looks pretty bad. What happened?"

"I was on a"

"Fractured radius and ulna, it's a clean break. Sprained wrist with bruising and swelling. Several other bruising sites," Draco interrupted. "It's not the worst we've been through. I think it was another Auror who did this."

"It wasn't his fault!" Harry said. "Frank was"

"You sure it was a clean break, Malfoy?" Maurine asked, ignoring Harry.

"Yes, there are no outward signs of fragments or unclean breaks. No extra bruising to show excess internal bleeding, and no skin breakage."

"Any other injuries?"

"I'm fine! Just the arm. And it wasn't"

"Nothing major. Maybe some scrapes and bruises. I'm not worried about those right now."

"No head injuries?"

"Nothing he's not used to."

"Hey! I resent that!"

"What about a silencing spell?"

"Maybe."

"I can speak just" Harry kept talking, but no noise came out. He looked accusingly at his boyfriend.

"That's better. So we're looking at a clean break of both bones in the forearm and a sprained wrist? No problem. We'll have you two home in an hour tops." Maurine left the room, closing the door behind her.

"No, I won't take the charm off. You need to listen to me for a moment. I need to know what you think. And I do mean what you think. I don't want to know the first thing you spit out of your mouth when you hear what I'm about to say. So just think about it for a moment, okay?" Draco asked. Harry nodded. "I'm not sick, I'm not dying, and there's nothing wrong with me, first of all. So just calm down." Harry sighed and relaxed a little. "The reason I'm supposed to be here Thursday is because I start my Healer training that day. I know we agreed we weren't going to do anything major that would change both of our lives without talking it over first, but this just feels right, Harry. I want to do this. I want to do something that no other Malfoy has done before: help people."

Harry stared at his boyfriend in shock. 'Draco wants to be a healer? He's never said anything like this before. But... He really wants to. This is something he wants more than anything. He is sincere about this. I don't... I don't know what to say. Yeah, we agreed not to make any major decisions without first consulting the other, but if he really wants this then I won't say no. I can't say no. Even if I do he'll do it anyways. I don't need to hold his hand. Speaking of which...' He looked down at his arm, still being held carefully by Draco's soft hands. He looked up into Draco's eyes, smiled, and nodded.

"You don't mind that I didn't tell you?"

Harry shook his head.

"I'll have to work weird hours for a while."

Harry nodded understandingly.

"I'll be away for days on end for the first month. Maybe even weeks."

Harry nodded again.

"Thank you, Harry."

What was he supposed to do? Forbid him to help save people's lives? Harry smiled and shook his head. He needed to get to St. Mungo's and fast. Quickly, he made his way back to the Three Broomsticks to use their floo. Once he picked himself up off the floor at the hospital and dusted off the floo powder, he looked around to get his bearings. As he turned left to make his way to the reception desk, a hand caught his sleeve. There was a woman standing there in a white doctor's robe. Harry searched for the girl's name.

"Kelli, hello," he said with a smile.

"Hello, Harry. Nice to see you again. I hope you're here for this," she pulled out a piece of parchment with Draco's handwriting on it, "and not because I need to fix you up proper again." She flashed a bright smile.

"Nope, just the parchment will do. Thanks, Kelli!" She walked away and he opened the letter to read it.

I do hope you remembered Kelli's name. It will be most embarrassing on Wednesday morning if you didn't. Please tell me you didn't embarrass me at work, Harry. What am I writing this for? Of course you embarrassed me. Oh well.

Seven long years we spent in the same building together. And we hated each other each and every single year spent there. Snape had some of the cleanest cauldrons though.

~draco~

"Cauldrons? Snape? What kind of clue is that?" Harry asked the room around him rhetorically. "I don't want to even think about Snape on our anniversary. However, this is very important if it's what I think it is. Seven years, hated each other, Snape, and more specifically Snape's cauldrons? Hogwarts. School. Looks like I'm going to see Dumbledore." He walked out the front doors of St. Mungo's and Apparated to the gates of Hogwarts. As he walked through the wards and up to the front doors, a memory assaulted him once more. This one he'd never forget...

"And what do we have here?" a voice drawled from behind him.

'Great,' Harry thought. 'Just what I need right now. Malfoy.' He finished picking up his books and tried to walk past the blonde-haired git only to find his pathway was blocked. "What do you want, Malfoy? I'm kind of in a rush."

"What happened, Potter? Someone knock your books out of your hands?" he teased in a babying voice.

"Stuff it Malfoy. I'm going to be late for Potions. And so are you." He started down the stairs.

"Snape's my godfather. He wouldn't punish me. You on the other hand..." He stuck his leg out and watched with a sick smile on his face as Harry went face first into the steps.

"Son of!"

"Ah ah ah, Potter. No cursing allowed. I'll have to take off points for that."

Harry knelt awkwardly on the steps, both hands over his bleeding and broken nose. Nasally, he threatened Draco. "I'll get you, Malfoy. You are so dead. Not only will I get points taken for being late, but for fighting and bleeding in his classroom as well probably. He may be your godfather, but he can't always be there to save your pompous arse."

"That will be another five for cursing. Really, Potter, do you kiss your aunt with that mouth?"

"Stuff it! And get out of my way!" Just as he stood and began shoving his books in his bag, the stairwell started to move. "Great! That's just great. I'm already late, Malfoy breaks my nose, and now the stairs are moving. I'm dead. If I weren't so afraid for my life, I'd just skip Snape's class!"

"Another five points for disrespecting a teacher. Really, Potter, have you no decency?"

"If you 'really Potter' me one more time I'm going to shove my boot right up your"

"My what? What were you going to say Potter? Nothing, that's right. Nothing. Why? Because you can't do anything about it. Not only would Snape take points from you, your children, and your grandchildren, but McGonagall would as well because the old bat is tough on everybody equally. Snape will never take points from me, so you can't touch me. I suggest you get used to it, Potter. This is the way our final year is going to go from now on."

"Oh, really?" a new voice questioned. "And here I was thinking neither of you were teachers."

Both boys turned and looked, in horror, at their Potions professor. "P-professor Snape, s-sir," Harry stuttered nasally. "We were just on our way to class. Sorry about being late, the staircase moved."

"I know, Potter. I watched it move. However, you are not on your way to my class, and I hope you would have been smart enough to realize that. It seems, however, my hopes were misplaced. The Infirmary, Mr. Potter, is where you should have been and where you should now be heading. You were correct in your assumption that I would be taking points should you bleed all over my classroom."

"You heard that?" Draco whispered, his eyes wide.

Snape turned to face him. "Oh, yes, Mr. Malfoy. And godson or not, I will not be talked about as such. Especially by you, Draco. Now then, I believe punishment is due. Mr. Potter. For being late, ten points. For fighting, another ten points. For the cursing, fifteen points altogether. And for the disrespect of a teacher, ten points." Harry didn't look as shocked as he felt. When his mouth had dropped open, it hurt his nose, so he promptly shut his mouth once again. "Mr. Malfoy. I think... five points for disrespecting a teacher and five points for breaking a fellow student's nose."

Now Draco's impression of a fish out of water almost made Harry laugh. Almost. "Both of you shall lose an additional five points for making me leave my classroom to find you, and leaving Miss Granger in charge. Be glad it's not more. Draco, get to class. Potter, get to the hospital wing. Now." Both boys scattered, but not before Snape could throw out one last bit. "And detention every night for two months, both of you. I think scrubbing cauldrons will make you think twice about being late to or missing my class."

It had been the longest two months of Harry's life. Snape would stand over them while they cleaned, rinsed, shined, and polished each and every cauldron that man ever made it seemed like. If they made any noise whatsoever, another half hour was tacked on to their detention that night. The only allowances made was once every other week for Quidditch practice. Since each team practiced three times a week, that meant the Gryffindor and Slytherin teams were without seekers for five out of every six

practices for two months. It would have been a crushing blow had both boys not been so good.

"Come in, Harry!"

Harry was jolted out of reverie. He hadn't even realized he was in Hogwarts, much less that he had made his way up to and now inside of Albus Dumbledore's offices! He shook his head and pasted a smile on his face. "Hello, Albus," he greeted. "Sorry about that. I didn't realize I'd been so deep in thought."

"It's okay, my boy," Albus said with a wave of his hand. He pushed a tray of tea and lemon drops toward Harry. "What can I do for you today?"

"I believe you have something of mine," Harry answered, politely refusing the refreshments.

"Oh? And what would I have of yours?" Albus asked, genuinely curious.

Harry faltered. "Draco... Draco didn't give you something to give to me?"

"No, I don't believe he did. Would it be something I would remember receiving?"

"Oh, yes," Harry answered quickly, now a bit worried. Draco was working up to something, something big by the looks of things. All the clues had been major points in their lives. "You see, today is our anniversary. I woke to an empty home, but I've been sent on a scavenger hunt of sorts. I am given a clue as to where the next clue will be. The last clue led me here, to Hogwarts. It's the only answer. And you're the Headmaster, so he would have given the next clue to you."

"May I see the last clue, Harry?" Dumbledore asked, reaching out for the paper. Harry silently gave it over. Dumbledore read it and then read it again. "No, not me, Harry. Read the paper and tell me what this is telling you."

Harry took the paper back and began to read. "'Seven long years we spent in the same building together. And we hated each other each and every single year spent there. Snape had some of the cleanest cauldrons though.' He was talking about Hogwarts. We spent seven years of schooling here, and Draco and I had one of the biggest rivalries since Salazar and Godric themselves. Snape was usually the one to punish us and usually by cleaning his cauldrons in silence." He paused. "It's not you! It's Snape! Snape has the next clue!"

"Very good, Mr. Potter." Harry whirled around to face Snape, who was standing in the open doorway. "When it took too long for you to show, I decided to come see Albus. I had a feeling you'd come to him first. Tell Draco he owes me." He thrust a piece of paper at Harry and then stalked off in that way that only Snape could do.

"Huh?" Harry looked down at the paper.

You went to Dumbledore, didn't you? Damn it! Now I owe Severus five galleons. Give me five galleons when you next see me, okay? Otherwise, I'll never hear the end of this. Well, it doesn't matter. Sev will never let me forget this day.

Oh well. I'd do it all over again if I felt like it. Next clue: It's been six years since I asked you to spend the night. And I don't mean for a party!

~draco~

"Spend the night?" Harry wondered aloud. He looked up at Dumbledore with a puzzled expression.

"Sorry, my boy, I was told not to help you." Dumbledore smiled that knowing smile of his and carefully shoed Harry out of his office with the advice to go somewhere where he could think.

"Somewhere I could think... Somewhere I could think..." Harry once more walked the halls of Hogwarts deeply lost in thought. As he reached the Apparation point just outside the gates, he froze. "Wait a minute! Everyone says that Draco is the thinking part of our pair! Draco always thought best at home. But, our home wasn't always his home. His apartment! We kept it as a storage unit. He would always go there to think. Everyone knew it. And he was the first to ask the other to stay the night. Draco's flat." With those two words, Harry apparated away. He appeared on the doorstep to the apartment Draco used to stay in. "Let's see..."

He looked all around the door of the flat, looked under the mat and in the mailbox. He looked around the railing and around the neighbour's door. He tried casting a revealing spell, a show me spell, and a point me spell. None of them worked. Growing irritated with Draco once again, Harry shoved his wand back into its holster and shouted at the door, "Give me the paper, you stupid door!"

Now, most kids were taught that the magic word was 'please'. Apparently, there were different magic words because the magic words this time were 'Give me the paper, you stupid door'. Once those words left his mouth, a note appeared on the door.

I wanted to know if you'd really insult the door just because you couldn't get the paper you knew would be here somewhere. I am amazed that you actually did. I had charmed it so that if you didn't insult it within five minutes, it would appear anyways.

Five years, my love, five years since you asked me to stay at home.

~draco~

"This is getting just plain weird, Draco," Harry groaned. "I've had to think about every clue, so let's think about this one for a minute. Five years since I asked Draco to stay at home. Where is home? Home is where we are now. Five years since I asked Draco to stay. The night I asked him to come back to my house! We were still living separately, but I wanted him to be a more permanent figure in my house since it was bigger!" And with that, he rushed down the stairs away from the flat.

... ..

A/N: This is being posted, in its entirety, as an apology for temporarily abandoning The 'Normal' Life of Harry Potter. Again, I am sorry-dpa06-

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

Harry awakes alone on his anniversary, but Draco did leave a note. Harry has to follow the clues to get to Draco at the end.

Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter. Everyone knows that I wish I did. And if you didn't know that, you do now. Because I do what to own Harry Potter and everyone/thing included with his name. Oh, I want them badly...

A/N: This took a long time for me to write and post. Sorry. I'm not a hurry up and write kinda author. I have to plan. And this one took planning, let me tell you. I got the idea while I was sleeping one night. That's when my muses usually talk to me. It's a two-part one-shot. Got that? TWO CHAPTERS!!! I decided I was going to stop it right in the middle of everything. Muah ha ha ha...

Part The Second

(I decided to keep uniform)

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As he got past the anti-Apparation wards, he froze in thought. 'There was no memory to go with this one. So maybe... maybe I have the wrong place?' he thought. He stood still, trying to think of another answer. When one wouldn't come, he read the parchment again out loud. "Five years, my love, five years since you asked me to stay at home.' Home may be *where* I asked him to stay, but it's not where *the conversation* took place! It was as we walked away from Hogsmeade!" The memory took over then, fast and hard.

Harry and Draco had just spent the entire day walking around Hogsmeade and looking in all the shops. Draco insisted on buying anything that Harry's gaze rested on for more than five seconds. And Harry bought Draco a few things as well, sometimes because he knew he could take it from Draco later. They decided to walk to the parting point, as there was a path out of Hogsmeade that split to head to their respective homes. However, when they got there, an overwhelming feeling of loneliness came over Harry.

"Harry?" Draco asked, turning to face his boyfriend. "What is it? What's wrong?"

"I just... I don't want today to end. I don't want to watch you walk away, and I don't want you to leave," was the answer.

"You know I'm not leaving you. It took this long to get to this point, and there's no way I'm giving that up now. You know that after I get off my shift tomorrow at St. Mungo's I'll be at your house."

"I know, but it's not the same." Harry went silent, staring at their feet. Then it hit him: Draco could stay the night! He could stay at his house. Surely they were ready for that. He'd already stayed at Draco's. There was no reason to not invite Draco over. In fact, it was probably long overdue.

"What if I"

"Will you stay with me tonight?" Harry asked in a rush.

"Do what now? If you want me to understand you, you have to speak plain British, Harry."

"Would you stay with me tonight? At my house?" Harry asked, slower this time.

Draco's reaction was Kodak: wide eyes, mouth in a small 'o', eyes blinking every few seconds. "Y-yeah," he finally got out. "Yes, of course. That would be fine. Just... just come with me to my apartment to get my things so I can leave from your place to work. That sound good?"

"Perfect." They turned to the left and headed to Draco's then. "You know, all you had to do was ask."

Harry smiled at the memory, a faint blush coming to his cheeks. Oh, he remembered that night alright. The memory began to play again, thinking perhaps Harry didn't understand where his next clue was to lead to. But he did know. And he made his way to Hogsmeade with a loud *crack*.

When he got there, the note was floating in midair, just waiting for him. He walked up to it, but was gently thrown backwards about a foot by a barrier. He shook his head and tried again. He couldn't get through. Trying all sides of the note, he discovered there was no way. 'Maybe there's a key to get to it, like at Draco's apartment,' he thought. "Give me the note, you moron!" he said, thinking maybe it was the same. He tried again, but still couldn't get through.

Getting frustrated, he tried spells and incantations, physical force and mind strength. But nothing was getting through the barrier. "What in the bloody hell am I supposed to do?" He read through the note that had led him here. When he was done, the memory started playing again. "You know, all you had to do was ask... all you had to do was ask... ask... ask..." "Ask? Ask what?" The memory began again. Harry was getting frustrated. He wanted to see Draco. If the numbers were going as he thought, this clue would be number four of ten. Only three to go once he got to this one. If he *could* get to it that was. "Ask. Wait a minute." He thought for a few moments. "You can't be serious?" Nothing happened. "Fine. Would you stay with me tonight? At my house?"

The barrier shifted and shimmered in front of him, finally allowing him access to the floating note.

See? Sentimentalist. You remember every little thing that's led up to this day I bet. I could ask you the colour of the tablecloth from the Weasleys' wedding, and I bet you'd remember. I'm sighing in case you want to know.

We've lived in this house for four years now.

(And yes, I know this one's easier than the rest. Bite me.)

~draco~

He didn't even get a moment to think on the note. He knew what house Draco spoke... wrote about. It was his house, their house. The memory started as soon as thought

about home.

"You know I was thinking," Harry started.

"That must have hurt," Draco teased. A pillow went flying at his head. "Hey! Don't mess up the hair!"

The pair was snuggled together in bed, just relaxing after their respective days. Harry sighed and was quiet. He wasn't used to being open and honest about his emotions. And when things interrupted him, he usually clammed up and didn't say what he had wanted to. This was one of those times. Draco wasn't being deliberately mean or anything like that. He was just teasing. That was just how Draco was.

"Love? Harry? What's wrong? What is it?" He was getting worried now. Harry had closed himself off. When he did that, it meant there was something he wanted to say but was worried about getting hurt after he said it. Not physically, no. Harry had rarely been physically hurt by speaking his mind. Only emotionally and mentally. His relatives had belittled and demeaned him for years, and the scarring was too deep to completely heal. "Speak to me. I promise to listen."

"I know. I just..." He trailed off.

"You know I love you. You know I would never do what they did. I want to hear your thoughts. I want to know what you're feeling and thinking and wanting. I can't do that if you don't tell me."

"You could use Legilimency."

"You know I'd never do that without permission. Please? Tell me?"

Harry sighed. "I just... I think it's pointless for you to be going back and forth like you do." He paused, but Draco remained silent. "I mean, you stay here at nights, and you work at the hospital, and you go to your apartment. Most of your mail comes here, and work knows to call here first rather than your apartment. You've got stuff in the loo, and have changed the kitchen around so you can cook, and planted things in the gardens for your potions stock, and roped off a part of the basement for your potions lab, and"

"Harry!" Draco interrupted. "Harry, calm down. Whatever it is you're trying to say, I'm not going to hate you for it. I want you to come out and say it. Look me in the eyes, that's it. Now, what is it you want to say really?"

"I... I want you to... I want you to stay. Here. Permanently. You already do, practically."

Draco was floored. He hadn't expected this, not tonight, and definitely not from Harry. He was actually thinking of taking Harry out in the next week or two to ask him himself. Harry wasn't usually forward about things in their relationship. It was hard for him to be that open. He stared at his boyfriend with as much love as he could manage. He was proud of the younger man, proud that he could voice his wants and opinions and ask for something that would be a big step in their relationship.

"Yeah, I know," Harry said suddenly. "It's not the best idea and it's too soon. You probably don't even want to move in with me. That's why you haven't yet. You need to get away occasionally, and that's why you keep going to your apartment. I understand. I'd probably want to get away from me too." He wrapped his arms around himself, trying to comfort himself. "I'm not exactly the best boyfriend material. I understand that. It's okay. You don't have to say anything."

Draco quickly realized that Harry had taken his silence as a decline of Harry's wishes. He wrapped his own arms around Harry and kissed him to quiet him. "I didn't say no, did I? I didn't think so. I would have remembered saying that. Now then, I would love to move into your house. We can go to my apartment tomorrow and pack everything else up. What do you say?"

"I think it sounds marvelous." And that was that.

Harry realized he was crying. He loved that memory most of all. He wanted Draco to stay with him all the time, but Draco was such a private person sometimes that he didn't think that them living together would ever be possible. But for four years now they'd done it. Which reminded him, he needed to get home and find that note. He Apparated once more to the front walk and ran all the way to the house. The wards recognized his magic and opened the front door for him, which was good for him as he was in a rush to get inside.

However, he had to stop as soon as he got through the front door. He didn't know where to go. The memory started again when it realized he didn't know where exactly he was to go to find the next note. He had to watch it three more times before he finally realized he had to go to the bedroom. Then he raced up the stairs to get to said bedroom. There was no note. He looked all over, but there was no note. He tried revealing spells, insults, saying things from the last memory. Nothing. He went into the bathroom and looked there. He looked in the shower and in the medicine cabinet, in the linen closet and the dirty clothes' hamper.

Back in the bedroom, he looked in all the drawers and in the closet. He tried the bureau and under the bed. Getting frustrated, he thought perhaps it was under the sheets. With a force that nearly ripped the material in two, he threw the pillows across the room and then pulled the comforter and sheets off the bed. When there was nothing but a mattress left, he stood over the bed heaving. There was no note. On a last ditch thought, he checked between the mattress and the box springs. No note.

On the verge of bursting into tears, Harry sat down at the end of the bed and thought out loud about the last clue. "He said five years since I asked him to stay home. We were here, in this room, in this very bed. Where else could it possibly be?!" he cried out, a tear finally falling. He wanted Draco. He wanted to celebrate their anniversary by cuddling up on the couch in front of the fire, or watching a sappy movie, or snogging. Anything but this now depressing game where he had to run around looking for clues that suddenly stopped when

"What's this?" Cocking his head to the side, Harry bent down to see what a bit of cream coloured something was amidst their brown, black, and green sheet set. He grabbed hold of the foreign colour and pulled. "The note!" he cried victoriously. "It must have been among the sheets and I just didn't see it!" Quickly he opened it and read what was written there in Draco's neat scrawl.

Make the bed.

"What? That's it?" He turned the note over, looking for the rest of the clue. "Make the bed. Fine, fine. I'll play the little game. At least I have the note." Quickly, hoping it was like the note from the restaurant, Harry made the bed. First the fitted sheet, then the cover sheet, then the wool blanket, then the comforter, and then their pillows. He looked at the note again.

Put my pillow on my side of the bed. And I mean my pillow, Harry.

"Oh for the love of!" Getting irritated now, Harry flipped two of the four pillows on the bed. "Is that better, Your Highness?"

Since I'm sure you've made some smartarse comment, the answer is 'Yes.'

Now then, three years ago the worst thing that's ever happened in my life took place. But it was quickly rectified. It took thirty-two galleons, a swallowing of my pride and dignity, and a new pair of trousers, but I did it. And there's not a day that goes by that I think it wasn't worth it.

~draco~

"That's the sappiest one yet," he commented idly, reading the note once more. "Three years... worst thing... rectified... thirty-two galleons... pride and dignity... worth it..." And right on schedule, like a freight train, the memory hit. It felt like a freight train with its ferocity, too.

His heart shattered into a million pieces. Those pieces were gathered up and placed in a baggie for someone to tap dance on. Then those pieces were thrown into an incinerator. The door was closed and locked. And that was still an understatement to the pain he felt. Gods, how could he have been so stupid?! Without thinking for another second, Harry turned and ran out of the building, away from that place. He couldn't stay there another instant. To see...

No, he wouldn't even think about it. But how could he not? Where was someplace he wouldn't think? Hogwarts. No, that was his school. Nothing but thinking there. Home. No, too many reminders. Weasleys. No, they'd know in an instant that something was up. The twins! He'd go to Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes! It was perfect. In mid stride, he Apparated in front of the store. Without waiting to get his full bearings, Harry ran into the store. There were a few customers here and there, looking at things to buy. George was talking to a few younger kids about what to expect from the product they'd just purchased.

Fred, however, was just watching everyone else in the store. He saw Harry burst in and continued to watch as he ran past them and into a back room. As silent partner, Harry had a few perks when it came to the small shop. A silent chat between brothers and George took over the storefront while Fred followed the distraught brother-in-all-but-blood. He found Harry crying his eyes out over a box of Extendable Ears.

"Harry? What's wrong mate? What's got you all worked up?" he asked softly, placing on hand on Harry's shoulder.

"Just don't want to think," Harry mumbled between snuffles. "Give me paperwork or sorting or cleaning or anything to do, please? Just anything. I don't want to think for a while. No questions, no answers. And, most importantly, no thinking."

"Yeah, no problems." He led Harry to a different room a few doors down. "Here, why don't you start by alphabetizing our inventory in these two filing cabinets, yeah?"

"Yeah. Yeah, that works. Thanks, Fred." Harry wiped his nose on his sleeve and smiled pitifully.

"S okay, Harry. I'll come check on you in a bit, 'kay?"

Harry nodded and Fred left, leaving the door open a bit. He went out to tell his brother what was going on, and then life continued as if nothing had happened. As business wound down, Harry came out of the back room and asked for something else to do. George set him to replacing the products customers had moved around during the day. When he was done with that, they had Harry cook dinner in their flat above the store. Instead of joining them for dinner, Harry started cleaning their flat.

"Harry, stop. Would you please Harry!" George snapped, grabbing Harry's wrist to make him stand still for a few moments so he could talk to him. "Will you tell me what's going on please? You've been acting weird all day now, and it's starting to worry us a little much. At first, it was just the filing or sorting. And that was okay. I can understand the need for mindlessness. But cooking us dinner and not eating it, and then cleaning our house? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Harry said quickly. "There's nothing wrong." He turned to fold the towels on the loveseat.

"Bull, Harry," Fred said, coming to stand by his twin. "We know something's up"

"and we want to know what it is," George finished.

Harry put the dishtowel down, but kept his back turned to the twins. "I just don't want to think. If I keep busy and do menial things that don't take any thought, then I won't think. I won't keep seeing it. I can't see it again. Please, just let me do this?"

"What don't you want to see, Harry?" Fred asked.

"Them," he whispered. "D-d-raco and... I don't even know!" he cried out, starting to sob. "I just went to see if there were any pictures in storage. We kept his flat as a storage unit since it's pretty cheap as long as we don't use the water or electricity all that much. And we don't. Because we live at h-home. But I went there to get pictures and there were noises and I went to see and I saw and now I don't want to see I just want to work and not think so please just let me do this?" he asked in a rush.

"What did you see?" Fred asked.

"Them!" he shouted, turning to face the twins. "D-d-raco... and... I don't know! I don't know who he was! But he was there! And it wasn't me! So just just let me not think about it, please?"

In an instant, Fred and George had enveloped Harry in a three-way hug, trying to comfort him as much as they could. It proved to be too much for Harry, who broke down sobbing. His knees buckled, slowly sending the three of them to the floor. They held the sobbing younger man until it was just snuffles and shuddering breaths. Then they tucked Harry into one of their beds, cleared their dinner mess, and flooed to the Burrow. After they explained what had happened to their mum, dad, Ron, Hermione, and Charlie, they worked out a plan to cheer Harry up and keep him busy. There was plenty around the Burrow that Harry could help with.

So the next morning, George took Harry to the Burrow. Molly kept him busy all day and Harry was just fine with that.

Back to the shop, George and Fred were nearly arrested for murder when Draco walked through the door. He had come looking for his boyfriend, or so Harry was told later that evening. George explained to the blond what had happened and told him that if he came near Harry again, he'd have the whole Weasley family to deal with. But that didn't stop Draco for an instant. He tried several times to talk to Harry via owl, floo, and in person. Any way he could get in touch with his boyfriend, he tried it. Finally, about two weeks later, an owl appeared at the Burrow with a heavy box attached to its feet. Harry took the box and nearly threw it away when he saw who it was from.

But he opened it, curious as to what was inside. A gasp had Molly running into the room to see if he was okay. She found him staring at a book in the parlour room. "Harry, dear, are you alright? Is everything okay?" She saw who the gift was from and immediately frowned. "What has he sent you now?"

"What I've been working on for months now. A photo album. Of us." He looked up at his adoptive mother with tears in his eyes. "Look. These were pictures from our childhood. We hated each other so much then... And newspaper clippings about me and a few about him. Only happy things. Here's his medical diploma and my Auror license. A picture of us in front of our h-house. I went to the flat to get some more pictures. I wanted to surprise him. Instead, he surprised me. Two times now."

Molly put an arm around his shoulders. Then she saw something else in the box. "Harry dear, what's this?"

"It's... a note." He picked it up, read it, then read it aloud for Molly. "Meet me at the Weasley shop on Friday. Please, allow me this one last effort. ~d~ That's all it says." He looked up. "What should I do?"

"Well... He can't hurt you anymore. We'll be there for you. Write him back and tell him a time, if you want. He wants to do this in public and at the shop. He must want to apologize."

Harry continued to look through the photo album the next few days, just waiting for Friday. He went into work with the twins and did a few things here and there. His need to

work so he wouldn't think had passed after a few days, so now he was just waiting. Every time the little bell above the door chimed, Harry looked up expecting to see Draco. But it wasn't until the afternoon rush picked up that the blonde appeared. He was dressed in his best trousers and shirt, no robes, and was carrying something clenched in his left fist.

Fred and George were immediately by Harry's sides while Ron ran the cash register and Ginny walked through the store seeing if anyone needed help. There were anti-theft spells and jinxes on the store and the items, and no one wanted to be pranked by Fred or George. Draco moved to the centre of the store and then stopped. For a moment, no one moved except the customers going about their business. And then Draco dropped to his knees. Everyone froze then, shocked at the display.

"I screwed up," Draco said softly. It was deathly silent in the store now, all eyes on Draco. "I screwed up bad. There's... I don't even know what to say. I've spent these last three weeks trying to figure it out. It wasn't even worth it. It wasn't even close to being worth it. I've been suspended from St. Mungo's until I am capable of working again. I found out you'd taken a few weeks off from the Auror squad because of me. I hurt you, and I know that. There's nothing I can say or do that will fix this or change anything. I know that. And if you walk away after today, I would understand completely.

"I can't explain myself, because there is no excuse. I can't say I'll make it better, because I've hurt you deeper than any other. I can't make it go away, because it will always be there now. But I can swear to never do it again. I can swear that I will work, until you relieve me, to never do anything like it again. I can swear that I will never, ever hurt you this way again. I would swear anything right now, Harry. Anything. And I swear it upon a Promise Ring, if you'll have it."

He opened his fist and presented the solid silver band to Harry. The whole shop gasped and held their breaths. Harry didn't know what to do. This obviously meant something monumental, but he couldn't guess what. The only thing he could think of was a marriage proposal, but Draco hadn't said anything about marriage. He took out his wand and cast a silencing charm around him and the twins. "What? What does this mean for me?" he asked.

"Harry," Fred began, "he's swearing something to you. On a Promise Ring. It's... unbreakable!"

"It's like he's making an Unbreakable Vow," George explained. "If he breaks his swears, he won't die. It will hurt him very much. The swears are imprinted on his magic and his soul. He can't break them unless he really, really wants to. It will warn him when he's getting close to breaking them and then continue to get worse the closer he gets to breaking his promises. If and when he finally breaks them, he may very well have to go to St. Mungo's to be healed. He's Promising to never hurt you again, Harry."

"Until you relieve him of that Promise," Fred jumped in. "When you say it's over, when you're sure he won't go back on his Promises without the aide of the ring, you can relieve him of the Promises. Do you want to accept?"

"Yes, but..."

"But...?"

"But he hurt me! I can't just forget that. I can't just forget what happened."

"He's not asking that you do," George said. "Remember? 'I can't make it go away, because it will always be there now.' He doesn't want you to forget. He doesn't want to repeat this experience. That's why he's Promising you this."

Ron stepped into the silence bubble. "What are the plans?"

"Harry's thinking about accepting the Promise Ring," Fred answered.

"Good." Harry looked at Ron in shock. "What? He can't hurt you unless he wants whatever it is more than you with the Promise Ring, Harry. This will be good for both of you. I've seen you two together. I don't like him, and this didn't help any. But you two just fit. Try it out. It's not life binding. He's not tying your souls together or anything."

Harry nodded and cancelled the silencing spell. Draco hadn't moved but to breathe and blink. 'It must be uncomfortable on his knees on the ground like that,' Harry thought. 'And I must have worried him talking to the Weasleys for so long like that. Good. He deserves to be uncomfortable after this.' "Draco... I don't even know where to begin. Just... just don't ever do that again. Don't think about it, don't imagine it, don't remember it, except to remember not to do it. That hurt more than anything the Dursleys or Voldemort ever did."

Draco flinched at being compared to the two most hated subjects in Harry's life.

"If you ever," Ron began in a steely cold voice, "ever hurt him again, I will kill you. And no one will stop me."

Harry reached forward to place his palm on Draco's cheek. "I don't know if there's anything special I'm supposed to say now. Since this was so important that the entire shop has stopped moving, there must be something I'm to say." But Draco didn't answer his question. "What do I do and say now, Draco?" Still, he said nothing.

George touched Harry's shoulder. "He can't say anything now. Once he's said his swears and presented the ring, he can only wait until you accept or decline. Just take the ring and put it on, or close his fist around the ring to decline."

Harry reached down and plucked the ring from Draco's hand. He hesitated on which finger it went on.

Fred explained, "It goes on your right ring finger. It's the second most important finger, next to your left ring. That's left open for an engagement or wedding ring should you marry someone."

The ring was placed on his right hand. Only then did Draco stand up with a small smile on his face. "May I... may I hug you, Harry?" he asked slowly. In answer, Harry dove into his arms, hugging him tightly.

"Oh, Gods," Harry choked out. He remembered that day alright. It had broken his heart to see that, then spend three weeks away from Draco, and then to go through the Promise Ceremony. He learned more about it later. He tried to relieve Draco of it several times each year since then, but Draco wouldn't accept. He wanted it to stay there. Harry would always keep the ring, but once Draco was relieved of the swears, the magic wouldn't be binding any longer. He read the note. "It has to of be at the shop," he said to himself. He ran out of the house and outside the Apparation wards.

In an instant, he was in front of the Weasley twins' shop. He tried to calm himself, but still ended up bursting into the store anyways. "The note!" he practically shouted, running toward one of the twins. He was so excited he couldn't even take a moment to see which twin he was running at. He stopped when he was only a foot away from the older man, but couldn't stand still. "Please, I know one of you has it. I must have the note. Please please please!"

"He said you had to get on your knees to ask for it," one of the twins said.

"He said you'd understand because you've had to do other things to get the other notes," the other added.

"You're joking, right?" Harry asked, suddenly serious.

"No, he said you had to ask on your knees or it wouldn't work right."

"And I want to see you ask us for a piece of parchment on your knees anyways," the second smirked. George.

"No way!"

"Okay," Fred said sadly. "Here's the note, but he said it wouldn't work."

Harry read the note, his eyes bugging out at the message.

They're telling the truth, Love.

"No. Effing. Way." Harry read it once more to verify it and then gave up with a sigh. He handed the note to George and then slipped to his knees. "May I please have the note I know Draco left with you for me?"

"Why, certainly, Harry!" George said with a big grin plastered on his face.

Harry snatched the note from George's hand and read it again.

Really, Harry...

It's been two years since I could walk among them and not fear for my life.

~draco~

"And not fear for his life? What's that about?"

"Did he really write that?!" Fred asked with a smile, looking over Harry's shoulder. "Oi, he did!"

"Well I'll be," George muttered. Suddenly, the twins went back to working, not answering any of Harry's questions. They did watch in amazement as Harry went still and his eyes glazed over. Draco had told them that this would happen, but it was still a sight to behold. The memory came just as fast and hard as all the others had.

Harry and Draco had been invited to dinner at the Weasleys' once more, this time for Ginny's promotion to Charms Professor. She'd been studying under Filius Flitwick for the last three years, as well as helping Poppy Pomfrey and Pomona Sprout when they needed it. Filius finally decided to call it quits and went into retirement.

Draco had always been uncomfortable around the Weasleys. There had been a long standing feud between the Weasleys and the Malfoys. He and Ron had been bitter rivals in school. The final straw had been the previous year when he'd cheated on Harry. The Weasleys had done their family duty in protecting Harry and watching Draco like a hawk when he was taken back by Harry. Ever since then, he'd been the proud new owner of glares, careful watchings, trailings, and more than a few tricks from the twins. Arthur Weasley had even had a talk with Draco! Harry told them to back off, but they never really did.

But this night was about celebrating Ginny's promotion to Professor, so they were all playing nice. It helped that Ginny sat on one side of Draco and Harry on the other. The twins sat on the opposite side with Ron across from Harry, and Molly and Arthur at each end of the table. They'd talked about anything and everything, even asked Draco how his new research with the Cruciatus Curse was coming.

As they were in the middle of dessert, Arthur cleared his throat. "I, uh, I have something to say on behalf of the family." Harry looked at him, excited to see what Arthur had to say about his daughter. "Harry, you and Draco have been together for quite some time. I am happy to see you taking it slowly. And after last year's fiasco, I am happy that your relationship is strong. Anyone can see that your love for each other is true and pure, especially those who live and have lived in this house."

"What he means to say," Molly butt in, "is that we think Draco is good for you, and Harry for you, Draco. The two of you are perfect for each other."

"And we just wanted to tell you that we accept Draco," Arthur finished.

Harry was floored. This wasn't about Ginny! This was about him and Draco! He looked at the twins and Ron and saw the smiles on their faces: genuine smiles. Not smirks, not knowing grins. Just... smiles.

"You mean... You mean you'll stop hazing him and questioning us and teasing us and just accept him now?"

"Well..." Ron began, "the teasing will never stop."

"That's half the fun of"

"having a brother with a boyfriend."

"We haze because"

"it's our brotherly right."

"And because it's Malfoy," Ron finished. "I mean, come on, Harry. We're not suddenly angels. We'll just be nicer now."

"The night you guys told us you accepted him!" Harry suddenly shouted, scaring the twins who'd been watching him closely. "That's why you were laughing at what the note said! And now that I think about it, that was pretty damn funny. Okay, to the Burrow. Can I use your floo?"

"Course mate."

"Go right ahead."

Harry was in a backroom and in the Burrow in a matter of seconds. "Molly? Arthur?" he called out. Since they had been the ones to say it that night, he figured one of them would have the next note. "Is someone here?" He looked around, but couldn't find anyone. That's when he noticed the note attached to the mantle he'd flooed into.

I bet you've been chasing these notes so long, you forgot to eat. Tell Molly.

"He's right. I haven't eaten. What time is it?"

"It's almost two!" a voice nearly shrieked behind him. He whirled around to see Molly standing there with her hands on her hips. "Draco mentioned you might not have eaten, but I didn't think you'd really wait this long to eat. Get in here, get in here right this instant and start eating. Anniversary or not, I'll not have you skipping meals. If I didn't know you'd had a hearty breakfast, I'd box your ears, young man. March!"

Harry high-tailed it into the kitchen to eat, taking a little of everything that had been set out for him. There was no getting around Molly when she was like this, and he was hungry anyways. Once he finished off his third piece of pie, he finally asked if he could be finished.

"Only because you ate enough for two of my Rons," Molly answered with a smile. "Now read your note again."

Now that you've eaten proper, go out to the back orchard.

"He told me to go out to the back orchard. We don't have a back orchard," Harry said, confused.

"You don't, but we do," Molly said. "Come along then." She took Harry's arm and led him to the back orchard. There he saw all the Weasleys and their respective spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, and children. And Draco. That's what he'd been searching for all day long.

He ran to him and hugged him fiercely. "I've waited for this since I woke up alone," he whispered.

"Oh, but you're not done yet. Read the note."

"The note? I did. It told me to come here."

"Read the note, Harry," Draco stressed.

It's been a countdown.

Ten years since you started Auror training.

Nine years since I said 'I love you.'

Eight years since I started Healer training.

Seven years of schooling together.

Six years since I asked you to stay the night.

Five years since you asked me to stay the night.

Four years of living together in the house.

Three years since I screwed up.

Two years since the Weasleys accepted me.

Now I just have one question for you:

Will you marry me?

~draco~

Harry looked up wide-eyed and mouth slightly open to see Draco kneeling before him with a ring in his hand eerily similar to three years ago. Draco must have read his mind because he started talking.

"We've been together for ten years, with seven years of schooling together before that. We know everything there is to know about each other. We live together; we love together; we belong together. Will you do me the honour, Harry Potter, of becoming my bonded husband in this life and all the next to come?"

Harry was still surprised and amazed and so very, very happy.

Ron leaned over his should and said in a stage whisper, "This is the part where you say 'Yes'."

"Yes!" Harry shouted suddenly. "Yes, yes yes yes, a thousand times yes!" He tackled Draco then, knocking them both over, and kissing his fiancé deeply and soundly. After a few moments, they broke apart. Harry sat up, thus allowing Draco to do the same. Draco placed the ring on Harry's left ring finger. "Oh, it's beautiful." It was a gold band, with Runes of love and fidelity etched into it. On the inside were their names: Draco Malfoy-Potter and Harry Malfoy-Potter. "You... You're combining our names?"

"Yes. We're both heirs. Neither of us is female. It made sense to me. Would you rather... would you rather have just one name then?" Draco asked hesitantly.

"No. This is perfect. Just like you." He kissed Draco again.

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A/N: And that's it, folks! Behold the two-part one-shot. I have more fics planned. I just need to write them. Review please! **dpa06-**