

Hollow Play

by Cliche

With nowhere else to go, Hermione turns to the only other man that she can trust
after all these years: her old friend and fellow fighter, Remus Lupin.

But is everything as it seems to be? Was it really Draco who decided to end such a
happy relationship? And what would happen now that Hermione has turned to
someone else?

Personal Matters

Chapter 1 of 1

With nowhere else to go, Hermione turns to the only other man that she can trust after all these years: her old friend and
fellow fighter, Remus Lupin.

But is everything as it seems to be? Was it really Draco who decided to end such a happy relationship? And what would
happen now that Hermione has turned to someone else?

Hollow Play

By Cliche

Chapter One:

"A long time ago, man would listen in amazement to the sound of regular beats in his chest, never suspecting what they were. He was unable to identify himself with so alien and unfamiliar object as the body. The body was a cage, and inside that cage was something which looked, listened, feared, thought, and marveled; that something, that remainder left over after the body had been accounted for, was the soul" --Milan Kundera, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being"

Draco Malfoy stumbled slightly after Apparating into this bedroom. The night was still young, nearing the witching hour. Not that Draco worried about such things. He himself was a wizard and had been sharing (not just) his bed with the same witch for the better part of two years. Faintly, he remembered his mother 'lecturing' him on Apparating while intoxicated.

"Apparating while impaired? By the gods, Draco!" She had clucked her tongue in disapproval, while waving a finger back and forth, gesturing no. He had tried to follow that finger with only his eyes, but in his state, his whole head jerked from side to side. Narcissa had laughed at that and had patted the boy on his head. Mumbling something about "My little dragon," and that had been that.

The memory itself had the young man shaking his head as if he were still following the slim digit. But he was no longer a boy who had gotten pissed to celebrate his coming of age. Tonight, he had drunk himself stupid in the hopes that he could get rid of her.

The room was dark, save for a few low candles. They cast shadows, throwing them every which way. Creating phantoms. He shivered. He was a melancholy drunk to be

sure.

Having made his way to the lush bed that dominated the finely decorated room, he sat himself down heavily and began to take off his dragon hide boots. He had dressed simply in black robes, a fine white shirt, and impeccable trousers. He realized slowly that he was no longer in possession of his robes and could not remember where he had left them.

He started to pull his shirt over his head when the body in his bed began to move about.

The blond man cursed silently. He had ignored her presence, putting off what he had set out to do weeks ago. There would be no more stalling, not after the morning before, and certainly not after his efforts tonight. He kept his back to her, still struggling to remove his clothing.

"Draco?"

The voice was one he knew well. He had been listening to it since he was a boy. As a young man, he had learned to love that voice. It held a slight authority, but was sweetly feminine. It was unmistakable and at this moment it was sleep coated and pushed him closer to the edge.

When he didn't answer, she tried again.

"Draco, are you just getting in?"

The now bare-chested man grunted in response.

"Where were you?"

The little-know-it-all need to knowing everything, didn't she?

"If you insist on knowing, I was taking care of some personal matters."

He dared look at the young woman. Her hair a halo of curls and her amber eyes wide with curiosity. She looked so damned young. For a moment, he felt like a lecherous old man appraising a girl far too young for him. Far too good, too innocent.

War had damaged them all, aged them all. It had taken away years that were meant to be remembered with fondness, marked by teenaged heart break and young love. Instead, their generation, their memories, would be saturated in blood and tears, remembered by the dates of battles and the thoughts of those who had fallen.

Hermione wasn't like the rest of them. Yes, she was damaged. More so than most realized, but war had changed her for the better. She put her resentment behind her and learned to accept the things she could not change. She was one of the few who managed to do so in the years since the war had ended.

Still incredibly bookish, she thrived where most others would fall short, but the young witch had learned to live from all the death she had encountered. She no longer hid behind the brawn of her two best friends, only ever thinking herself as the brain. Now she was a participant, where before she had not been.

Draco tore his eyes away from her and went back to undressing. For every second he was near her, the more sober he became. This made him all the more agitated.

"Personal matters? At this hour?"

The voice that had sounded so muddled with sleep was now alert.

"If you must know Hermione, I had business in Knockturn Alley."

His lover gasped and with that, the ugliest of sneers planted itself on his face. He felt the bed dip as she got up. He heard her feet pad on the floor as she moved to stand in front of him. He knew she would smell the spirits; would smell his sweat; would smell the cheap perfume worn only by a woman who would sell her love.

She crouched down in front of him, placing her small hands on his knees. She was worried and they both knew she had good reason to be.

"What were you doing there?"

"And they call you the brightest witch of our age."

The remark made her flinch. Not just from the words, but from his tone.

"I think my business there would be quite obvious, Hermione."

"I--I don't understand?"

It was a question, the tone shy of pleading. He knew what she was thinking. She was wondering how he could be so heartless, so crass. How could a man she loved hurt her so much? He had no answers for any of those questions, but it mattered little. He knew her; she would not ask until she absolutely couldn't keep them in any longer. By then, he would think of all sorts of horrible things to say to her.

He took one of her hands in his own, which would have been a romantic gesture, if his face had not been twisted into something so ugly. He turned it over, palm side up and began stroking gently.

"What makes you think that I would enjoy sharing my bed with an incompetent lover?"

He continued to stroke her palm, even as she struggled to reclaim it. He laughed harshly and held on tighter. He did not want to hurt her, but the idea of bruising more than just her ego was tempting. It would make it easier for them both.

"You're a bastard, Malfoy."

The sound of his surname shocked him for a second, but not long enough for him to drop her hand or for his face to show it. He had become used to her tongue caressing each letter in his given name, but the fact that she reverted to Malfoy proved he had hit his mark.

"I never said otherwise, Granger."

He looked into her eyes then. They were wet with unshed tears that her pride would not allow to spill. She had begged for answer. She would not lower herself more than she already had, if she could possibly help it. He loved that about her: her strength. Yet he felt the urge to break her.

"You're a distraction, and frankly, I've grown bored."

"You were the one who pursued me! There were plenty of women who threw themselves at you! Why didn't you choose one of them?"

He dropped her hand suddenly and brought one of his own under her chin, tilting it up slightly, so that the wetness from her eyes leaked, and in their wake, left slightly dampened trails.

"Why would I have given them a second look when I could have the Gryffindor Princess in my bed? We were friends then, weren't we? The young Death Eater, turned spy."

Befriended by one of the Light's strongest supporters. It helped put my family back in good-standing, you loved me, and I would finally know what it was like to taste you. There is no one answer, but it is quite simple, Granger. I. Wanted. You."

She recoiled, as if she had been struck, and the sight pained him, but not enough to stop. He had remained dangerously calm through most of their conversation. He had decided days before that when the time came, he would be cruel, but he would not raise his voice.

"I trusted you." She bit out.

He wanted her to leave. To run. To fucking leave him alone. But she was still in front of him, looking like a wounded animal trying to understand why its master would kick at her when she only wanted to love him.

"A bit of a mistake on your part, I'd say."

He stood up then and made his way across their room to a dresser filled with clothes.

After pulling on his own sleep wear, he tied back his hair and secured it, then sat himself on Hermione's side of the bed.

"I daresay I'm tired." He yawned, though it was forced. He was not an inch tired, but his body was heavy and rest sounded as good an idea as any.

That was her dismissal, and to his great relief, she didn't miss a beat. She pulled on her Muggle sweatshirt and, without another word, Disapparated.

The silence following the crack of her departure was deafening and he had to get out of bed. Any noise would help.

He pointed his wand at the fireplace grate and the logs there burst into flame.

It was over.

This was what he had wanted. He had wanted to hurt her enough to make her leave him. That was imperative. She had to be the one who left. He had forced her hand, yes. But she had left him. To those who did not know any better, it would seem she had grown bored of their relationship and moved out.

But they would know better.

His parents would know better and so would her friends. Who, up until this very night, had also been his own. Narcissa and Lucius would forgive their son, even though they had grown quite fond of Hermione. But the Potters? The Weasleys? They would not be so lenient.

Draco would change the wards accordingly in the morning, but for this moment, all he could do was examine his life and wonder how things had gone so wrong.