

Some Things Change

by LiteraryBeauty

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

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The first time Draco Malfoy had asked her to go on a date with him, Hermione Granger laughed.

It wasn't quite as funny the second time.

Both working in the Ministry of Magic in the Department of Charities, the two saw each other in passing regularly, but didn't actually work together. Hermione had her small office, which was shared with a colleague, and Draco had his Office, which was expansive and plush, suited to his tastes. It didn't matter that Hermione actually had seniority, since Draco and his father were the main benefactors to more than half the charities Hermione worked on.

After the war, people were desperate to rearrange their lives. Most started on the inside, working on prejudices or bigotry. Most tried to be the change they sought in the world. The Malfoys, unsurprisingly, went at it from a different angle; they were changing the world without even considering that they themselves could use a change.

So, they donated millions of Galleons over the five years since the end of the war, subsequently saving Lucius Malfoy from Azkaban and buying Draco his pretty little office and job.

Needless to say, it drove Hermione absolutely mad. She had worked very hard for her job, bypassing all sorts of social events and neglecting her personal life in favour of her charities. It was, for the most part, a very satisfying existence. She spent most of the day writing letters for owls to take out, guiltily people into donating to whatever cause she could reel them into...and she was very, very good at guiltily people. She had the highest quota of anyone in her department, even higher than the silver-tongued Malfoy get.

Of course, whenever Draco fell a little behind, an anonymous donation would come in through his office, and they would be balanced again. He claimed to be ignorant of the sources of the donations, but the timing was always a little suspicious, and Hermione believed that he didn't even care if she knew he was donating to his own causes. There were no rules against it, after all; and it gave Hermione the incentive to work even harder, both to beat him at his own game and to increase the amount he would have to donate to match her.

A very satisfying existence, indeed.

Draco had changed from their school days; they all had. He was, of course, still arrogant, snotty, self-satisfied, snide, and condescending. But he could also be funny, and

his intelligence was beyond reproach. He was entirely too civil to Hermione, if you asked her. He even brought her coffee on the few days he arrived at work after her, bringing it to her office and entering without even knocking. She could only grit her teeth against his invasion of her privacy and accept the olive branch. For that's what it seemed to be. Draco was trying to make up for all his years of verbal abuse with offerings of coffee and breakfast.

But Hermione never gave him an inch. The wounds were too fresh in her mind, especially the light sentencing of the elder Malfoy, whose home had been the scene of her torture. He could claim the Imperius all he wanted, but Hermione knew better. Or at least, she thought she did.

So when Draco came into her office offering more than coffee, she'd laughed. He'd been sweet, for him, and asked if he could treat her to dinner that night. She'd told him she was busy...a lie... and he'd asked about the next night. She'd told him through half-stifled incredulity that she was busy for the rest of the month. He'd nodded as though this was a perfectly natural happenstance and gracefully exited. She knew her laughter must have followed him back to his office.

She hadn't meant to be so rude; she usually prided herself on her decorum when it came to him, even when she wanted to hex his pretty face off. But he'd caught her so off guard...it was just so absurd!

Hermione wasn't naïve enough to believe she would be anything more than another charity case to him, another effort to improve the Malfoy name that had suffered near-irreparable harm thanks to their loyalties. So she'd laughed; not like she could hurt his feelings anyway, since she doubted he had any that weren't contrived.

When the first day of the next month rolled around, Draco stepped into her office with his usual nonchalant invasion of personal space, placed her coffee on her desk next to her hand and stood in front of her desk.

"Thank you for the coffee, Draco." Her standard response did not deviate one iota.

"You're more than welcome, Granger." His did not alter either.

And still he stood there.

Hermione finally looked up from her work, peering at him questioningly. "Is there something I can help you with?" Her tone, as usual, brooked no cordiality and was just on this side of rude.

"Well, since you're not busy tonight, I thought I'd take you out," Draco said calmly, his voice as sure as ever.

"What makes you think I'm not busy?"

Draco glanced casually at her desk calendar, and all too late she realized her words when she'd turned him down the last time. He shrugged lazily and continued to watch her carefully. She didn't like being under his speculative gaze, so she looked back down at her work.

"Well, actually, I was going to..."

"Don't even bother, Granger. I want to take you to dinner, and I will get what I want. If you say no today, I will be in this office three times a day, every day. I will flood you with inter-office memos and tie you up; I will come to your home to bring you take-out. I will owl you, Floo you. I will sleep outside your door. I will have your colleague fired and my desk moved in here."

Hermione's mouth was agape; what on earth was she supposed to do?

He continued, "Or, you go out with me tonight...one dinner...and if you still want to maintain this childish animosity, I will never ask you out again, and your lonely life can continue unhindered."

Her mind was racing. She could not have him working in this office next to her! He would drive her insane in a matter of minutes. If he actually slept outside her apartment, she would be evicted for sure. He was as good as promising to stalk her, and though Hermione was sure the law was on her side, she also knew the Malfoys were Teflon. She wouldn't stand a chance.

Her dramatic sigh could be heard throughout the floor as she nodded her head in acceptance.

His bright smile shocked her; she couldn't remember ever seeing him do anything other than smirk or sneer. It almost reached his eyes and made him look like a boy again.

"I knew you would see reason. I'll pick you up tonight at seven. Dress..." He looked at her appraisingly. "...Like you are out with a Malfoy," he finished, and she scowled. Some things never changed.

But the date was actually pleasant, and no one was more shocked than Hermione. Draco's charm was going at full blast, and he even had her smiling.

He'd picked her up exactly at seven and complimented her simple black dress. He'd taken her arm and led her out of her middle-end high rise apartment, into a carriage.

Of course the Malfoys travel in carriage...why Apparate when that doesn't showcase your wealth at all! She thought bitterly, but said not a word.

They arrived at a French restaurant Hermione had never heard of, but which obviously catered to only the richest and most influential. Draco ordered for Hermione, which had her seeing red, especially since she couldn't speak French and didn't know what he'd ordered.

She was pleasantly surprised to see it was salmon...her favourite...but she said nothing.

"I'm really glad you said yes today, Granger. I wasn't looking forward to sleeping in the hallway of your building. Couldn't you have a house like normal people?"

"Draco, *normal* people have to save for years for a down payment for a house. Not all of us have our entire lives bequeathed to us, you know." She couldn't help the snarky tone in her voice; his entitled attitude always rubbed her the wrong way, as if he honestly didn't know some people didn't have all that he had.

"Ah, of course," he said slowly, as if actually considering what she'd said.

She only shook her head and asked him about a large account they had both been going after for the Werewolf Emancipation Project, which was poorly funded and highly controversial. Werewolves were under a lot of scrutiny after their part in the war, and it would be tortuous getting the restrictions on their freedoms repealed.

He told her about some headway he'd made, and she was surprised. He took a lot of initiative and had more balls than she'd given him credit for, which was saying a lot.

After that, conversation was easier. Every now and then they threw a barb at one another: Hermione mentioned how the Ministry was still as corrupt as ever, accepting bribes instead of following the law, at which Draco looked away; Draco asked what Hermione thought about the young wizard who had nearly tied her NEWTs scores the previous year, and she cringed.

Some things never changed.

After dinner they had dessert, though Hermione was full and couldn't finish hers. He offered to have it wrapped for her, but Hermione didn't want to walk out of the most posh restaurant she'd ever been in with a doggy bag, so she regretfully left it behind.

He had the carriage drop them off a few blocks from her apartment, after asking if she could walk in her shoes. She said, "Of course," to which he smirked, as if to say, "I should have known the sensible Hermione Granger would never wear shoes she could not walk in."

They walked the rest of the way slowly, Draco putting her hand on his arm and resting his other hand atop hers. His chivalry was infallible, unforced, and Hermione had to wonder if he actually wanted to touch her, or if it was just too ingrained for him not to.

When they reached her apartment door, she put the key in and opened it. She turned around and asked the question that had been burning her all night.

"Draco, why did you ask me on a date?"

"Didn't you have fun?" he countered, standing closer to her than she thought absolutely necessary.

"I did, as a matter of fact. But... your prejudices are infamous. I'm wondering why you would deign to lower yourself to being seen with me."

"Well, you do make a good argument," he drawled, and her scowl reappeared along with his smirk at her reaction. "But the truth is, I've grown up. Things changed for me in ways you wouldn't understand. I've made so many mistakes..." A flash of true regret graced his features, and Hermione wondered exactly what kinds of mistakes he was referring to. "But I am trying to make up for them the only way I know how."

"You can't buy me like you bought your job, like you bought the public. My memory is not as selective, Draco."

"First of all, I earned my job." He graciously ignored her snort of derision. "And secondly, I'm not trying to buy you, not at all. I genuinely enjoy your company. Maybe I'm a masochist, who knows." When he said this, his smile did reach his eyes.

And for some reason, faster than she could ever have expected, the block of ice that surrounded Draco Malfoy in her mind melted ever so slightly.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

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When Draco returned to Malfoy Manor that night, he went straight to his father's study. As he suspected, Lucius was sitting behind his massive mahogany desk, working fervently at something Draco knew was dreadfully boring.

He announced his presence by sitting heavily in one of the chairs in front of the desk. Lucius did not look up. Draco sighed dramatically. No response. Draco put his feet on his father's desk, and Lucius' reverie was finally broken.

"Oh, for Merlin's sake, Draco. Can you not find something else to entertain you? Perhaps a house-elf or a box of kittens?"

"No, Father. I don't want to be entertained; I only wanted to inform you of my date tonight."

Lucius would not deign to snort, but was not above a sneer. "I have absolutely no interest in your exploits until they produce an heir."

Draco laughed; he knew his father was only half serious. In the last few years, they'd forged a bond that had never existed in their lives before. He knew his father respected him, and he returned that respect wholeheartedly. They had both suffered greatly in trying to keep their family together and had learned that sometimes something that seemed so right in theory was absolutely wrong in practice. They weren't the only ones who had learned this the hard way.

"Well, perhaps your interest will be piqued when I tell you with whom I was out."

"Doubtful."

"Hermione Granger."

As much as Lucius would have loved to remain impassive to this news, he was truly shocked. Draco really had matured. He'd known it, but had not thought it extended into his love life.

"Really, a Muggle-born?"

"Well, love makes no such distinctions," Draco declared with a hand over his heart.

Lucius looked at his son, seeing that while Draco was joking about being in love, he truly believed that sentiment.

"Indeed," he drawled cryptically.

"I think you would really like her, Father. She is so acerbic, it's hilarious to witness. She still struggles with her own preconceived notions about me; I really don't think she sees the irony in that."

"I'm sure you'll set her straight soon enough, Son." And Lucius was sure; when his son wanted something, there was no stopping him. He came by it honestly, of course.

"I intend to."

Draco left his father to his work and went up to bed.

He laid awake for a while, wondering just when his life had changed so drastically. He had honestly hated Hermione throughout his school years, not just because of her blood status, but her fierce loyalty to those two prats had personally offended him, and her intelligence had threatened him at the time. Now her loyalty and brains were two of her best qualities, and Draco hated that he'd let himself be brainwashed into hating the one person who could have been his equal.

A few years ago he'd blamed his father, until he'd learned his father was just as brainwashed as he'd been, only for much longer and with much more violence. Lucius had had his superiority beaten into him at every turn, and Draco, who'd never had so much as a spanking, could not hold against his father that which he himself would never understand.

He was only grateful that their family was still together... mostly. His mother had left immediately following the war, unable to accept their changing world or Lucius' attempts to make a place in it for their family. She couldn't bear seeing their money squandered, as she put it, on fruitless efforts like Werewolf Emancipation and House-Elf Liberation.

Of course, the Malfoys still had house-elves. They just paid them now.

Draco missed his mother...who was currently residing in Italy with her new husband, Draco's stepfather, who was his own age...but they kept in regular contact. If Draco were to be honest, he'd admit things were better without her. Lucius smiled more, joked more and seemed years younger. Draco himself felt freer and less constrained by social mores and pressure. The Malfoy men were doing just fine on their own, it was true.

But something was missing, and Draco believed knew just what...*who*...it was.

Lucius was musing over what he'd learned from his son that evening. He knew Draco had changed, that the war had changed him, but he had no idea of the extent. Especially since only a few months ago, Draco had come to him absolutely exasperated about "that Granger chit," for one reason for another. Sometimes for multiple reasons.

There was, indeed, a thin line between love and hate, and Draco was a passionate young man.

Now that he thought about it, he couldn't believe he'd never seen it before. Of course Miss Granger would be perfect for Draco. Their intelligence was matched, their passions equal, their interests similar. They would make a very good pair, if they would be able to get past the animosity of their youth. He knew Draco was willing to overlook it, but would she? Could she?

Lucius finished up his work for the evening, looking forward to a weekend free of responsibilities. He tried not to think about how he'd been a little disappointed at the name of Draco's date, but not because of her blood status, no, no.

Because it had not been Lucius himself on that date.

The first time he'd noticed Miss Granger at the Ministry, he'd recognized her immediately from Draco's school days. He'd been impeccably polite to her, and he'd found himself thinking about her long after their meeting. Whenever she came to his office for budget approvals, complaints about the restrictions on certain charities, and once, a none-too-subtle commentary on nepotism, he'd found himself admiring her fire, her figure, and her drive. She was probably one of the very few Ministry employees who earned every dollar the honest way. Even Lucius was not above pulling favours and dropping names to get his job done well. He wasn't sure if he admired her for that or not.

But he hadn't intended to court her, not really. It was merely a passing fancy for a younger woman whose passion matched his own. He admitted that Draco was a better match for her. Maybe he was just having a mid-life crisis. Lucius scoffed disdainfully, perishing the thought.

But despite his attempts to convince himself that he didn't want Miss Granger, that night his dreams matched her eyes and her scent pervaded his imagination.

Over the next week, Draco managed to convince Hermione to go for dinner once more and to lunch twice.

It was possible that she was a glutton for punishment, because she could honestly not understand why she'd agreed. He had even given her an out when he said he would never ask her again if she didn't want him to. But when he had asked, she hadn't told him to take a long walk off a short dock.

So really, she had brought it on herself.

But the shocking thing was she was having fun. Draco was actually funny; his sardonic wit was biting at times, but when it wasn't at the expense of another person, it was remarkable. She found that she quite liked talking to him at times.

Other times, she wanted to disembowel him. When he pompously acted like he was doing her a favour by going out with her, she'd promptly gotten up from the table and left the restaurant. That was the last date they'd been on two days ago. He'd followed her, but she'd ignored him. He'd tried to grab her arm to slow her down, but she'd hit him with a look so scathing, he'd drawn his hand away and held it up in surrender.

"Merlin, take a joke, Granger!" He'd been angry that she had taken his comment the wrong way, but not surprised. He had been a little bothered by how much her being bothered had bothered him.

When Draco told his father about their fight, he laughed uproariously. "I hope you didn't expect it to be easy, Draco! It appears you've underestimated your little friend, and that is a dangerous mistake to make with someone like Hermione."

Draco noted his father's use of Hermione's first name, and like a Malfoy, filed it away for later. He also took notice of the backhanded compliment he'd paid her and wondered if Lucius was getting soft. It bore consideration.

"I don't want it to be easy, for once in my life. But I wish I knew how to say the right thing all the time."

Lucius smiled at his son. Draco might have had a lot of experience with sex, but he actually had little history with dating and less still with wooing. Perhaps it would behave him to give his son a few lessons on the fairer sex.

"Son, she is a special case. You know you cannot buy her with baubles or charm her with charity. You need to appeal to her intelligence, her sense of justice, her ambition. You have more in common than you know, and you're only driving her away by dwelling on the differences between you, rather than the commonalities."

Draco was surprised at his father's wise words. Perhaps that's what he'd been doing wrong all along: reminding her of the past, and the way he'd used to be, instead of the man he was now.

"Um... thanks, Father. I think you might be on to something there."

Lucius chuckled and said only, "Good luck."

Draco would need it.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 35

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Hermione avoided Draco for a few more days. She suspected she was being childish, but his rude comment, which she now believed had been a fairly innocent jest, had hurt her pride. Hermione did not go on many dates...and by many, she, of course, meant *any*. The last one had been over a year ago, and it had gone amazingly well. So well that she'd let the man take her home. Maybe she'd been silly to expect to hear from him after that, but expect it she had. And when he didn't call, she'd packed up her heart and left town, metaphorically speaking.

Literally speaking, she'd stayed put. Everyone knew her in wizarding London where she worked, and that was a huge detriment to her social calendar. Who knew people wouldn't want to date war heroines, especially when Harry and Ron were inundated with offers? Men were very fickle, she'd decided, heart-shaped valise in hand.

She had gotten other offers, but she'd turned them all down, telling herself she relished the solitude, when in reality, she relished her heart remaining in one piece.

So it had shocked her as much as it had Draco when she had continued to let him take her out. And when he'd made the comment that set her off, the one she couldn't even recall now, she was reminded of why she preferred to be alone. She didn't like Draco's flawlessly manicured hand reaching for her valise.

She knew she had to start being polite to him again, eventually. They did have to work together, and even if she wouldn't admit it, she missed their little repartees.

She picked up her mail on the way into her office and sat down heavily in her chair. Her colleague had called in sick again, it appeared. The smell of coffee assaulted her deprived nostrils, and she noticed a steaming cup sitting on her desk. She picked it up and inhaled the aroma.

"I didn't poison it, and if I had, you would never be able to smell it."

The mocking tone demolished her peace.

"Good to know." She put the cup on the desk and pointedly pushed it away.

He only laughed and entered her office. He reached for her mug and took a sip. "See? Poison-free."

"Trust you to build up an immunity, clever boy." Her words were sarcastic, but she had a smile on her face.

He laughed gaily, sitting down in front of her desk. She took the mug back and sipped it, closing her eyes to better enjoy the taste. "Thank you," she said.

"No problem, Granger. Did you get our revised budget for this quarter?"

Her eyes widened and she shook her head. He pointed to the memo she'd placed with her mail, and she grabbed it up.

Draco thought about fleeing when he saw her eyes widen and her fingers clench on the paper, but rashly decided he'd rather witness the explosion than read about it in the *Daily Prophet*.

"I... am going to... *kill*... your father."

Now Draco's eyes widened. He hadn't thought she knew Lucius, let alone realized it was he who had approved the budget. Draco knew Lucius wasn't really trying to cause them any trouble, but his father realized the public wanted funding to go to dramatic arenas, like the development and invention of potions or charms. The Department of Charities never spent any money advertising, and people already felt hounded when they received an owl from one of their many team members; they did not like being hit up for more cash. To be fair, their budget had not been decreased, merely left at last year's appropriation level.

But Hermione was seeing red and didn't notice Draco stepping out of her way as she walked to the elevators.

"Go easy on him, Granger! He's only doing his job!"

His words, of course, fell on selectively deaf ears.

Hermione made it to the elder Malfoy's office in record time. He looked up from his desk at her unannounced entrance and then gazed at the time. She'd only taken four minutes from the time of her arrival at work to barrel through his door. Impressive; though he was slightly disappointed to note she must have sat down first or else it would have been two minutes.

"Ah, Miss Granger..."

"Do not 'Miss Granger' me, Lucius Malfoy! Do you know how hard I've worked to get my department up to snuff over the years? How hard your son has worked? We spend our days begging for money from the public, writing up proposals to beg for money, making presentations on begging for money. We spend board meetings on our knees *begging* and for what? To be told nothing we do makes any difference. This quarter is no different from last quarter, which was no different from the year before or my first year here. Year after year we are given no increase except to allow for inflation! It is absolutely ridiculous, and I will not stand for it!"

Hermione was panting by the time her outburst was finished. Her hands were clenched tight, still holding the damnable memo. Her eyes were wild, and her cheeks flushed.

Lucius couldn't help but be aroused.

But ever the Malfoy, he only stared her down, one silver eyebrow raised as if to ask if she was quite finished. She did not look away, but her breathing calmed, and she began to look as though she was regretting her tangent.

"Miss Granger, I am sorry to hear you are disappointed. However, I only approve the budgets, I do not create them. I am also only one of four who have to approve, and this decision was unanimous. So..." He got up and walked behind her, stopping at her side and saying, "One has to wonder why you chose me, of all the people who more rightly deserve your indignation, as the target of your appeal?" *Though, believe me, you appeal to me,* he added silently.

She only shrugged, calm now. "You were closest."

"Indeed," he chuckled. "And if I had raised the budget, were it in my power, could I expect you to storm in here demanding to know why I had done so, or would you assume it was your due and carry on as though you had deserved it? Or would I be in for another lecture on nepotism?"

Hermione had to admit she probably would have figured he had done it for Draco, but she would not have questioned it.

She sighed. "I only want what my department deserves. Every year I've been here, we've brought in more money than the last. Yet every year without fail, we are not allocated any more. It's..." She wanted to say 'not fair', but settled for, "...enough to make a person want to stop trying."

Lucius took pity on her; he knew how difficult the bureaucracy of the Ministry was to handle when one was young and idealistic. Or rather, he thought he knew; he'd never had to beg for money like she had, after all.

"Hermione, you and I both know you will never stop trying."

Hermione felt shocked at his casual use of her first name, as well as his comment on her resilience. Was that a compliment, or was he calling her dogged? Malfoys could be so frustrating.

She was silent, and he continued.

"Would that I could change things for you, but the fact is my hands are tied as tightly as yours. If I don't approve the budget, I will be asked to pull the money from somewhere else, possibly even my own salary, more likely out of my staff's. I simply couldn't justify it. Hopefully you will receive some donations to help out your department."

His last comment sounded like a promise. Hermione had no choice but to accept his words and bow out gracefully, if grace could be regained after her monologue.

"Thank you for your time, Mr. Malfoy," she said, honestly meaning it. The last thing she wanted was for Lucius' own staff to be short-changed. She would make do, as always.

"Any time, Miss Granger. It was a pleasure, as always."

His voice was a purr, and like his son the night of their first date, he was closer to her than she realized. Was it her imagination, or had the word 'pleasure' been stretched out more emphatically than was normal?

In the elevator going back down to her floor, Hermione began to question her ability to keep her right mind around those damned aristocratic blonds.

She allowed Draco to take her on another date that night. She was feeling down from the budget memo and could use a drink. He seemed to sense her melancholy and took her to a little pub in Muggle London that he used to love to escape to when the pressure of his social image became too much.

A live band was playing, and Hermione was glad she'd come out. It was nice to wear Muggle clothes in public without being stared at, and she had to admit, Draco looked... *nice* in dark blue jeans and a black long-sleeved shirt. Just nice, of course.

His longish blond hair, firm, lean body, and confident stride made him the centre of attention and her the centre of envy. Hermione didn't like being looked at like she had strangled puppies, so she tried to remain as small as possible. Draco bought their drinks, and they chose a booth near the back of the bar, away from the band.

"So, what you do think?" he asked, referring to the atmosphere.

"It's very... nice," she admitted, using her favourite word of the evening. "I do like Muggle London, though I don't come very often. I feel more at home in the wizarding world these days."

He nodded like he knew what she was talking about. "I like it here, too. Sometimes home gets to be a little... overbearing."

She knew this was an important admission from him, and she agreed gravely. "It's nice to have anonymity, isn't it?"

They both knew what it was like to be recognized left and right...Hermione for being the Golden Heroine, one third of the selfsame Trio; Draco because of his near role in the assassination of Dumbledore and his father's alliance with the Dark side. In war, no one ever thought their side was wrong, so no one ever wondered how they would be seen by the other side. Draco had gotten in too deep, too fast, and even his father hadn't been able to save him, though not for lack of trying.

"That it is."

They sat in a slightly awkward silence until Draco couldn't stand it any more and said the one thing he knew would keep them occupied for the rest of the night.

"So, can you believe that budget?" He smiled and waited for the fallout.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 35

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Hermione didn't usually blush over her dreams. After all, they were perfectly natural, and she was used to her brain taking ideas and running away with them, even while asleep.

This dream, however, was particularly lascivious.

It involved not one, but *both* demanding, delicious, and... in her dream...degenerate Malfoy men. She had to shake her head at the intensity of the dream. She'd never even had the inkling that one man wouldn't be enough; in fact, her somewhat poor self-esteem sometimes informed her that she was the one who wouldn't be enough for a man.

So, she filed that dream away for a rainy day and got dressed for work. She usually enjoyed analyzing her dreams, getting a perverse pleasure in deciphering exactly what her overactive imagination was implying.

This time, however, she tried to forget about it.

And she had more important things to deal with, anyway. Like the fact that her Floo was going haywire and dropping her off too early, so she had to walk to the Ministry from a neighbouring building. Very frustrating. Her Apparating seemed to be failing her as well, not splinching her, thank goodness, but leaving her feeling very ill, like she had travelled overseas and not just across town.

Maybe she was coming down with some sort of wizarding 'flu. It bore thinking about...but not now.

Now, it was time to work.

She and Draco had a presentation for the Liberation of House-Elves group today in front of the Ministry's budgeting committee. They had to have nearly every dollar approved before they could spend any of it, despite the fact that their overall budget had already been set. The Ministry didn't like to see too much money going to any particular cause and wanted it spread fairly evenly, because Merlin forefend they actually get anything of merit done with their money.

Hermione had the charts and spreadsheets ready, though she knew that Draco would only scoff at her and tell her the committee only needed the department's assurance that they would not blow their budget in the first week of the quarter. Hermione would not relent and informed Draco in turn that change began at home, et cetera, until he agreed to help her pitch.

Having been accused of predictability a few times in her life, Hermione could recognize it in others immediately, and Draco always capitulated when she lectured him for any longer than three minutes straight. She could set her watch by it.

And like clockwork, one hundred and eighty two seconds in, Draco sighed heavily and reached for her portfolio, telling her he would read the section on the lasting impact of slavery on other comparative species in history.

Hermione smiled demurely and handed it over.

Draco was his usual professional self, reading her work as though he'd written it himself, answering questions and fielding responses like he'd done it all his life, never losing his cool, never stalling or stuttering.

When Hermione stood up to finish the presentation, she noticed Lucius Malfoy quietly come in through the far door and take a seat at the table. He was on the budgeting committee, but rarely showed up to these meetings as only two members had to be there, with a third needed only in case of deadlock (which never happened). The decision had to be unanimous, and they rarely wasted their time quibbling.

Lucius looked at Hermione with an interested look on his face, raising an eyebrow when she stammered. Feeling the heat rise in her face, she tried to find her place. Why was he looking at her like that? Didn't he know the effect he had on people?

On her?

She couldn't help but recall the dream she'd had the night before, and with that thought in mind, she completely stalled.

Draco had noticed his father's entrance and Hermione's subsequent descent into incoherence. *Well, that's interesting*, he noted to himself as he stood up to continue the presentation flawlessly. Hermione sat down, looking at her hands, and Draco glanced at his father questioningly, wondering what exactly had turned his spitfire into a shrinking violet. His father only gazed back impassively, the smallest of smiles playing on his lips.

Their budget was immediately vetoed and reworked. Draco couldn't help feeling sorry for Hermione, since her efforts had been for naught. The committee usually overruled their decisions and put into place their own, regardless of how well-researched the attempt was. Only half the money they'd asked for was to be allotted to the Liberation of House-Elves fund. Lucius did not attempt to overrule, just as Draco had known he wouldn't. He wished Hermione would stop wasting her time trying to get the senior members to change.

Hermione flew out of the boardroom while Draco was collecting their papers. He didn't notice Lucius smoothly exit after her.

"Miss Granger, a word?"

"Unfair," she immediately retorted, walking briskly to the elevators.

"Pardon me?" he queried, catching up to her and stopping her with a hand on her elbow.

"You wanted a word; I gave you the first one that came to mind. Unfair. I work *so hard* to get my voice heard, and it never means anything." She looked extremely upset, and Lucius was suddenly glad it was common knowledge that the Malfoy house-elves were freed.

"We are not having this discussion again," Lucius stated, fighting the urge to groan. "It is just not feasible to dump such a large percentage of your budget into one project. You had to know it wouldn't be approved."

"No, I didn't! I thought that all my evidence, research, and passion would make a difference this time! Call me naïve, foolish, I don't care. Someone has to try, or nothing will ever change."

Lucius led her to the elevators and pressed the button for her. They stepped in together, his hand remaining on her elbow. He turned her to him once the elevator doors closed.

"Hermione, believe me, I appreciate your... passion. But small steps, yes? We're all just cogs in the Ministry machine, after all, and all your bosses have bosses to answer to. Everyone has a pet project that gets shot down. Believe me."

Hermione looked at him, surprised. *What was his project?* she wondered. She realized she knew nothing about him...the *new* him. And she thought that maybe she'd been harsh in her assessment of him. After all, she'd changed her mind about Draco; *that* had only taken five years. Maybe the ice around Lucius could afford to melt a little.

Her smile was small, but she said, "Sometimes a pet project becomes a life mission, and it will always hurt to have one's hope shot down." Her voice was small, but convicted; he knew he'd hear the same lecture on slavery in the next quarter, without fail, and he smiled at the thought.

"There's always the Werewolf Emancipation Project," he reminded her, smiling ever so slightly. She laughed and got off on her floor. She turned around to thank him through the closing doors, but the intense look on his face startled her. He seemed to notice her looking at him, and immediately replaced his cool mask. He only nodded his head and let the doors fall closed as he continued to his floor.

The rest of the week went by unremarkably. Draco was taking her out for Chinese in Muggle London that Friday, and she was looking forward to their familiar banter. She was thankful that he kept their working relationship professional, other than inviting himself into her office without invitation. However, she was beginning to suspect that it was an affront to which he subjected everyone, not just her. It was possible that it had never even occurred to him to knock.

That was how their fight began.

"Draco Malfoy, remove yourself from my office immediately," she ordered, having been imposed upon too many times that day and taking it out on him.

He raised his hands in mock surrender, which he knew she absolutely hated, and backed away slowly. He didn't leave, however. Hermione rose from her desk and walked to him in a way she hoped was intimidating.

It wasn't.

Draco could help but smile at the tiny brunette trying to be tough. Her eyes narrowed, and he realized his mistake immediately.

No one laughs at Hermione Granger.

All the frustration, all the annoyances, all the times her projects were denied, all the anger at their budget rose to the surface, and Hermione lunged at him, embracing her Muggle heritage and leaving her wand sheathed.

The Pureblood never saw it coming.

She pushed at his chest, and he fell against her office wall. She was on him immediately, pounding him hard with her fists and even catching his cheek when she realized her fists against his chest were ineffectual. Draco managed to grab one wrist, but the other flailed wildly and caught him across the side of the head.

"Holy hell, Granger, get a hold of yourself!" he shouted desperately, unwilling to admit this vixen was actually causing him pain, but unable to deny the ringing in his left ear.

She seemed to immediately calm at the sound of his voice, and he was able to grab her other wrist. He turned her so it was her back against the wall instead of his. Breathing heavily, he looked into her flushed and angry face, not relinquishing his grip on her wrists for all the world.

Hermione closed her eyes, completely ashamed of her outburst. She knew she would lose her job over this and couldn't believe she could be so selfish. She would even lose his friendship, and that hurt almost as much.

"Draco... I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to... attack you. I don't mind that you don't knock, I promise."

Draco was astounded to hear that the reason for her brutal assault on his person was due to his familiar way of entering her office *Holy shit*, he thought; *what happens when I actually leave my underwear on her bedroom floor, or forget to turn the kitchen light off at night?* Not really understanding why his thoughts immediately went to the domestic, he loosened his grip on her.

"Okay... you attacked me because I forgot to knock?"

She looked away, tears welling in her eyes, more out of frustration than sadness.

"Granger, I'm going to let you go now, but you have to promise not to kill me. I see you have a letter opener on your desk, and I just don't want to die like that."

She laughed in spite of herself and promised that if she did kill him, it would be with more dignity. He let her go without stepping back from her. They both became aware of their nearness at the same time. Hermione stared at his chest before looking up into his silver gaze; Draco inhaling the scent of her hair and nearly caressing her face when her whiskey eyes met his.

They only looked at one another, both unsure of what was passing between them, but both knowing they enjoyed it. Draco put one hand on her neck and jaw, and she leaned slightly into his hold. He bent his head as she raised hers, and their lips were centimetres apart.

Your first kiss should not be in an office, Draco His father's voice was inside his head, and he pulled back from Hermione, his breath coming fast and hard. *Okay, let's hope that never happens again*, he thought as he opened her office door. Hermione looked bereft but slightly relieved.

"I promise to knock from now on, Granger. You have my word." He slipped out of her office, closing the door behind her. He fell heavily into his office chair, just as she sank into hers. Both wondered what would happen next.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

That Friday, Hermione and Draco ended up getting Chinese takeaway instead of eating at the restaurant. They went to Hermione's apartment, to Draco's ill-concealed displeasure. He'd never been inside, but he couldn't imagine there would be much to it.

He wasn't wrong. Her flat was about a third of the size of Draco's own suite at Malfoy Manor. Hermione put her keys in a small bowl on a table by the entrance. She hung their coats and put her briefcase and purse on the kitchen table.

A place for everything and everything in its place, he thought with a mental smirk, watching her gather plates and cutlery for their dinner.

They sat in the living room to eat, with Hermione mentioning that she rarely ate at the dinner table, a throwback to her youth when she and her parents had always eaten in front of the television.

"So, where do you put all your stuff?" Draco asked innocently, only half joking. This place really was tiny.

"What do you mean? My priceless statues and artefacts, my multiple trousseaus and wardrobes, or my endless collection of Louis XIV furniture?" Hermione answered, just as innocently, scooping a delicate forkful of rice into her mouth.

"All of the above, I suppose. I'm just saying, your apartment is a little on the... petite side."

"Draco, you live with your parents!" she exclaimed incredulously.

"What on Earth does that have to do with the size of your place?" Draco asked, truly confused.

"You're mocking me for having a small flat...which I furnished and pay for myself, on time, every month...while you live under your parents' roof and probably will for the rest of your life!"

"Well, well, the claws come out, eh Granger? All Pureblood families live under the same roof until the kids are married, and even then, most still do. It only makes sense; there's more than enough room," he said, looking at her pointedly. "I'll just be moving back there one day anyway, when the Manor is mine."

"So you don't see anything strange about living with your folks and continuing to do so?"

"It's not like we ever see each other, anyway. My father works long hours and keeps mostly to his rooms, his study, and the library. We've gone weeks without even bumping into one another."

Hermione had to concede that they obviously lived in different worlds. She loved her place, loved that it was all hers, and she worked hard to make it home. Draco loved that he didn't have to do that. But she noticed he only mentioned his father and not Narcissa.

"Draco..." she began hesitantly, uncertain if the topic was verboten. "Does your mom still live at the Manor with you and your father?"

Draco shrugged, sensing her discomfort. "No, she lives in Italy. She left my father not long after the war ended. It's better this way." He shrugged again, and Hermione could tell he was a little sensitive about the subject, so she dropped it.

"So Lucius tried to make me feel better about that colossal budget coup the other day."

"Did he, now? That's unlike him."

"I thought so, too! But he was quite sweet, calling us all cogs in the machine." She snickered at the memory; it had been so out of character for the cold and ruthless Malfoy. Draco didn't respond, only looked thoughtful, and Hermione wondered if she'd said the wrong thing. She was more conscious of her words these days, aware that she was sometimes a little cutthroat with them, and for some reason, she didn't want to drive Draco away.

They finished up with their dinner, and Hermione told herself not to talk about Draco's parents, since they seemed to be a bit of a sore spot with him.

She tried to make him go over a proposal she'd written for a client, but he would have none of it. He told her to put it away; they were on a date, for goodness' sake.

This led ever-suave Hermione to ask, "Are we dating, then?"

Draco cocked his head to the side, wondering what she wanted to hear. He decided to answer honestly.

"If you want to be."

Now it was Hermione's turn to think. She looked at Draco long and hard, and he met her scrutinizing gaze unflinchingly.

"I'll think about it," she promised. She did want to date him, but needed more time to ease herself into the idea of going steady with her erstwhile enemy. It was disconcerting, but at the same time, thrilling.

When the evening wound to a close, and there was nothing else to conceivably do within the confines of her apartment, she told him they should call it a night. Ever the gentleman, Draco agreed and let her walk him to the door.

He stopped in front of it and turned to her, capturing her hands in his.

"I had fun tonight, Granger. But next time, we go to my house." He winked salaciously, and she snorted.

"You're on."

Hermione looked at their clasped hands, revelling in the strong warmth of his touch. His hands were surprisingly rough for a Pureblood, she thought somewhat unkindly. She looked up at him, drawn in by the molten silver of his gaze. Before she had time to think about what she was doing, she stepped up on her tiptoes and brushed her lips gently against his. She held the kiss for a second before falling back on the heels of her feet. She blushed, unable to look at him. She felt about twelve years old.

Draco grinned at her cute display, wondering if everything about her was as innocent as her kisses. Needing to find out, he put both hands on her face and tilted it up to meet his. He met her eyes, giving her a silent warning of what he intended to do. Her gaze darkened, and his lips descended. His kiss was soft at first, searching. But then he tilted his head, tipping hers farther back and pressing harder against her, demanding entrance to her mouth. She relented, and Draco plunged his tongue into her mouth, wasting no time. She made the most delicious whimpering sound. Draco caressed her mouth with his tongue, nipping at her lower lip before drawing it into his mouth. He licked at her lips, and her tongue grazed his ever so slightly. He ended the kiss by pulling on her lower lip with his teeth gently.

Their foreheads touching, the couple breathed heavily as they regained their senses. Draco kissed her lips once more before slipping out the front door, leaving her standing, hand on her mouth, wondering where the heck *that* had come from.

Lucius was pacing his study again. He was beyond annoyed at himself, and he deserved every moment of his self-reproach.

He should never have even spoken to her; his son had staked his claim, and that should have been enough. But Lucius was never one to bow out gracefully; no, he usually fought until the bitter end, often continuing even after the battle was lost.

His annoying propensity for tenacity was sure to be the death of him. He only hoped it wasn't at his son's hand, if he ever realized what was going through Lucius' thoughts at the moment. He'd rarely cared about anyone else in his life: Narcissa once, and now Draco. That was it. Now Draco was the sole recipient of his loyalty, if it could be called such at this point. Draco's opinion was the only one that mattered, and yet Lucius was the epitome of disloyalty at this moment.

He was abhorrent.

He wanted Hermione Granger. Wanted her like air, like a flawless reputation, like priceless jewels. Wanted her like life. She was passion, effervescence, vivacity. She was simply lovely, and he wanted her.

What was worse, though, was that his magic wanted her. He hadn't experienced such a disruption in his magical force since he'd first met Narcissa, and even then, it had lasted a week before dissipating completely, never to return. He only hoped this current problem would last only that long. But something told him he'd be erroneous to assume that.

When he was around her, he was drawn to her; she pulled him in. Her scent, her force. His magic craved her magic. It was undeniable. When he was near her, his magic fairly crackled. He'd hardly been able to contain it when in the elevator with her after her presentation. It had taken all his considerable self-control to reign himself in and not fuck her against the elevator wall, letting their magic claim them in a firework frenzy, exploding in sweet and violent ecstasy.

But she was his son's. There was no way Lucius would ever jeopardize this new rapport he shared with his son, the newfound trust Draco had in him...perhaps undeserved. He wanted his son to respect him, to love him. That would never continue if Lucius tried to steal Hermione from him. And it wasn't even certain that she would

be amenable to his advances. It was possible she didn't feel the same pull; she hadn't acted as though she'd felt anything, except for a brief stuttering during her speech.

It could be that his magic was just going haywire and had nothing to do with her. It could be that it was a total fluke and would never occur again. It could be that house elves had stolen his real wand and replaced it with a faulty one in a bid to render him useless, take over Malfoy Manor, and then the world at large.

All possibilities were equally viable at this point.

All Lucius knew, all he *needed* to know, was that Hermione was off limits to him and would be until Draco was no longer interested. Even then, he would ask permission from his son (in a way that did not sound like a request at all, of course). But Lucius knew his son had changed, and he suspected that Draco genuinely cared for Hermione, which was all he could want for his son. Draco deserved happiness more than he himself did, after all. Draco had not made such glaring mistakes.

He owed Draco this much and more.

But all the self-delusion in the world could not change the fact that when he saw Hermione Granger, his body and his magic reacted to her in such an intense way that he truly did not know how long he could restrain himself. Or how long he would want to.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione was certain she was going mad.

First, she was barely able to Floo without ending up two buildings down, Apparating made her ill in a way she hadn't experienced since she'd first learned to do so, and her Portkey to work ended up taking her to her coat closet instead.

But now... it was too much. Hermione stared in dismay at the mirror. Her hair was totally out of control. A simple drying spell had frizzed it so badly that she could hardly see through it. It was almost a foot tall all the way around. It was ridiculous.

She got back into the shower, washing it with more conditioner than ever before. She didn't try another spell, but mangled it into a tight, wet bun.

She *Accioed* her purse and ended up with a disgruntled Crookshanks.

The wards she placed on her front door turned it hot pink.

Hermione was nearly crying in frustration by the time she made it to work, barely in one piece. She had never, ever had her magic betray her like this. Her spells and charms were usually perfect; even difficult ones came easily to her. *This is unacceptable*, she informed her wand in no uncertain terms. It didn't listen, boiling her coffee all over her desk instead of warming it.

She'd been preparing to live life as a Squib when she heard a cry from across the floor. A stream of invectives followed, and Hermione had to snicker at the inventiveness of the curses. She got up to see what the fuss was and stumbled when she saw Draco being attacked by a feisty tawny owl.

The owl had its talons entrenched in Draco's arm and was flapping its wings wildly. *No wonder it's cranky*, she thought, *owls are nocturnal after all, for goodness' sake. I'd be cranky, too.*

Stifling her laughter, Hermione ran to Draco, who was holding his arm away from himself and shouting at his assistant. The assistant looked beside herself, shooing the owl with a folder while trying to maintain a safe distance.

Hermione grabbed a doughnut right out of a watching a co-worker's hand and offered it to the wayward owl. It made a strange hissing noise at her before grabbing the doughnut and promptly flying out the open window.

Draco's arm was bleeding, and he was obviously in pain, gritting out a, "Thank you" to Hermione before setting a glare so vicious upon his assistant that she nearly burst into flames.

"Come on," Hermione said. "Let's get you to the infirmary." He settled the glare on her, but Hermione was not impressed. She took his unwounded arm and led him to the elevators.

"Bloody owl could have killed me; I swear they are a hazard. We shouldn't have let that one go; it is obviously intent on mayhem."

Hermione clucked reprovingly, trying not to laugh out loud at his grumblings.

Hermione could have healed his wound herself, had she been confident in her abilities at the moment. *Actually, Draco could have healed it himself*, she realized.

When they arrived at the infirmary, Draco was taken right in. She waited patiently, glad to have something take her mind off her strange condition, but nervous for Draco. He had actually been cut up pretty badly. About fifteen minutes later, he came out of the room with a murderous gaze.

"Incompetents! The lot of them! First using owls with violent tendencies, and then hiring Healers with no healing ability! My father *will not* be pleased...."

In times of stress, Hermione noticed, Draco reverted to his younger days, using his father's name as a shield, as though it could actually protect him. She believed it was a defence tactic and most likely entirely unconscious. It also meant that Draco still trusted his father implicitly to protect him.

"What do you mean? They couldn't heal you?" Hermione was confused; she'd had that same Healer take care of her many times, most often for exhaustion.

"No! The Healer said the spell wasn't working, and then potion they use as a back-up didn't work either. You know what they had to do?"

Hermione had an idea, but she shook her head.

He hissed, "They healed it *the Muggle way!* Sweet Merlin's balls, what is the wizarding world coming to? They cleaned it and bandaged it. What on Earth is that going to do? It's still bleeding!"

Draco was shouting, and people were staring as they made their way back to his office. Hermione tried not to incite him, but it was almost impossible. Draco on a rampage was nearly irresistible to not goad.

"Goodness, Draco, you'd think they tortured you. It'll be fine! Relax. You're being melodramatic."

Draco's eyes widened as the magic words fell into place. He took a deep breath, ostensibly preparing himself for an explosive outburst at her expense, and Hermione grinned wickedly. Just as he was beginning to let the vitriol spew forth, Lucius Malfoy walked into Draco's office.

When he did, a strange silence fell over the three of them. Draco's mouth was still open, but his words were on pause. Hermione's smile slid from her face, and Lucius stopped mid-step.

In a second it was over. Draco began to shout at his father regarding incompetence in general, and his hatred toward owls and Healers specifically. His father rolled his eyes and winked at Hermione, and she snorted. Both waited patiently for Draco's outburst to come to a close. Draco had at least kept his voice down this time. Lucius was nodding, lips twitching especially at the part where the Healer had abused him with disinfectant.

Lucius drew his wand imperiously and aimed it at Draco's bandaged arm. Hermione immediately put her hand on his arm.

"Actually, Mr. Malfoy, I think there might be a disruption in the building's magical defences. I've been having trouble with my magic, and now with the Healer being unable to heal Draco, I think something might be wrong."

Lucius looked at her pensively, but lowered his wand. "Draco, have you tried to heal it yourself?"

Draco looked a little embarrassed, saying, "No. I think Hermione's right. My magic's been off lately, too."

Lucius went pale. Hermione wanted to ask what was wrong, but she held her tongue. Could he think they were under attack?

Lucius schooled his features back to impassivity and raised his wand back to Draco's arm. He murmured a few healing spells, one to heal the deeper lacerations, one to stitch the surfaces together, and a last one to diminish scarring. He performed that one twice, causing Hermione to roll her eyes. Merlin forbid that Draco have an imperfection.

The spells worked perfectly, and Hermione undid the bandages to reveal near-perfectly healed skin. Only a faint white scar remained, barely visible.

Draco looked at his father questioningly, but Lucius only said, "I suppose the Healer will need to be replaced."

Draco looked sheepish and cleared his throat before asking Hermione for some privacy. She left quickly, feeling confused. Once back in her office, she cast a *smallumos*, and a shower of sparks lit her paperwork on fire. She sighed.

"Draco, how long has your magic been off?"

Lucius wasn't sure he wanted to hear the answer. He was certain this would end badly.

"Only today, really. And maybe a bit yesterday. Why?"

"It seems unusual, doesn't it?" The best way to get information was to act ignorant, Lucius knew.

"I guess. It's never happened to me before, so I noticed it acutely. I'm sure it will be back to normal any time now." His voice denoted his need for reassurance of this fact.

Lucius nodded. "I'm sure you're right. But let me know if it continues? And if... anyone else experiences it?"

Draco nodded, and Lucius launched into the reason he was in his son's office in the first place. He told Draco a client of his wanted to donate to a few charities for tax purposes, but required more information first. Draco helped him assemble a package and wrote out some additional details. Lucius accepted the bundle and thanked his son upon leaving.

Lucius hated wasting his son's time; there was no client. He placed the papers in his desk drawer, not wanting to throw it out since Draco had put it together for him. He would look through them later and perhaps donate a little to ease his conscience.

The truth was he'd had a hunch, a feeling that told him to get to Draco's office *now*. When he'd followed his intuition, Draco hadn't been there, and Hermione had been gone as well. He'd tried to find them, but upon returning to Draco's office to wait, they'd come back and Lucius had discovered his son wounded by an errant fowl.

Like any father would be, Lucius was pained to see his son hurt, even if it was superficial. But he'd been taken aback to hear Hermione casually mention her magic being interfered with. Most wizards and witches wouldn't admit a weakness like that. And many would recognize it as the influence of a strong affection. *Love*, his mind corrected him. But not all witches or wizards ever experienced that disruption, even those who were truly in love. A disruption like that suggested a compatibility between magics trying to settle themselves, trying to combine.

Usually when the two afflicted people were in the company of one another, the disruption settled and the magic would work again. Lucius took the chance, and his magic worked perfectly. He was sure it worked because Hermione was there and that she was the missing piece of his magic.

But Draco's magic had been faulty as well, and that could only mean that Draco also loved Hermione and shared a similar connection. And there was no way to tell whom Hermione loved, but clearly it was Draco, as Lucius had only encountered her a few times. The disruption was unconscious, though; recognizing love even before the witch or wizard would, recognizing its magical mate with the person being unaware.

It was clear that neither Draco nor Hermione had experienced it before, but Lucius had. He and Narcissa had both dealt with it for about a week before it had dwindled. Lucius assumed it meant their magic mingled, though there had been no problems after they'd split up. Lucius hadn't thought of it until now.

The fact was his magic would be haywire forever, because there was no way Lucius could not only steal Hermione from Draco, but sentence him to life without magic as well.

The Slytherin Death Eater in him wanted to rebel against his magic deciding a Muggle-born witch was his perfect match and resented the fact that he was to be tied down after only just being divorced. The man in him, the wizard, wanted to share himself with Hermione and see how good they could be together, magically and otherwise.

But the father in him always won, and Draco's happiness superseded his own. He would just have to learn to live with it.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Draco avoided Hermione for the next week.

She didn't understand it, but she suspected it was because of his somewhat childish antics regarding the owl attack. She was, admittedly, a little disappointed in him. It would have been nice if he'd been able to prove his maturity by dealing with it with a little more aplomb. But at the same time, she was glad to see his perfect mask slip a little. It gave her a little relief, knowing he had flaws.

It was all too easy to forget that, given his impeccable appearance.

However, she could not tell him this, and he continued to go out of his way to stay out of hers.

Hermione had finally been able to accomplish Flooing again, so it was almost easy to forget that her magic had essentially abandoned her, now that she could get to work without injury. Not much of her job needed magic, though she noticed it was a little more difficult to get owls to send her missives. To remedy this, she began to give them entire doughnuts as payment, rather than normal small owl treats.

Being Muggle-born, it was a little easier to adapt to life without magic than it might be for a Pureblood. No one else seemed to be experiencing it, except Draco, who had only briefly mentioned it, so she tried to ignore it in the hopes that it would go away. She tried researching a little on what could cause such a thing, but there was a myriad of possibilities, and she simply didn't have the time to troubleshoot them.

Families had to be fed, after all. Elves freed, and so on.

Hermione had tried cornering Draco in his office to suss out exactly what was going on with him. This cold shoulder business was a little excessive just because he had embarrassed himself in front of her. Not as though he hadn't done it before, she recalled. A bloody nose and quivering lip above her wand in their third year at Hogwarts was proof of that.

But upon her confrontation of him, he'd merely continued writing, barely acknowledging her presence. He'd been polite, but would not answer her about why he was avoiding her. He denied it and asked if there was anything else. In a fit of pique, and distinctly recalling how she'd almost attacked him the week before in her own office, Hermione stomped out gracelessly.

Two can play this game.

Draco was a little disturbed. He had this feeling; more than a feeling, it was *afeeling*. And it was telling him to back off Hermione Granger. He couldn't explain it...it was like two parts of himself were battling. Half of him wanted nothing more than to take her in his arms and snog the living daylights out of her, and this half of him also cringed at his callous treatment of her. But the other half was telling him to stay away. No reasons given, and when he examined himself, he found absolutely no motive for this change of heart. He still wanted her, desperately even.

But Draco had a hard time ignoring his hunches. They usually steered him straight, and drastic things often happened if he ignored them. But this was different than his conscience, which often wormed itself into his head in his father's polished drawl, as annoying and disconcerting as that was. This was more like a feeling deep in his bones. And it wasn't just that he felt like he should stay away, but that the time wasn't right. He had this odd sense that he just needed to give them both some space and everything would be okay.

This fact that his intuition told him it was only a matter of time was the only reason he listened to the compulsion at all, since he was certain he couldn't...and had no desire to...avoid Hermione forever.

So he would give them a little break, for whatever reason, and hope she wouldn't grow to hate him in the interim. It couldn't hurt to humour his hunch for a few days, after all.

Draco gave a long-suffering sigh and dropped his head into his hands. His head ached, causing him to decide he would just go home for the day. He wasn't getting any work done, anyway.

There was no reason for him to be in her office. He'd thought up a decent excuse while he was in the elevator, but it escaped him now. All he could think about was her delicate, ink-stained fingers grasping the quill in a death grip, marking the page with angry slashes. All he could smell was her unique scent intoxicating him. All he could hear was her soft breathing, which escaped in huffs when she came across another apparently angering segment of the parchment.

She finally noticed his presence and started in her chair.

"Mr. Malfoy! I'm so sorry; were you waiting long?" She gestured for him to come in, and he stepped inside her office, closing the door behind him. She had the office all to herself for the time being, her officemate having taken a few too many unauthorized sick days. Normally, she luxuriated in the privacy, but now with Lucius Malfoy standing in front of her desk, she felt a fleeting need for a witness... or alibi.

"Not at all. I only just arrived."

She nodded, and he sat in the chair before her desk. He leaned his walking cane against the desk, and she held back a smirk. Only Lucius Malfoy could pull off such an ostentatious show of pomp, but pull it off he did.

Shaking her head to clear it of such thoughts, she smiled patiently at the man in question, waiting for him to make the reasons for his presence known.

The silence stretched on. Lucius seemed to be looking into her very soul, but Hermione could not look away. She was struck by how different his eyes were from Draco's. Draco's were a light, cement grey, shot through with darker streaks. Lucius' were a slate grey with no relief, no flecks. Just impenetrable grey.

"Miss Granger, I have a client..." Lucius paused, unable to believe his own presumption, using the same excuse on Hermione that he had used on his son the last week in an effort to talk to him about Hermione. Nevertheless, he continued, "...Who would like to make some substantial donations to various charities but does not have time to

do individual research. Do you think you could...?"

"...Put a donation package together? I'd be happy to! How much is he looking to donate? Does he have any particular interests? Is he interested in Magical Creatures, or perhaps a Muggle-born scholarship fund or something of that nature?"

As she was speaking, Hermione was throwing pamphlets and flyers together in a heap on her desk. When she was finished, she began to sort them by category, making comments on them with magical Post-its and stapling and clipping everything together.

Lucius marvelled at the difference between her approach and Draco's, which had been to calmly create a package of only a few choice materials.

"I'm not sure of his interest, so perhaps a bit of everything?" he encouraged.

She nodded distractedly, pulling a few more papers from her desk drawers. Once the package was complete and at least four times the size of Draco's, Lucius realized his time with her was coming to a close.

He wasn't entirely certain of his own intentions, but he suspected the Slytherin Death Eater part of himself was holding the father part's head under water for the time being.

"How is Draco?" he asked casually. "I went to his office but he wasn't there." This much was true; Lucius had stopped by his son's office with the intent of taking him to lunch.

"Actually, he went home early today. Other than that, I'm not sure how he is...fine, I suppose."

"You're not sure? Are you two not...?" He waved his hand in the internationally recognized gesture for 'you know what I mean.'

Hermione glanced up at Lucius once she finished writing one final note. He looked genuinely interested, but she sensed an ulterior motive. She scoffed: with someone like the elder Malfoy, she doubted there were primary motives at all.

"Well, no, we're not..." she repeated his gesture. "We were, I thought, but now...."

Lucius gave himself a minute to be sorry for his son in case he was unhappy with the break up, but then he rallied himself immediately. He'd told himself he'd ask Draco before he made a move in such a situation, but... maybe just a lunch?

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said warmly, and she smiled her thanks. She got up to hand him the package and see him the short distance to the door. He allowed her, but as she reached for the doorknob, he took her wrist and held it.

"Miss Granger, I wonder if you'd like to have lunch with me today. I had a lunch meeting, but it was put off, and I find myself famished."

Hermione was shocked; Lucius never gave her any impression... or maybe he had, and she was too thick to notice. It had been known to happen; she wasn't very in tune to the intentions of men. And even though she'd been seeing his son, Hermione didn't feel as awkward about it as she thought she should. Lucius was incredibly handsome and always so polite to her... and Draco was being such a dick lately....

She bestowed a bright smile on him, and Lucius found his breath was stolen. "I'd like that. I usually eat in the Ministry cafeteria around one."

Lucius smiled patronizingly and said, "I'll be here at ten to one, then." *And we shall not be eating in the cafeteria,* he added mentally.

He left a slightly dazed Hermione in his wake.

True to his word, Lucius arrived exactly on time. Hermione had had time to think about what made her agree to his invitation, but the more she considered it, the less she understood. She really liked Draco.... The kiss they'd shared had really lit her on fire. And more than that, she'd thought they'd had a connection.

But apparently she'd been wrong, if his treatment of her lately was anything to go by. It was possible the kiss hadn't been as good for him as it had been for her, or maybe he just wanted to be friends.

Hermione sensed that wasn't the problem, but she couldn't help feeling slighted, and being scorned played a major part in her acceptance of Lucius' invitation.

He stood in the doorway of her office and smiled at her. "Ready?"

"Sure." She grabbed her purse. Lucius offered her his arm, and she hesitated a moment before taking it. He led her out of the building, and before she could ask where they were heading, Lucius gripped her in a tight hold, and they Disapparated.

Lucius looked around himself. He still had Hermione in his arms and made no move to release her, until she squirmed a bit and he had no choice.

"Where are we, Mr. Malfoy?" Hermione didn't recognize the street or stores.

"Please, call me Lucius," he said distractedly. It was possible something had gone wrong. Not likely... just possible.

"And, well, I don't exactly know."

Hermione stared. "How can you not know; you Apparated us!"

"Yes, I did. But I meant to take us outside *Guillemé's*, a French restaurant in the High Wizarding Quarter. Not... wherever we are!" He chuckled, sounding a little exasperated. "This is rather embarrassing."

Hermione felt a sinking feeling. Whatever was affecting her and Draco was also apparently affecting Lucius. *What is going on here?*

Lucius took her into his arms again, and Hermione felt a shock when his hand grazed the bare skin of the nape of her neck. His hand was warm and slightly softer than Draco's. *Merlin, comparisons must not be made!*

They Apparated back to the Ministry, arriving not at the Apparation point, but almost half the street down. Neither made any comment on the strangeness of the occurrences, but Hermione could tell Lucius was unsettled.

"I apologize, Hermione. Would you mind eating in the... cafeteria?" The word took on a derisive slant, and she suspected he'd rather go hungry. But she was intrigued by him and wouldn't let him off the hook that easily.

"Yes, let's." And so they did.

Lunch was an interesting affair. Lucius retrieved food for both of them...sandwiches and salads...and Hermione sat at a bistro table toward the far end of the open space. She took in all the astonished faces that watched Lucius crossing the distance, red food tray in hand. She hid her snicker behind her hand at his highly held head and indignant glare, and he placed the tray on their table and leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Aren't you going to eat?" Hermione asked, since he didn't look as though he intended to.

"I haven't decided." *Oh, for goodness' sake! Another pouter.*

Hermione tucked in. She was starving, and the sandwich actually looked really good. After she took a few bites, Lucius reached for his and ate it with nary a scowl. They spoke a little about Ministry policy, and Hermione had to contain herself before she mentioned the budget fiasco. She knew it wasn't his fault, but she found it hard to resist pestering him about it. They also spoke about trivial things and made easy conversation.

Lucius was very congenial and walked her back to her office. Hermione had been quite surprised to discover they shared a lot in common, and she quite enjoyed spending time with him. He wasn't bad to look at, either, as her brain consistently reminded her.

At her office, he took one of her hands in his and raised it to his lips. He brushed a kiss softly against her knuckles, and Hermione couldn't help the flush that spread over her cheeks. She hastily looked away. He raised an eloquent eyebrow at her reaction.

"Thank you for allowing me to take you out. I'd really like to do it again; maybe for dinner?"

Hermione nodded. "Maybe dinner."

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

The next day, work was torture. Hermione, already prone to intensive introspection, was reaching levels of near-painful self-inspection.

She wanted Draco. That was undeniable. His boyish charm, his slightly petulant demeanour, even his immature reaction to the owl attack...all of these things appealed to her. His ever-changing attitude and the way he always surprised her. His tombstone eyes and silken tresses. His rough hands and firm....

Near-painful levels.

Lucius, on the other hand.... Lucius was suave, debonair, and sophisticated. But he was also intelligent, passionate, and sweet.

Neither man was the cold, reserved, or cruel person she'd known when she was a student. Or at least Lucius wasn't. Draco was giving her cause to doubt his maturation; he was still avoiding her, though he'd graced her with a small smile, which Hermione had practically gobbled up until she reminded herself she was a self-respecting witch who didn't need scraps from the likes of Draco Malfoy.

Especially since his father had sent her a very sweet owl just a few moments ago with an invitation to dinner that night a*Guilleme's*, since his previous attempt at taking her there had resulted in cafeteria food instead.

Hermione strongly suspected she should not be entertaining the notion of dating two men at the same time, let alone son and father. However, it just didn't feel wrong to her, and she was not one to invent feelings that did not exist just because society dictated it. If it didn't feel wrong, then she would continue to do it. She did want to tell Draco; she felt as though he deserved to know, even though he'd barely said two words to her all week.

But with the way office gossip went, she was certain he'd already heard about her lunch with his father. And he hadn't said anything; he'd even smiled at her. Therefore, everything must be okay...as okay as it could be without him talking to her, anyway.

She wasn't wrong. Draco had, indeed, heard of his father's unprecedented venture into the mess hall. His shock had only been surpassed by hearing that Hermione had joined him.

His father and Hermione had eaten lunch together. *Like a date?* He didn't know.

At first he was a little hurt and a lot jealous. He knew that he and Hermione were not exclusive; she'd never given him a solid answer as to whether or not they were actually dating. She was well within her rights to play the field.

As for his father, Draco had been more surprised than anything. But at the same time, when he tried to remain objective about the situation, he was happy that Lucius was happy. And from what he'd heard, he had been. The rumour mill had the two of them laughing, talking with heads close together, and Lucius walking her out of the cafeteria with her arm tucked into his. Objectively, he recognized that Hermione could be a good match for his father; they were both stubborn, temperamental, and passionate.

But the subjective part of him, which was the majority by far, pouted. He was all those things, too! He was good for her, too! *But alas*, the minority piped in, *you have been ignoring her with absolutely no cause, and for all she knows, you've moved on.*

Draco's love for his father and his growing affection for Hermione allowed the objective part of himself to gain control. *Just a few more days*, that niggling part of himself reminded him. *Just give her a few more days, and then go back to her.*

Draco's head settled in the by now familiar cradle of his arms once again.

Hermione spent an unusual amount of time dressing herself that night. She rarely went out socially on weekdays, but this was a special occasion. The more she thought about it, the more excited she allowed herself to get. She also could not stop the comparisons between father and son. Draco had taken her to a pub in Muggle London; how would *Guilleme's* compare? Draco's kiss had been intense and persistent; how would Lucius' compare?

Hermione groaned as she finally decided on a simple black dress with a square neckline and a bold slit, which usually exempted it from her selection. Thinking about

kissing Lucius sent spirals of heat throughout her body. Hermione wondered what it meant that she didn't feel uncomfortable with this new development. She told herself it was because Draco had given up on her, but somehow she knew it was more than that.

Not wanting to dwell on Draco's hurtful behaviour, Hermione chose a delicate white gold necklace with a small diamond pendant...a gift from Harry for graduation. She opted for small silver hoop earrings and black peep-toe pumps with a daring heel. Ginny had given them to her because they'd been too small for the red-haired girl, and Hermione had laughed, putting them into her closet to never meet her feet until today.

Lucius' owl message had been so sweet; the least she could do was make an effort. Unfortunately, her hair did not agree, and Hermione was running late by the time she'd mangled it into something that almost resembled a chignon.

She crossed her fingers and Apparated to the coordinates she'd been given. Against all odds, she made it there in one piece. Perhaps her magic was back to normal? Not wanting to test that theory and destroy her tenuous hairstyle, Hermione made a note to try it out later in the privacy of her home.

Since Hermione was late, she went inside and gave Lucius' name to the Maitre d'. She tried not to cringe at the excessive attention his name afforded her, and she was seated with a flourish next to the immaculately attired Malfoy Senior. She nodded her thanks and greeted Lucius, who had risen to greet her.

He kissed her cheek in salutation, and she couldn't stop the flush from flowing over her face. What an effect he had on her!

They sat, and Lucius told her he'd ordered for her. Her annoyance abated when he said it was salmon, her favourite.

"How was work today, Hermione?" Lucius asked cordially.

She waved her hand dismissively. "The same as usual. Despite sending out nearly fifty owls with requests for volunteers, only four people responded, and now we are, as always, shorthanded for our Equal Rights for Werewolf fundraiser at the end of the month." She sighed and closed her eyes briefly. "I'm sorry, I'm sure you don't want to talk about work."

"I don't mind. It's obviously important to you, and that makes it interesting. So why were so many owls sent in the first place? Don't you have a volunteer database to choose from?"

Hermione nodded, trying not to get worked up, but not succeeding entirely. "The owls were sent from that database! That's the frustrating thing. People put their names on the list, then act affronted when we actually ask for their help! It's ridiculous."

Lucius agreed sympathetically. "Maybe a new sign-up sheet should be circulated to make certain all the volunteers are still amenable and available." Lucius hoped his suggestion was taken in the manner in which it was intended, and that she would not think he was trying to tell her how to do her job. He knew that would rub her the wrong way.

"That's actually a great idea. I should do that first thing tomorrow. The sooner, the better." Hermione nodded decisively and whipped out a small agenda. After ostensibly writing his sensible suggestion on her To-Do list, Hermione smiled. She seemed to be more at ease, and he took advantage of that fact.

"I'm glad I could help." He smiled winningly, and she returned it. "That's a lovely necklace," he continued, reaching over and caressing the chain gently with his fingertips. Her hand automatically reached up to touch it, and her fingers met his. They hesitated there for a moment before she drew them back and blushed. She was really beginning to get annoyed at her propensity for redness in his proximity. She usually had more control over herself than this.

"Thank you. It was a gift."

"From a lover?" His question was bold, but he was sure she could handle it. To her credit, she did not blush this time.

"Not at all. It was from Harry; a graduation gift." She fingered the chain in exactly the spot his fingers had vacated.

"An unusual gift from a man who proclaims to be only a friend. Surely he had ulterior intentions." His certain tone had Hermione laughing freely, and he could only smile in return, her hearty chuckle warming him.

"Oh, no. I'm sure Ginny picked it. It's something she would buy for herself, after all." She smiled at the thought, certain she was right in her assumption. It didn't cheapen the gift for her, because Harry had cared enough to ask for Ginny's help.

Lucius had his own thoughts on the topic, but wisely kept them to himself. If he was going to court her properly, he would want Potter on his side after all, and this seemingly innocent gift may give him an advantage with his intentions. Lucius filed that little morsel away and turned his attention back to the lovely young woman before him.

Before either of them wanted, the dinner ended, and even tea could no longer prevent their parting. They both had to be at the Ministry early the next day, and as much as Lucius wanted Hermione, he knew he would have to wait until the timing was better.

In order to get a few minutes more with her, Lucius Disapparated with Hermione to her apartment building. He walked her to her door, which was a rather alarming shade of pink, but Hermione didn't offer an explanation and he didn't ask.

"I'm delighted you agreed to come with me tonight, Hermione. I had a lovely time, and I'd like nothing more than to do it again."

Hermione smiled that sunny grin and rested her fingertips on his upper arm. "I'm glad you asked me out, Lucius. I was a little nervous, but I had fun. I'd love to see you again." No sense being coy, she figured; she might as well lay all her cards on the table.

Lucius sensed her all-or-nothing attitude and stepped closer to her. He again traced her necklace with one hand, letting the other rest on her waist. Her breath caught slightly when his fingers grazed her collarbone, and she lifted her face to meet his gaze. His stormy grey eyes were trained on her neckline, and she drew a deep breath to steady herself. His eyes flashed as her lungs filled, and her breath caught at the tumult there.

Taking the initiative, Hermione moved her hand from his arm to his face, and finally his eyes met hers. They seemed to be looking for something in her face, something which he must have found, because his eyes softened and his lips parted slightly. Hermione stepped on her tiptoes and kissed him. His lips were soft and warm, his breath sweet from the tea. He didn't move, and Hermione was afraid she'd misjudged the moment, but she moved her lips anyway.

Lucius was finally jolted from his stupor. Her kiss was so sweet, so gentle and yet the sexiest thing he'd felt in a long time. He held back from crushing her body to his and settled instead for sliding his tongue into her mouth, relishing her soft moan and tracing his hands along her waist to her back. She leaned into his embrace, wanting more, but he was already pulling away.

Her lips parted, breath coming heavily and eyes glazed with desire. She stood unsteadily before him. He took her hand in his, and as he had in her office, grazed a kiss against her knuckles.

"Sweet dreams, Hermione."

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

After her date with Lucius, Hermione had attempted a few simple spells in the safety of her flat. After her successful Apparition earlier that day, she'd hoped she might be able to manage her magic again.

But nothing went as it should, and she was forced to resign herself, once again, to acting without magic. She couldn't contain her disappointment, however, and let out an anguished sob before throwing herself on her bed. Something was seriously wrong, and it was more than just a fluke. She couldn't deny it any longer; she knew she would have to see a Healer.

She'd known about magic for longer than she'd been a simple Muggle, so while it wasn't as difficult to cope without magic as it would be for a Pureblood, it was nearly impossible to function in the Wizarding World with faulty magic. Unless she wanted to risk death by Wizarding Elevator or some other ignoble demise, she would have to toughen up and seek help.

With that decision made, Hermione ungracefully shucked her clothing without leaving the comfort of her bed and fell asleep with thoughts of an unidentified blond wizard in her mind.

Lucius also turned in for an early night. It was unlike him to get to sleep without even looking at his work for the night, but he felt he deserved a night off. After all, he had a very uncomfortable talk with his son coming up, and he would need his strength. Draco's temper was legendary, surpassed only by Lucius' own, though both had been tempered slightly in the intervening years since the war. Still, there was no sense in taking chances, so Lucius mentally prepared his speech to his heir, hoping Draco would forgive him or at least hear him out.

He wasn't exactly afraid of his son's reaction, but he was anxious. Draco's decision to stop pursuing Hermione made the entire thing easier, but Lucius couldn't be sure of the circumstances surrounding that, so he planned to tread lightly.

When sleep came upon him, he dreamt of both Draco and Hermione. They were embracing passionately, as if after a long absence. But rather than feeling jealous, Lucius was drawn to them. He felt like he, too, had been parted from the young couple and was in need of a reunion. When he approached them, he was met with excitement and joy from both his son and Hermione.

In the middle of the night, Lucius awoke with feelings of anxiety and all-encompassing clarity. Things had just become infinitely more complicated.

Draco was also having a difficult time staying asleep. He hadn't been dreaming, that he could recall, but he'd been awoken rather rudely by an odd sensation. He almost felt as though he wasn't alone in his room, though the ample moonlight made it clear that no one was there.

He shrugged off the feeling and burrowed deeper under his silk sheet, desperate to fall back asleep before his mind turned on and rest became impossible. His last waking thoughts were of an adorable, bushy-haired witch and the irrefutable idea that everything was going according to plan. Whose plan, though, he didn't know.

"Draco, a word please?"

Draco looked up from his papers. He'd left work early that day, feeling distracted and anxious and somehow knowing he'd get more work done in his own study. Now his father was standing in the doorway with a decidedly nervous look on his face, one that Draco was absolutely certain had never graced his features in all the years Draco had known him. The nervousness was immediately passed onto the younger Malfoy.

"Of course. Would you like to have a seat?" He gestured to the sofa and chair that were situated by the lightly glowing fireplace across the room. He felt a little silly being so formal, but he'd always responded to his father in kind; whenever Lucius was official, Draco felt as though he should be as well.

Lucius nodded and took a seat on the chair. Draco followed him, sitting on the end of the sofa closest to his father.

Lucius sighed a little dramatically, and Draco had the impression that something important was on his mind. He tried to nod encouragingly, but his father wouldn't meet his eyes. Draco's eyes narrowed; this was out of character, indeed.

"Draco, have you continued to experience a strange disruption in your magic?"

If Draco was shocked by the somewhat incongruous topic, he didn't show it. "Actually, yes. But it comes and goes, and to be honest, I've been ignoring it in the hopes that it will work itself out. Why do you ask?"

Lucius looked as though he had already known the answer to that question, and Draco tried not to get frustrated. He wished his father would come out and say what was on his mind.

"Because I believe I know the cause, and yet I wanted to delay telling you until I was certain, but things seem to be getting more and more convoluted."

Draco tried to riddle out this response but to no avail. He looked blankly at Lucius until his father took pity.

"Let me say what I need to say, and don't interrupt. This is not going to be easy, for either of us, but you need to know the truth so we can make an informed decision."

Draco was starting to become extremely concerned; his father was acting as though Draco had a terminal illness or something. As soon as Draco thought that, he paled. What if he was sick, really sick? It made sense, after all; his magic was unstable, he was having odd dreams, strange sensations, and even compulsions to do things entirely against his nature, like leave Hermione alone when he wanted her more than anything. Draco's breathing became shallow, and Lucius immediately noticed.

"Nothing is wrong, son, not really. Everything is repairable. We can get through this, I promise. Don't panic just yet." Draco took a deep breath and found comfort in his father's reassuring words. If nothing else, Lucius was honest with his son, to a fault at times. He would not sugar-coat something important. He gestured for Lucius to go on, feeling a little embarrassed by his reaction.

Lucius nodded, seeming to rally himself. "In the Wizarding World, there are couples that are a little more special than most. They are not unlike what some call 'soul mates,' though to name it that is a little simplistic. Perhaps a better definition would be 'magic mates.' Every wizard's magic is attuned to that of a witch, or in some cases, a

wizard; it can change if a wizard does not find that specific witch, or if he does find her and she dies or vice versa. It is usually signified by an alteration in one's magic, which becomes erratic or volatile. Usually when the two members of the couple unite, the magic settles as it recognizes itself in the other person.

"However, very rarely..." Lucius paused to take a deep breath, and Draco listened avidly. "Very rarely, there are more than two members of a match. Sometimes, there are three, or even four. These types of relationships are often unbearable for a number of reasons, not the least of which being a propensity for monogamy in our society. Such triads rarely last, but when they do... when they do last, Draco, they are formidable. The power of each member feeds and grows off the others, not only increasing the strength of the magic, but also the abilities of the wielder. For example, longer life spans, faster healing abilities, increased physical strength and endurance, to name a few.

"But there is always a downside. The reason so few of these matches exist is because most people need only one other person. In cases of triads, the magic needs two other people because the members themselves need the others. They can only be truly happy in the triadic relationship, and this frightens people because it is poorly understood and, of course, judged. If the triad fails, the members are essentially condemned to life without either of the other members. A duo cannot be formed between two members, leaving out the third, because the imbalance becomes precarious and the magic will not stand for it. The only other option is an outside relationship without a magic match, which is a poor substitute indeed. The only way for... the people involved to be truly happy is to remain a triad."

Draco absorbed everything his father was saying, watching the emotions play across Lucius' face. He seemed a little nervous, even scared, telling Draco all this. While Draco found it fascinating, he had no idea what it had to do with him. He'd heard of what Lucius called 'magic mates,' even knew of a few. He also knew what triads were, how rare they were, but hadn't quite gleaned on to how it applied to him. Yes, his magic was acting up... but the rest just didn't apply. He only wanted Hermione....

Lucius could see his son struggling with what he was telling him. He pursed his lips, uncertain of how explicitly he should explain.

For once in his life, Lucius opted to plunge ahead rather than allow Draco to infer his meaning.

"Our magic...yours, mine and Hermione's...wants the three of us to be a triad. Together. In a relationship." Lucius couldn't really go any further with his explanation, but the blank look on Draco's face was almost enough to make him think up more synonyms for 'together.'

Slowly, ever so slowly, Lucius' words sunk in. *Oh, my gods...*

"Your magic wants you to fuck me?" Draco exclaimed, utterly scandalized and equally nauseous. *This cannot be happening....*

"Draco, for Merlin's sake, language! And no!" Lucius looked insulted and a little outraged by Draco's comment. "No, Draco. I don't think that's what is happening. I believe Hermione is the link between us; I can honestly say I have no desire to...." He gestured between the two of them, finding himself unable to vocalize the rather disturbing idea of being intimate with his son.

Draco heaved a sigh of relief, laughing nervously. He knew he had not handled that well and hoped his father was not insulted. Attempting to repair the situation somewhat, Draco laughed and said, "I mean, you're very handsome and all..."

"Enough! Draco, do you understand what I've said? I believe you, Hermione and I could be a triad. We could be immensely powerful, and, I believe, very happy."

Draco sobered immediately. He knew he cared about Hermione, and obviously he loved his father. Could he share her? Could he handle a relationship with his father, even if they weren't necessarily together sexually?

"Father, I'm sorry. I don't think I could handle that. It's too much, I..."

"Please, Draco. Don't make a decision right now. I know this seems like a lot to absorb, and indeed, it is. But you won't do either of us any justice by making a hasty choice. And I think Hermione needs to hear everything, too. It should be her decision as well."

Draco knew his father was right, but couldn't get over the image sharing a bed with his father, even with Hermione in the middle.

"Are you going to tell her?"

Lucius nodded. "Yes, I think that would be best. I doubt you could be... objective about the situation. Just tell me you'll think about it, and I'll take care of Hermione."

Draco stood up, nodding. "I will think about it, Father. I promise." He bit his lip, wanting to say more, but feeling incredibly awkward. "Good luck with Hermione. *You'll need it.*

Lucius remained in the study for a little while, thinking about what had happened. As soon as he'd realized the importance of the dream he'd had, and exactly what the implications of the three of them having faulty magic were, he knew he could waste no time. It was incredibly difficult to manage without perfect magic. He suspected that if he and Draco both made the decision to leave Hermione alone, their magic would settle down and return to normal. After all, they wouldn't be punished forever for not choosing the triad. After Narcissa had left, he hadn't experienced a disruption, which led him to believe that as long as one or both pursued Hermione separately, they would experience difficulties, but if both they either accepted her together, or they each decided to go separate ways, the magic would immediately begin to look for another suitable match, most likely not in the form of a triad.

Lucius had to admit he was intrigued. The thought of the power they could wield was somewhat intoxicating, certainly. But more than that, having Hermione by his side was a delicious thought. Even the idea of being with Draco, not sexually but certainly more than father and son was appealing. It meant he could keep Draco with him always, and that was something to fight for.

Now, if only Hermione and Draco would see it the same way....

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione was surprised, but not displeased, to see a missive from Lucius on her desk when she arrived at work that day. She waited until she'd had her coffee and

opened all her other mail to address it.

She hadn't seen Draco that day, nor did she expect to. She'd nearly resigned herself to the idea that she'd been judged by him and found wanting. When she went over what could have gone wrong, she drew a blank.

But she wasn't one to dwell on things that went wrong.... Well, maybe that wasn't entirely true. But at least she'd convinced herself that it must be Draco's problem and not hers. She regretted that he obviously wasn't interested, but she had to admit, she felt a little relieved. He made her a little nervous, both with his intensity and his past. As much as she believed that he'd changed, there would always be a little uncertainty; Malfoys were notoriously good actors, and while half of Hermione was sad at the lost chance, the other half was thankful that her heart was safe for another day.

Safe, that is, unless Lucius had designs on it.

She was just about to open the letter from Lucius when a knock on her door startled her. She'd taken to leaving it shut all the time, partially for privacy from Draco, but mostly because she was embarrassed by her malfunctioning magic and didn't want her co-workers seeing her do everything the Muggle way.

"Come in!" she called, putting the letter down and folding her hands over it.

To her immense surprise and begrudged pleasure, it was Draco.

"Can I come in?"

"Of course." She smiled at him. Gods, but he had an immediate effect on her. She tried to school her features, but grinned at him regardless. He returned it, and she was smitten. *Ugh, control yourself, Granger. He is so not interested.*

"Good morning. I just wanted to ask if you'd finished the mock-up for the new volunteer form. I was thinking about circulating it later today."

Hermione was startled; she hadn't spoken to him about that yet. "Well, yes. I finished it before I came to work this morning. How did you...?"

Draco waved offhandedly. "Oh, my father told me about it. I think it's a great idea; we definitely need the help." Hermione felt a tingle of warmth at his compliment, but she'd also felt a frisson of heat at the way Draco said, 'My father.' Something very odd was going on inside her head!

"Thanks. Well, I just need to make magical copies, and I figured we'd leave some on every floor, as well as personally visit all the previous volunteers to find out which ones want to continue. I doubt many will, but I'm hoping we can recruit some new ones." She dug around in her briefcase for the form. Handing it to him, she said, "Do you and... your father normally talk shop?"

He took the form and looked at it briefly. He answered her in a distracted voice, "Well, not really actually. Just when it concerns you." He gave her a conspiratorial wink and promptly exited her office, closing the door behind him. She was left with a feeling that she didn't quite have all the information. Why would they talk about her? Did Draco know she'd been on a date with his father? He wasn't acting like he cared.... Maybe they were right back to being colleagues and nothing more. Well, that was better than the cold shoulder, anyway.

Shaking her head and wondering when her life had become so complicated, Hermione finally opened Lucius' letter. Her eyes widened.

Hermione,

I know you have many questions, and I'm pleased to say I believe I have some answers for you, regarding your magic. You may not like what I have to say, but I hope you will hear me out with an open mind. If anyone can manage that, it is surely you.

I would be grateful if you would return with me to Malfoy Manor this afternoon after you are finished work. We can have dinner together, and I'll tell you everything I know. I shall come by your office around five.

Yours,

Lucius

Hermione was shocked. How could Lucius have answers to her magic problems? What did it even have to do with him? She noticed he'd left no way for her to respond to his missive. She decided instead of going to his office to confirm that she would indeed accompany him tonight, she would just wait for him to show up; he obviously expected acquiescence anyway.

And he'd signed it... *yours*.

Mine?

When Lucius eventually did come to her office, it was just before five. He knocked on her door, a clunking sound that made her believe he was knocking with his cane instead of his hand. *How very Malfoy.*

"Come in!" she called to the second Malfoy that day.

Lucius entered the room, filling it with his presence. Unlike the Death Eater she knew as a teenager, this Lucius wasn't as intimidating as he was commanding. He didn't frighten her like he used to, but she couldn't deny she was drawn to his power. It fairly radiated off of him, and, to an only slightly lesser extent, his son. It was really no wonder she was drawn to these men. She was a fairly powerful witch on her own, so it suited that she would be attracted to men of a similar magical stature.

"Good afternoon, Miss Granger. I trust you got my letter?" His cultured voice never failed to send a shiver down her spine, but she managed to answer gracefully.

"I did. I'd be happy to come with you. I must admit, I'm very curious to hear what you know." And not a little put out that he hadn't deigned to inform her earlier.

"I'm happy to enlighten you. I only hope you will be equally happy to be enlightened."

Hermione tilted her head coyly. "There's nothing I enjoy more than... enlightenment."

They both smiled at her flirtation, even if Hermione herself was a little shocked. Lucius put her at ease while simultaneously keeping her on her toes.

She quickly gathered the work she planned on doing that night and stuffed it into her briefcase. Donning her coat, she accepted Lucius' arm, and together they walked to the Apparition point. In moments they were outside Malfoy Manor. Hermione followed Lucius inside, and he led her to his study. Hermione blanked her mind against the sickening rush of emotion at the memory of the last time she'd been in this house. *Things are different now*, she reminded herself.

Similar to Draco's study across the manor, this room was completely Lucius. The dark mahogany desk was massive, and all the furniture in the room shared the same wood theme. The walls were beige, and that kept the room from feeling small. There was a brown leather sofa and loveseat, as well as a dark green wingback chair situated in front of a huge fireplace. Two walls bore immense bookcases, even though the room itself was attached to the library. He obviously felt very comfortable here, and Hermione instantly felt the same.

Not letting go of her hand, Lucius sat Hermione on the loveseat and took his place beside her, sitting close enough that their thighs touched. The fact that he chose the smaller loveseat over the more accommodating sofa did not go unnoticed by Hermione.

She smiled warmly at him, wanting him to tell her everything he knew. When he placed his hand on her knee, she couldn't refrain from shivering. His touch inspired something within her. His hand was warm and reassuring, and his smell assailed her. It was spicy and musky and made her want to lean forward and breathe him in....

"Hermione..." His voice was impossibly low. The warmth of the room and his closeness intoxicated her, and she raised her face to meet his.

He searched her eyes for a moment, but she closed them in silent permission. When she felt his breath against her lips, she leaned in to close the distance with a kiss.

His hand immediately cupped her cheek, and he tilted his head to deepen the kiss. Her mouth accepted him immediately, not playing any of the games she usually enjoyed. Now, she only wanted him.

When his tongue stroked hers, it was like a piece of her soul settled. An anxiety she'd hardly known she'd been feeling lifted, and she felt free and complete. She sighed in contentment, and he swallowed her sounds. He pulled back slightly, kissing her lips lightly a last time before pulling back. She kept her eyes closed, not wanting to forget the sensation, but when he whispered her name, she had to see his eyes.

They were the darkest she'd ever seen them, and a look of lust crossed his features before he contained it. It was almost as if he was afraid she'd be frightened by his passion...and she was anything but. She'd waited all her life to see passion like that, and she'd only ever witnessed it in one other eerily similar pair of grey eyes.

"Gods, you are stunning. I could kiss you for days." He looked amazed, possibly because of what he'd said, but more likely because what he'd said was true.

But as much as Hermione was enjoying his talented attentions, she had to know what he knew.

"Lucius, you need to tell me about my magic."

He nodded solemnly. He'd decided to use much the same words he'd said to Draco the night before. And like with Draco, he did not hesitate, but told her all he knew about the magic mates, and the triad, and how he believed it involved the three of them. He barely paused to register her reactions, and when he was finished, he clamped his lips shut.

Hermione was sure her face was a comic mask at this point. She had never felt more incredulous in her life. Lucius Malfoy...former enemy, Death Eater. Bad Guy...was telling her that he believed she was destined to be in a relationship with him and his son, Draco Malfoy...Death Eater-in-training, arch nemesis, Junior Bad Guy. She wanted to laugh, but her expression was frozen.

"I think I should probably head home, Mr. Malfoy." She lurched unsteadily to her feet, but didn't take a further step. The problem wasn't that everything he'd said was wrong. Oh, no, that would have been much easier to cope with. The problem was that everything he'd said felt so damn *right*. The more he'd spoken, the more she felt everything fall into place. The magic, the feeling of emptiness she'd had before, the lack of guilt she'd experienced when agreeing to see Lucius even though she was seeing Draco. Her *dreams*.

Lucius held onto her wrist, and it felt impossibly small in his large hand. "Please, stay for a few moments. Talk to me. I know it's frightening; it's all quite a bit to absorb. Draco did not handle it very well, either."

"Draco knows?"

Lucius nodded, and Hermione sat back down, trying to ignore the heat of his thigh against hers. "Yes, I told him just last night. The way he's been avoiding you... it wasn't *you*. It was his instincts. The magic between the three of us was telling him to give me time to make you aware of my intentions. If you'd chosen him completely, you never would have considered me, and all of our power would continue to revolt."

"Does Draco... want this, as well?" Hermione congratulated herself on keeping her voice steady. She was certainly not unaware that some couples engaged in sexual encounters with more than one partner. She even knew that some people maintained relationships with three members. It was not entirely unheard of...slightly more common in the Wizarding World than the Muggle world, but still not very prevalent.

"Draco doesn't know what he wants at this point. But that isn't to say he's ruling it out. To be perfectly honest, I believe he will keep his cards close to his chest until he knows what you want. He won't pursue anything if he suspects you are hesitant. I don't know if I have the same qualms." His voice lowered, and Hermione instinctually leaned toward him. "I know exactly what I want."

His lips descended quickly to hers, not giving her a chance to deny him. His hands held her face lightly, and he kissed her with the passion she was beginning to associate with him. He certainly did nothing by halves. She moaned into his mouth, all thoughts of triads and magic mates fleeing her mind while he learned her mouth with his tongue.

Hermione gently touched his cheek, but was compelled to card her fingers through his silky hair. It was long, past his shoulders, and the same silver-blond as Draco's. She tugged lightly on his tresses, and he growled into her mouth, deepening the kiss even further.

But just as quickly as it started, Lucius pulled back. "Now you know everything I know. And you know what I want. I hope you make the right decision, for it is all up to you."

Catching her breath, Hermione nodded slowly. "I can only promise that I will think about it, Lucius. I won't say No right away, but all this... it's a little scary. I'll have to..."

"...Research?" Lucius smirked, raising a silver eyebrow ever so slightly.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Yes, I'm so predictable. You know, there's nothing wrong with covering all your bases and making an informed decision!"

"Of course not, pet. Just remember, your heart should have as much say as your head." And with those rather sage words, Lucius led Hermione to the Floo, through which she travelled to her suddenly very empty-feeling living room.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

Hermione made her tea with shaking hands. Upon her return from Malfoy Manor and the rather life-changing information Lucius had imparted to her, she'd sat in shock on her worn and cosy sofa for nearly an hour.

Her brain had raced like it had a medal in the offing, but it uselessly came to no conclusions. After scalding herself with scorching liquid thanks to her trembling digits, Hermione decided tea was not the answer.

But for once in her life, she didn't know what was.

Looking at the situation objectively, it made a certain amount of sense to just walk away. She was not all that involved with either Malfoy at this point. Though she was glad Draco had a reason for avoiding her, little sense though it made, she was sure she could forget about that blissful, sensual kiss in time. As for Lucius, well, his passionate and commanding kiss could be forgotten as well. In time.

But there were two issues that drew her back in, two major *Pros* in the left-hand column of life. Power. And Love.

Hermione knew she was a good witch. She'd mastered nearly everything she'd ever attempted, and she understood magic in an inherent way that few Muggle-borns ever did. Magic had always been seductive to her, and when she learned a new charm or mastered a new potion, she felt a thrill that stayed with her. More than a love of learning, Hermione had a passion for *magic*. So the idea that she could be even better...learn more, achieve more...appealed to her on a level few people realized she possessed.

But the other issue... that just might be the clincher. Hermione didn't trust easily, and there was only one person she trusted absolutely implicitly. Herself. She trusted her magic to make the right decision. She didn't think her magic would hurt her. So her magic must know something she didn't. And if it wanted her to be with those devilish Malfoys, she knew her heart would not be broken irrevocably. If something did happen and the triad didn't work, she could always leave. It wouldn't be easy to give up the power, certainly, but it could be done.

But what if you love Lucius and not Draco? Or vice versa? Hermione was wise enough to know she did not love either man at this point. She barely knew them, their real selves. How horrible would it be to fall for one and not the other? Could she live in that type of relationship? And how would it work with them being... father and son?

How could they be okay with that?

The first answer came to her quickly. Falling for one and not the other just wouldn't be possible. She had love enough in her heart to love them both, and she had to, again, trust her magic to have made the right choice. She would love them both; it was as simple as that. The second answer was more difficult, and Hermione realized she didn't know many gritty details about how the triad would work. Especially when it came to sex. Hermione had a little experience...she certainly knew what could go wrong with two men and a woman... but would father and son want that? Would she? Hermione coughed mentally and moved onto the next question. Would they... be together as well?

Hermione's face flooded with heat as she pictured two perfectly coiffed blonds closing in for a slow, sensual kiss.... Lucius taking the lead and Draco leaning into him....

Okay, time to think about unsexy things.... Why can I never think of unsexy things when I need them the most? Settling for an image of Hagrid in a bikini riding a bicycle, Hermione was able to get her thoughts back on track.

She would just have to research the... sex thing. Now, the cons list. Well, they were Malfoys. Not one, but two. Insufferable, arrogant, prejudiced, proper, cruel, cold... well, maybe she was reaching a little. They were at least some of those things. Public image. People would think they were disgusting, incestuous. People would think she was a slut, or mad. Harry and Ron would absolutely lose it. She might be hospitalized until her sanity was proven. People might think they were coercing her, magically forcing her. That would be ugly.

Hermione decided the only way to get the answers she really needed was to talk to another triad. She usually preferred getting knowledge from books first and people second, but in this case, a book would only be a second-hand account, whereas a real triad...she could ask them all the questions she needed to and make a properly informed decision.

She always felt better when a decision was made. Hermione jotted off a quick owl note describing her intentions and sent it away to the Manor.

Her owl came back about an hour later, just as she was getting ready for bed.

Hermione,

I think your idea of a discussion with a triad is a wonderful idea. I know you have many questions, and I only have so many answers, as well as a few questions myself. Draco agrees with me. He is most pleased that you are willing to think about this arrangement. As am I, of course.

I will set up a meeting with a triad I met a few years ago at a Ministry party, with whom I've had fairly regular contact. They are rather young, both in terms of age and relationship, but they should give us a good idea of what we can expect.

I will owl you with the time.

As always, yours,

Lucius Malfoy

Hermione grinned. *Always mine.* It made her a little giddy to think such a powerful, debonair man like Lucius Malfoy called himself *hers*. She wondered if Draco felt the same. *They could both be mine.... I only have to say the word.* She would see Draco at the office the next day, and he would have to talk to her. If they planned on discussing a lifelong commitment to one another, they would at least have to converse.

She was looking forward to it. She'd missed him more than she cared to admit, and she was eager to hear his thoughts. But she reminded herself that she would not make a decision until she'd met the other triad.

The next day, Hermione was late for work. The second she'd Apparated, she knew something had gone wrong. And she was very, very concerned to realize she had ended up at the end of the Apparition wards at Malfoy Manor. Luckily, it seemed no one was home to notice her random arrival, which they might have if she'd accidentally touched the wards or set off other alarms. It was her good fortune that Lucius and Draco both made a point to arrive early at work and weren't around to witness her rather abrupt and unexpected landing.

It could have been worse, of course. She could have ended up half at Malfoy Manor and half at work.

She managed to Apparate only a block from the Ministry. She really shouldn't have tried a second time...who knows what could have happened...but she was already running behind, and she was anxious to see Draco.

She hurried into her office, pleased that no one seemed to take note of her late entry. She shut the door and sighed. Turning to face her desk, Hermione shrieked and jumped a foot in the air like a cat.

"Late? That's so unlike you." Draco's smile was feral as he rose gracefully from her chair, slipping around the desk and approaching her shocked form.

"Dear Merlin, Draco! Can't you wait outside of my office like a normal person?" Her heart was slowly returning to a normal pace, but her face felt devoid of blood and her fingertips tingled.

"But you don't like normal men, do you, Hermione?" he purred, coming into her personal space and taking her hand. "I think that's evident enough, wouldn't you say?" His fingers trailed up her arm.

She shivered at the contact, feeling sparks at the touch. She couldn't help but lean into him.

"I suppose not. But still, you shouldn't lurk around..."

He laughed a low, throaty laugh that was altogether too close to her ear. Hermione's eyes fluttered closed.

"I was hardly lurking. I was waiting. I've missed you," he admitted, mouth resting against the shell of her ear, licking slightly before he pulled back to watch her face for a reaction.

"I've missed you, too, Draco. I was so confused by your sudden change of attitude."

He shook his head sadly. "I know. I couldn't even explain it to myself; it was just a feeling. Apparently it was for the best, though. Or so my father says," he finished with a wicked smile.

"What do you think about this triad thing, Draco? Honestly?" She needed to know the truth about how he felt. Lucius had pulled no punches, telling her exactly what he thought and what he wanted her to choose. But Draco's opinion was just as important.

"At first, I was afraid..."

"You were petrified?" Hermione snickered.

Draco looked at her blankly. "Well, I suppose..."

Hermione rolled her eyes. If she did agree to the triad, she would spend a day every week teaching these arrogant Malfoys all about Muggle music and culture.

Draco continued, but not before giving her a strange look as if she would interrupt again. "But now it just feels right. Honestly, it feels like we're already together, you know? I want you, Hermione Granger. I want to be with you, and if I have to share you with anyone, I'm glad it's my father, as weird as that may seem. He's more like a friend than a father anyway; or, at least, it makes it easier to think about when I put it that way. I just want to be with you."

Hermione considered this. "And of course the increased power and magic are nothing to scoff at, right?" She searched his face. The power appealed to her and certainly to Lucius, but she didn't want it to be the only reason Draco agreed to this. That idea hurt her deeply.

"Well, the power is like the icing on a delicious..." he kissed her neck softly, "...Hermione-shaped..." he nibbled her collarbone, "...cake," he finished, biting her neck and soothing it with a kiss. "And I am very hungry," he growled, capturing her lips in a kiss that took Hermione by surprise. It was hard and fast, passionate and ferocious. Hermione tried to keep up with his near-frantic movements, her body heating up instantly as his hands circled her waist and held her firmly against him.

Her hands buried themselves in his hair, marvelling at the light silkiness as his strands slipped effortlessly through her fingers. Her heart was settled; she knew what Draco wanted, and it wasn't power or increased magic or anything superficial. He wanted her and she wanted him. It was suddenly so easy. But she knew she had to meet the other triad in order to make the best decision. But even if the meeting didn't go so well, she had an unshakable feeling that the three of them could make it work somehow. She cared too much to not try.

Especially since Draco was continuing to snog her senseless in her office like this. Just as that thought filtered through her brain, Draco pulled back, breath mingling with hers, eyes stormy and dark with desire.

"Now that... that was a good kiss," he asserted, fingers tightening on her waist.

Hermione could only nod in agreement.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione was not the type to labour over what to wear. Her clothes were well-fitting and efficient, not expensive but not cheap. The materials were usually middle-of-the-road, and the styles were only a season or two behind the mode.

So why she was standing in front of her closet mirror holding dress after dress in front of her towelled body was beyond her.

The meeting with the triad was today. Lucius hadn't given her many details, other than telling her they were rather young but very nice. He'd said she didn't know them, which made Hermione slightly disappointed. It would have been interesting if she had. She wanted to make a good impression for the triad, and she also wanted to look nice for her men. It would be the first time she was around both of them at the same time, and she was nervous about how to act around them. Would they both want to hold her hand? Kiss her? There were so many variables....

Hermione sighed. There was no point in dwelling. For whatever reason, they both appreciated her slight frame, her admittedly small breasts, and her wild hair. She could

dress in the fanciest *haut couture* but it wouldn't hide that she was Hermione Granger, bookworm extraordinaire.

She finally settled on a dark green sundress that was fitted around her bust and flared at her slim hips. It had thin straps and fell to her knees, and the colour should appeal to the Malfoys if nothing else. Hermione smoothed her hands over the material, shivering when she pictured Lucius doing it instead... or maybe Draco... or maybe *both*.

Hermione gulped.

Lucius had opened his Floo to her, and she threw the powder in, announcing her destination with only a slight waver in her voice.

Draco and Lucius were both in the Malfoy parlour to receive her. Draco quickly corrected her stumble and leaned in to kiss her on the cheek.

"Good morning, Granger." He winked wickedly, and she wrinkled her nose at him.

"Good morning, Draco," she returned.

Lucius stepped forward, placing his arm gently on the edge of her shoulder. He kissed her other cheek and murmured, "Hello, pet."

She shivered. Both men were touching her, and she simultaneously felt perfectly at ease and completely unravelled. "Good morning, Lucius. When do your guests arrive?"

"Any minute now," he answered her. "Tea?"

"Please," she nodded. Draco wouldn't stop leering at her, and Hermione tried not to giggle. It would be very un-Hermioneish to do so. Draco released her arm, and she went to sit beside Lucius on the sofa. Clearly he was the safer choice, and Draco could just sit on the armchair.

Lucius immediately took her into his arms and slanted his mouth against hers. He tasted sweet, like tea and winter, and Hermione was beginning to suspect there was no safer choice with these two. A fog filled her mind, leaving only the sensation of his tongue soothing hers. A whimper tried to escape her throat, but Lucius devoured it along with everything else she offered.

When she felt Draco settle on the sofa behind her, the fog cleared and she froze in her kiss with Lucius. Draco gently ran his hands down her bare arms, and her heart picked up speed. He placed a gentle kiss on the side of her throat from behind at the same moment Lucius nipped her lip, remonstrating her for her sudden lack of participation. With both their lips on her, the fog came back thicker than ever. Lucius' mouth moved to the unoccupied side of her throat, and Draco turned her head to meet her lips in a difficult but satisfying clash of lips and tongues.

Lucius was the first to pull away, and then he had to pull Hermione from Draco.

"I see I'm to have the role of referee, hmm?" His voice was a caress against her flesh.

Draco quipped, "Well, if you're offering to take up the role, I won't fight you for it."

Lucius snorted. "Of course not, Draco. Merlin forbid that you take responsibility."

Hermione had a vivid flash of what their future might look like and chuckled. Both men looked questionably at her, but she kept her humour to herself.

A house-elf suddenly popped up, wearing the sweetest little pink suit. "Master Lucius, Young Master Draco. The guests have arrived. Shall I show them in?"

Lucius nodded his assent. Hermione was gaping. "You've educated your house-elves?" She knew the Malfoys paid them, but this... was unheard of.

"Of course. Their poor English was a constant trial on my patience." Lucius' voice was haughty, but she heard a pleased undercurrent. She suspected his pride wouldn't let him admit that he'd done a good deed. Hermione vowed to remedy that. They were continually surprising her.

The three of them stood and awaited the entrance of the triad. Hermione was more excited than nervous, especially since she had a list of questions filed away in her purse.

Three people entered, and Lucius greeted them immediately. He introduced Hermione first. The woman, with whom Lucius seemed familiar, was tall and slender with light brown hair and hazel eyes. She was quite pretty and dressed in a smart business suit. Her name was Celeste. Lucius introduced Michael next, a sharp-dressed young man with blond hair and blue eyes. He was handsome, an athletic type. He shook her hand firmly and smiled broadly. Lastly, Lucius introduced Thello.

Thinking she'd heard him incorrectly, Hermione clarified, "Othello?"

"Oh, no," Celeste laughed. "Nothing as tragic as that! His name is Thello. I doubt he's ever even heard of Shakespeare." She looked to Lucius, a mischievous twinkle in her eye. "A Muggle-born darling? Or perhaps a Pureblood with an impressive breadth of knowledge?"

Lucius raised an eyebrow. "Hermione is a Muggle-born," he announced in a tone that said no one had better take issue with that. No one did.

"Please, sit," Lucius directed everyone. Draco had been introduced as well and looked a little overwhelmed, but hid it well. Hermione sat again between the two men on the sofa, across from the triad on another sofa.

Lucius asked Celeste all about her family, and Hermione took the respite to watch. Thello was a dark-haired man with near-black eyes. His skin was pale, his attire black. He looked like a young Severus Snape, but his features were softer, his lips fuller and his eyes a little less intimidating. He was handsome in a very different way than Michael. He met her inquisitive gaze, and she smiled, but he did not return it.

Celeste sat in the middle with her hand on Michael's knee. His hand was atop hers. Celeste's body was turned slightly toward Michael, away from Thello, and the latter was as far over on the sofa as possible without sitting on the arm. Thello was looking anywhere but at Hermione, Draco and Lucius, and she had to wonder what the behaviour meant. He looked like he would rather be anywhere than here with them.

Celeste was looking at her expectantly, and Hermione smiled apologetically. "I'm sorry, what was that?"

"Lucius said you had questions?" Her voice was inviting, but somehow a little cold.

"Yes, do you mind?" Celeste and Michael shook their heads, and Hermione reached for the list in her purse. Thello snorted upon seeing it, but Celeste laughed.

"Our Hermione likes to be prepared," Draco purred. His voice sent shockwaves down her spine, and she shook her head to dispel the feeling.

"How long have you been together?"

Celeste, apparently the spokesperson of the group, answered. "About seven years now. I was twenty-one when I married Michael, and then three years later, we met Thello."

Hermione frowned. "Did you live three years without your magic?"

Celeste shook her head. "The disruption was never that bad. Every now and then it would be faulty, but never dangerous. Just things like a *dirtumos*, or an *Accio* that

didn't quite hit its mark. All major spells and charms worked just fine."

Hermione turned to Thello. "Was it the same for you?"

He paused before answering. "No, my magic went horribly awry. I would have been resigned to life as a Muggle without Michael... and Celeste."

"And how is your magic now?"

"Better than ever." All three were in agreement of this fact. Thello demonstrated by flicking his finger and bringing her question sheet over the table to him.

She gasped. "Wandless magic?"

Michael shook his head. "Only Thello can do that. We still need wands. Our magic increased as well, but Thello was a more powerful wizard to begin with."

Lucius and Hermione exchanged a look. They were all quite powerful in their own rights. The possibility of wandless magic was definitely tipping the scales. Thello smirked as he looked at her questions before floating the sheet back into Hermione's lap.

"I have a couple more questions. How were you able to deal with society's stigma about triad relationships?" This question was important to her, but it also led into the more personal questions.

Michael answered this. "Well, we're not exactly out as a triad. Celeste and I are married, and as far as anyone knows, Thello is a friend. We've found it best to deal with it like that. That isn't to say you should do the same. Just that it's different for every group."

Hermione was surprised. She doubted very much that Lucius or Draco would abide by being left out like that. Glancing at Thello, she decided there was more to the story, and she intended to find out what.

She met Lucius' eyes, and he seemed to know exactly what she was trying to convey.

"Celeste, Michael, I would very much like to show you the garden. It's come in wonderfully since you've last visited. Thello, I remember you saying you had no interest in such things, so I hope you won't mind keeping Hermione company. Draco, come along." Draco looked to Hermione for confirmation, and she nodded. He kissed her on the cheek and followed his father and the other two out of the room.

Hermione stood and approached Thello. She gestured to the space beside him on the sofa. "Do you mind if I sit?"

He shrugged. "It's your house, isn't it?"

She sat and laughed. "No! I don't live here."

He looked at her curiously. "But you will."

She shrugged. "Maybe one day, in the future. I have my own flat. It's terribly small and inconvenient, but it's mine." She smiled at him, but he looked away.

"Yeah, I had my own place as well. At least in a place like this you'd have your privacy."

"Thello, can I ask you a personal question?"

"Isn't that why we're here?" he countered.

"But you don't have to answer, of course." He nodded, and she continued, "Why does it seem like you'd rather be anywhere other than with Celeste and Michael?"

He smiled bitterly. "Lucius told us about how you were dating Draco first, but the magic encouraged Draco to give you space for Lucius to come into the picture. Imagine dating Draco for three years and *then* discovering you were meant to be with Lucius as well. Imagine marrying Draco first."

She nodded slowly in understanding. She couldn't fathom having to deal with that. "Do you feel left out? You love them, don't you? Otherwise, it's not worth it, not even for the wandless magic."

"Miss Granger, most triads are like ours, like yours. Not all members are intimate with all members. Draco and Lucius will mostly likely never be intimate together, correct?" Hermione couldn't answer that, so she shrugged a shoulder. He went on, saying, "I've never been with Celeste."

Her eyes widened in dawning comprehension. "So you and Michael...?"

He nodded. "Their relationship was unstable until I entered it. I was drawn to Michael from the beginning, and I love him more than anything. I would put up with anything in order to be with him. Even her. When we became a triad, their love cemented. I was like an anchor, strengthening their bond."

"But what about you?" Hermione's heart was breaking for this man who was more like Snape than she'd initially guessed.

"I have a higher purpose. Our relationship is important. Any children from a triad will be among the strongest wizards and witches alive. And Michael is happy with Celeste, and his happiness is all I wanted from the start."

"Do you and Michael...?"

He shook his head. "Not like we used to. He used to divide his time fairly equally between Celeste and me, but in the last couple years he's only... visited me a few times." Thello's voice was strained, and Hermione's eyes glittered beyond her control. She put her hand on his knee and shook her head.

"I know I don't know you well, Thello, but you deserve better. There has to be another way."

"If I left them, their relationship would become unbalanced again, and he would be unhappy. It would devastate him, and that would destroy me."

"But if you stay," she whispered, "It will destroy you just the same!"

Now it was his turn to shrug. "Miss Granger, you are very lucky. Both of your wizards seem to care about you very much, and they obviously love each other, albeit in a different way. It very rarely works like that. Triads are about power first and love second. Only the truly lucky ones get the benefit of both. Don't feel sorry for me. I've made my choices, and I am content in them."

But when Celeste walked in with Michael on her arm, beckoning imperially for Thello, Hermione saw the look that passed between Michael and Thello, one of desperate longing and regret. She was sure she'd never seen anyone less content in her life.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

After seeing the triad out and promising to call on them soon, Hermione, Draco and Lucius returned to the parlour. Hermione felt a little out of sorts from the meeting. She felt like she knew even less than before, and that was a disconcerting sensation.

She took a seat on the armchair. She felt better sitting beside Draco or Lucius, but she needed time to think about what had passed. On one hand, the heated kisses the three had shared before their guests had arrived enflamed her; it had felt so right, not awkward or unequal. That same hand was proffering the idea of wandless magic, something very few witches or wizards could claim to be able to do.

On the other hand... Thello had seemed so desperately unhappy, and it pained her to even think that one of them would ever be so lonely. It didn't seem fair, and it was breaking her compassionate heart. Thello had said triads were about power first and love second, but Hermione didn't want that. She hadn't guarded her heart so voraciously over the years just to give up on it and settle for a relationship based on anything but love.

She needed answers. From her wizards, this time.

Lucius had freshened her tea, and she sipped it thoughtfully.

"Lucius, did you know Celeste and Thello have never been intimate?"

Draco took a moment to catch on to her meaning, but when he did, his face shone with enlightenment.

"I was aware of that particular facet of their relationship, yes."

"Would you and Draco ever be intimate?"

Draco spluttered and Hermione couldn't help but smile. He was so very easy to rile. But she really did want an answer.

Lucius sighed. "Insofar as there must be a certain level of intimacy between two men sharing one woman, I suppose so. If you're asking if we'll ever have sex..."

"Uh, no! Sorry, Father, but no. Just no." Draco looked like he wished he'd kept his mouth shut, but Lucius nodded.

"That answers that, I suppose."

Hermione chewed her lip. "And are we going to 'come out' as a triad? I hate the thought of one of you being left out like that. It would mean the one who wasn't public could never date me, or hold my hand in public... I don't like the thought of that." She shook her head to emphasize her point.

Draco leaned forward. "But what would be better? Publically dating only one, or being subjected to rumour and conjecture about our unusual relationship?"

Lucius added, "Despite the fact that Draco and I are related, it is you, Hermione, who may bear the brunt of public scrutiny. The press especially are notoriously ruthless about women who have more than one partner."

Hermione expounded, "But that's ridiculous! It's not as though we really *chose* it, is it? Our magic did! And triads are extremely powerful. They should be jealous, not hateful!"

"They would be hateful *because* they are jealous, Hermione," the younger Malfoy told her.

Lucius hesitated before deciding his words needed to be said. "And while the magic did choose the type of relationship, it bases its possibilities on the actual desires of the members. Hermione, you wanted us both *and* your magic recognized its mates in ours."

Hermione was confused. "But Celeste's magic would never have chosen Thello's to be paired with!"

Draco shook his head. "No, but Michael's would have. Celeste isn't the head of that triad, though she certainly acts it. Michael is."

"So, I'm the head of our triad?"

"Of course," Lucius said.

"I would rather deal with the public than have one of you have to hide your feelings for me and vice versa. It wouldn't be right. And I've dealt with the media since I was just a child. If they know what's good for them, they'll be smart about it." She menacingly punched one fist into the palm of her other hand and smirked widely.

Both Malfoys laughed. This waifish little sprite threatening to take on Wizarding Media bare-handed did not surprise them in the least.

"Malfoys are raised to deal with publicity. We can handle this without resorting to fisticuffs, I'm sure."

Draco groaned. "Okay, Father, if we're going to be spending so much time together, Hermione and I will need to teach you some modern terminology."

Hermione snorted. "But I like his old fashioned ways!" she protested.

Lucius raised an eloquent eyebrow. "Old fashioned? Indeed?"

Recognizing she was circling a possible sore spot, Hermione left her perch on the armchair and sat beside Lucius on the sofa. She gently cupped his cheek with her hand.

"Not old fashioned. Not really. Formal. Gentlemanly." She impressed her words with a soft kiss to the corner of his mouth, and Lucius looked suitably placated.

Draco pouted, and she gave him a gentle kiss as well. With both Malfoys sufficiently wrapped around her pinkie, Hermione leaned back, satisfied *This might not be so hard after all.*

"I have a question," Draco announced. They looked at him expectantly, and he leered.

"How does the sex work?"

It was a good question, Hermione couldn't fault that. The delivery could have used a little work. Lucius cleared his throat and asked, "In what capacity, exactly? I'm assuming you know the basics?"

Draco glared at his smirking father and continued. "I mean, when Hermione moves in, who does she sleep with? What if I want alone time with her, Father, or vice versa? What if I'd like to take her to Muggle London or a concert? Do we...are we...?" He seemed to have lost his bravado, but Hermione rubbed his knee encouragingly, and he blurted, "Will we all have sex at the same time?"

Hermione dropped her face into her hands. It really was more complicated than it seemed at face value. She had, of course, thought about making love to both of them at the same time, but she'd assumed it would be more of a 'one at a time' scenario. She wasn't sure how a threesome would work... physiologically.

Lucius thankfully took the reins. "I think that depends on all of us. Hermione will certainly have her own room. If she's not comfortable with... sharing.... we can take turns visiting her, I suppose." He paused. "This conversation is most perplexing."

Hermione piped in, sensing her men were losing their nerve. "Since this seems to be mostly about me, maybe I could decide." She thought for a moment. "What are you two comfortable with? Um, regarding threesomes?"

Draco assured her whatever she wanted was fine, and Lucius said he was certainly not averse to the idea.

He added, "I suspect that is actually the purpose of the triad. The more I think on it, the more I suspect Celeste, Michael and Thello were not the best example of a triad to learn from. Since our magic is most in control when we are all together, it naturally follows that we were meant to all be together sexually," he raised a hand to stave off Draco's objection. "Through Hermione, Draco. For Merlin's sake, please stop acting like I'll take any excuse to ravish you. You're not that pretty."

Draco crossed his arms petulantly. "That's not what I was going to say." But since he did not elaborate on what he was going to say, Hermione and Lucius could only assume it was indeed what he had been about to cut in with.

Hermione smiled. Draco pouting was half annoying and half adorable. She kissed him firmly on the lips, pulling away when he began to respond. "I think you're pretty," she whispered in his ear.

His grin was feral, and Hermione gulped. She was immediately drawn into his unyielding embrace and kissed quite thoroughly. Lucius looked on amusedly.

"I'll show you pretty, you little vixen!" Draco declared before sucking unrelentingly on her neck, marking her decidedly. Though he was teasing her, his lips thrilled her, and her head fell back in pleasure. He broke away and admired his handiwork.

"Maybe one day you can tattoo your name on her behind, Draco, you caveman." Draco looked a little too interested in the idea and Hermione's eyes widened. Lucius kissed the dazed young woman softly before rising.

"I have a meeting now, but I'll be back around dinnertime. Hermione, will you be accompanying us?"

She nodded.

"A work meeting?" Draco inquired.

Lucius sighed. "Unfortunately. You two are not the only ones who continually seek budget adjustments, and I'm the bearer of bad news yet again. It promises to be most unpleasant. Take good care of her, Draco." His son nodded his assurance, and Hermione glowered at the implication that she could not take good care of herself, before she remembered what she'd said moments ago: *Gentlemanly*.

Lucius then bent to kiss Hermione while Draco watched. His father definitely had good technique, and Hermione seemed very affected. The kiss lingered on, making Draco impatient. He could excuse himself, letting them have a private moment, but Draco wasn't the most sporting type, especially since, at this very moment, he was planning on how to seduce Hermione in his father's absence.

It wasn't that he was afraid Lucius would disapprove. And what he was feeling upon watching their kiss wasn't really jealousy, just impatience. Draco couldn't help but feel awkward at being with the same girl as his father. And it was Lucius' fault that Draco had never been taught to share well with others, anyway, so he had only himself to blame. Nevermind that he had no real qualms with sharing, not when he was really honest with himself, but the magic had already put his pursuit of Hermione on pause once...he didn't want to risk that happening again. He had to wonder if he was going to be cockblocked by magic every time Lucius had to catch up with him.

If that was the case, Draco meant to make the most of tonight. Because from the way this impossibly long kiss was going, Lucius wasn't pulling his punches when it came to their little bookfox (because bookwork just didn't bring the right images to mind).

Lucius finally broke the kiss, and Draco had to look away from the heat in his father's visage. He definitely wasn't comfortable with all aspects of the triad, and seeing his dad with a raging erection was one of them. But Lucius only kissed Hermione's hand and went to leave.

Lucius paused at the door. "About what we were talking about before; I think we can both have time alone with Hermione as well as time together." He nodded decisively and swept into the Floo to attend to his business.

"Hear that?" Draco murmured against Hermione's neck. "Daddy said it was okay..." He nipped her throat.

Hermione's eyes widened. Draco saying that word, even teasingly. *Whoa. Dirty, dirty thoughts.*

Draco's kisses left her breathless for a few moments, and when he pulled away, she needed a moment to focus before she could understand that he was talking to her.

"Hermione?" She nodded for him to go on.

"When will you be moving in?"

Another good question posed by the deliciously hopeful Young Malfoy. She did love her apartment, even though it was expensive for what it was, and it was inconvenient both in layout and in location. But it was *hers*.

"I don't know, Draco. This is moving faster than I expected, and I do like my privacy."

He nibbled her earlobe, words ghosting into her ear, causing her to shiver. "But you want this, right?" He pulled back to see her eyes. "And you'll be here all the time anyway. I assure you, I'm quite insatiable, and I probably come by it honestly. You'll never have a moment to yourself, if we can help it." She laughed breathlessly as his hands roamed over her thigh to her hip. She could see his eyes become serious. "If you know this is what you want, what's the point in waiting? This is forever, Hermione. A few more weeks or months won't prepare you any further. I want you here. I know my father does as well. You belong with us, love."

His words were quite convincing, almost as much as the firm pressure of his hands on her body, creating heat in heretofore un-erotic areas.

Seeing she was almost convinced, he prepared to hammer the final nail. "Here, you'll have a suite of rooms larger than your own apartment, anyway." And here it comes:

"And think of the money you could donate to your charities with what you'll save on rent."

Her eyes widened with the possibilities and Draco internally cheered. He was not the only predictable one in this relationship.

Celebrating his victory, Draco kissed a trail along her collarbone. He would never tire of her sweet taste, like honey and brown sugar. It was intoxicating and addictive, and he planned on feasting upon it.

Hermione reclined on the sofa in abandon. His words had been liquid persuasion, and she'd drunk deeply. Now she could only enjoy his ministrations.

He kissed her until her lips were swollen and reddened, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes dazed, half wild with lust. Just as he best liked to see her, he was beginning to realize.

Then, with perfect Malfoy timing, he told her it was time for dinner, and stood up, infuriatingly steady on his feet. He helped her up, pretending not to see the slight stumble to her steps. If he'd had more time, Draco would have properly ravished her, but given the tentativeness of their new relationship, he hardly thought his father coming back from his meeting to Hermione and Draco *in flagrante delicto* would be the ideal first time.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Lucius was thinking over the day's events as he waited for his business associate to arrive. He hated to leave, but he had responsibilities at the Ministry, and getting the Malfoy name back where it belonged was an onerous and time-consuming task. Being fair and available was a large part of it.

He smiled when he thought about giving Draco his... permission with Hermione. He had expected Draco to take Hermione to his rooms immediately and was surprised at the lack of jealousy that thought aroused in him.

But then again, with Hermione, everything was different. The meeting with the other triad had not gone nearly as well as he'd hoped it would. Thello's evident unhappiness had tugged at Hermione's heartstrings, and Lucius was man enough to admit it had affected him as well. When he'd first met the triad, Michael and Celeste had only just met Thello, and the three had seemed very happy, if a little awkward. But as time went on, it became clear that each member was somewhat unhappy with the arrangement, despite the obvious magical benefits that came with it.

Despite his good intentions, it seemed the meeting might have done more harm than good in persuading Hermione how amazing triads can be. He knew she was looking for love, and that while the idea of immense power appealed to a strong witch such as her, she also wanted a stable and loving relationship. Lucius felt confident that he could provide her with that; she was certainly lovely, brilliant, fun to be around and incredibly sexy. He knew that loving her would not be a stretch for him, though it might take time. He had not loved another since Narcissa, nor he loved anyone before her or while they'd been married. She'd been the only one for him for as long as he could recall, but he certainly remembered how to love. He believed he was made for marriage; he'd always been happiest when Narcissa had been happy, despite how difficult she had been at times.

Draco might pose a problem. The young man had grown a lot, both since the end of the war and since Narcissa had left, but he was still very young. Lucius knew his son had great potential, both as a lover and as a husband, and he would certainly give him the benefit of the doubt, but he worried that this whole thing was too much, too soon for the young man. Lucius vowed to talk with his son about the implications, not just of the triad, but of a lifelong, monogamous relationship.

He hoped Hermione would take them up on the offer of staying at the Manor. It would be much easier to seduce her within the Manor's walls than have to do it at work. He could woo her outside of work as well, but this proximity would make things much simpler.

Because there was simply no way Hermione Granger was going to walk away from this without two men on her arms.

Dinner that night was a muted affair. Hermione tried not to notice the devilish look in Draco's eyes, and since he kept *staring* at her, that became more and more difficult.

"Hermione," Draco said, startling her away from staring at the food on her plate. She looked up, and he smiled. "You have to try this, it's *amazing*."

From his seat beside her, he presented her with a spoonful of chocolate mousse. Her own dish held the exact same dessert, but she couldn't resist opening her mouth to partake of Draco's instead. Her eyes nearly rolled back at the unholy lightness of the dessert, so good she regretted swallowing.

Draco leaned over and placed a kiss on the corner of her mouth, tongue darting out as if to catch a stray bit of chocolate, even though Hermione knew the spoon hadn't even touched her lip there. He pulled back slightly, sighing softly and kissing her again.

"Sinful, isn't it?" he whispered against her parted lips.

Hermione tried to remember where she was. "The... the dessert?"

He smiled, leaning back in his chair. "Of course, Hermione. What else?"

What else, indeed!

A house elf saved her from answering, quickly bowing before Draco and announcing, "Master says he will not be home until very late, as his business meeting is running behind schedule."

Draco nodded his thanks, and the house elf went to pop away before turning once again. "And Master says to entertain your guest. He says Miss is most welcome to stay tonight."

"Thank you, Gibby. Please make sure a cognac is waiting in my father's room when he arrives. It sounds as though he will need it."

"Of course, Master Draco." The house elf disappeared, and Draco scooped another spoonful of mousse and consumed it thoughtfully.

"You know, few are brave enough to go against my father's wishes," he said, speaking slowly as though he was only just realizing this.

Hermione laughed. "Are you threatening me? If I don't stay, you'll sic big, bad, Death Eater Lucius on me?"

Draco looked at her steadily, before smiling tightly. "Of course not. Would you like some tea before I show you to your rooms?"

Hermione bit her lip, sure she'd done something wrong. "No, I'd like to see the room now, if you don't mind."

"Not at all," he said, standing and offering his arm. Hermione was wondering where the playful Draco had gone as he led her up the stairs, but she didn't have time to think on it because she was too busy trying to remember the way they were taking.

"Is Apparition possible in Malfoy Manor?" she asked, knowing she'd never find the way.

"You aren't keyed into the wards yet," he said flatly. She nodded, and finally they arrived outside a set of double doors. He inclined his head at her, indicating she should open the doors. She smiled at him, and he responded with only a nod. Confused, Hermione decided to just open the doors.

She couldn't have held back the gasp if she'd tried. The room (*rooms*, her inner child giggled) was enormous. Her flat would have fit inside with room to dance around the edges. It was done in a light sage colour with heavy mahogany furniture and wainscoting. Dark grey and burnished silver made appearances throughout, but what immediately drew and kept her eye was the massive canopy bed. It was every woman's dream. The wood was beautiful, a colour that gleamed in the light, dark but not oppressive. The bedspread was a warm grey colour with light and medium green pillows and a matching throw folded at the foot of the bed. Draped on the canopy were silvery curtains, light and translucent and flowing enticingly in the wind.

The wind... Hermione looked to her right where there was a balcony with French doors thrown open. Entranced, Hermione walked toward it. The balcony was large and overlooked the Malfoy gardens. The smell of fresh flowers wafted into the room, and Hermione had to close her eyes. It was all too beautiful, all too much. But she *wanted* it. She wondered if wanting something so material made her a bad person, but she just couldn't bring herself to care. It was the most beautiful room she'd ever seen, and it was *hers*.

Speaking of *beautiful* and *hers*, Draco was leaning against the doorway to her room, eyebrow raised, watching her carefully. She beckoned for him to join her on the balcony, and when it looked as though he would refuse, she went to meet him.

"Draco, this is completely gorgeous. I'm stunned. I've never seen anything like it." She reached for his hands and was grateful that he let her, since it seemed he was upset over something. She leaned up to kiss him, but his lips were unresponsive. She bit her lip, wondering if they were close enough for her to just come out and ask what was wrong.

"I'm pleased it's to your liking. I think I'll retire now." He turned as if to leave, and Hermione impulsively grabbed his arm. He turned slowly back toward her, raising a cool eyebrow.

"Draco, what's wrong? Did I do something?"

He smiled a cold smile that made her shiver and reminded her unpleasantly of the Old Draco. "Not at all."

"You're upset with me. Please, just tell me. You have to be honest with me if this is going to work. You know that's true."

He looked at her appraisingly, and his facade crumbled only for a second...enough time for her to see uncertainty and hurt. In a mere moment, it was back up, and she sighed.

"You know your father would agree with me. Please, tell me." She ran her hands in what she hoped was a soothing manner up his arms to loop around his neck.

He sighed and gathered her in his arms, tucking her head under his chin. He kissed her temple and let out a shaky breath.

"You're right. I need to learn to be more... open. It's just not what I was taught, how I was raised. Things are different now, so I suppose I should adapt."

He led her over to the bed and they both sat down. She took a moment to revel in the absolute decadence of the mattress and the utter luxury of the coverlet before looking at Draco expectantly.

"I know you know my father was a Death Eater." He paused and her error flooded her like a tsunami.

"Oh, Draco, I didn't think..."

"I know. It's just... not something we talk about. I mean, we don't ignore that it happened; it was *horrible* mistake, built on generations of similar mistakes. My father is not a weak man, but he was *wrong*. He knows and he has *paid*. I don't think people will ever know the extent to which he...*we*...have paid."

Hermione felt tears stinging her eyes. She had been so callous to make such a stupid comment, a joke like she would have made with Harry or Ron, and she should have known better. It hurt, of course, to know that only a few years ago Lucius and Draco hated her solely on the matter of her parentage, but she did believe people could change, or else she wouldn't be here.

"I am so sorry. I will never say anything so insensitive again. And I'm so glad you told me what was wrong. I want to fix it."

Draco smiled, squeezing her hand and leaning over for a soft kiss. "It's fixed. I shouldn't have let it bother me, but I'm happy I told you. If my father heard... if he suspected you didn't respect him or believe him reformed..." Draco shook his head and looked away. "He cares for you so much, Hermione. It would destroy him," he finished in a whisper.

"The words are erased from my vocabulary, I promise you. I have great respect for your father, and you, Draco. *know* you've changed, both of you. And I'm so grateful to get to know the real you."

She leaned in for another kiss, and Draco didn't let her pull away this time. He held her face softly in his hands, mouth moving slowly, tenderly against hers. His gentleness unravelled her, and she moaned softly when his tongue tickled her lips, parting them and slipping within. His taste was so different than any she'd known, it was sweet and soft and perfect, like ice cream. His tongue slid alongside hers, and he pushed her gently onto the bed, leaning over her without breaking the kiss.

"You're beautiful, Hermione. Thank you for this chance." His eyes searched hers and she was struck yet again by how their lack of colour was more arresting than any blue or brown eyes she'd ever seen. The grey was darkened, flecked with silver in a most tantalizing way.

She kissed him lightly, and smiled. "Thank you for having me." It seemed inadequate, but it was heartfelt, and one look at his face told her that her message was delivered.

She moved back to recline fully on the sinfully soft pillows, and Draco followed her, running his hand up her bare calf and up her thigh, under the green sundress which was obviously appreciated. She bit her lip in anticipation when his hand met her underwear at her hip. His traced it lightly with a fingertip, leaning over her and watching her reaction. She was sure she didn't disappoint, gasping when his finger grazed her lower belly at the top of her underwear.

"I want you, Hermione," he told her, voice dangerously low. She pulled him down for a kiss, and her mind reeled at how different his kisses could be from one moment to the next. This one was highly provocative, passionate and hard. He bit her lower lip before sucking it into his mouth and following it after he released it, tracing it with his tongue and flicking. The assault on her mouth was entirely too reminiscent of what he might do between her thighs, and her breath caught at the thought.

Draco moved so he was settled between her thighs, her dress hitched around her hips to allow him there. His arousal pressed against her intimately and she nearly gasped, feeling the heat and *size* even though their layers of clothing. Draco took the kiss to her neck and collarbone, marking her lightly and smirking, and it was all too easy to imagine he was thinking of what his father would think.

Her hips were circling of their own accord, and she had no idea where she learned *that*, but her movements were preternatural and entirely instinctual, and Draco seemed to appreciate it because he kept exhaling sharply against her skin before renewing his ravenous kisses.

"Draco," she moaned, not having planned to say anything further. His somehow cool fingers lifted her skirt higher, and, finally, over her head. She wore only a pair of dark green lace panties, not having needed a bra with the supportive dress. She shivered to be bared so before him, but the look in his eyes was only appreciative and very much so at that.

"You are one stunning witch," he told her, reverently smoothing his hand up her side to cup her breast. She writhed at the contact, wanting more. His fingers circled her nipple before finally pinching it lightly, watching it firm under his skilled touch. Groaning softly, he lowered his head and repeated the treatment with his teeth, and Hermione gasped as the slight pain sent shockwaves right between her thighs.

His hand travelled into her panties, tugging lightly on her downy hair before slipping between her folds.

"Yes," she whispered, moving her hips to get more contact. He'd reduced her to mere nerve endings, her brain only thinking more.

He obliged her, fingers expertly circling her clit, pressing and flicking it in a devastating rhythm matching the one his tongue was exerting on her breasts. His finger slid into her, slowing delving into her pussy before coming back with another finger.

He met her lips for another inflamed kiss, but when her hand went to caress the front of his trousers, he took her hand and pinned it beside her head.

"Tonight, only you, Hermione," he whispered against her lips. Her intense desire to reciprocate fought with her need for more friction in her own underwear, with the latter winning. She raised both hands above her head and vowed to keep them there.

Draco slipped between her spread thighs, whispering, "Good girl," in her ear before tugging her panties off. Bending her legs so her feet were flat on the bed, Draco leaned down, his tongue immediately seeking out her swollen nub, circling and flicking it with ferocious efficiency.

While his tongue worked her into a frenzy, his fingers rejoined the effort, thrusting into her body with a force that made her wish for more. She was seconds away from begging Draco to fuck her when her orgasm came upon her like a freight train, announcing itself only moments before exploding.

"Draco! Oh, gods, coming!" she cried, unable to stop herself from sinking her fingers into his silky white-blond hair and press his mouth closer against her needy body. Her hips rolled as sensation flowed through her, curling her toes and clenching her pussy so tight he couldn't retreat if he'd wanted to.

Hermione came back to herself and released her death grip on Draco's hair. Wiping his mouth surreptitiously, he languorously crawled back up her body, kissing her squarely, to which she could barely find the strength to respond.

"Well," she panted, smiling at his sparkling eyes. "I think you're overdressed."

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Lucius didn't arrive back at the Manor until nearly three in the morning. He went straight to his bedroom and was met with a house elf and a most inspiring glass of his preferred spirit.

"Thank you," he said upon taking the glass, sniffing it appreciatively. "Where is Draco?" He was simply curious, of course.

"Young Master is with his young lady guest. He entertained her, just as you instructed, Master."

Lucius smiled. It was so nice to get his own way. He dismissed the elf with his thanks and changed into his black silk pyjamas, complete with the Malfoy insignia over the pocket. He always felt royal in these, even though he tended to see pyjamas as undignified.

He wondered if Hermione wore pyjamas.

Reclining against his luxurious pillows, Lucius drank of his cognac and looked over his agenda for the next few days. Tomorrow was a surprisingly easy day, only a midmorning meeting and drinks around seven in the evening were blocked in. In the interim, he could either go into the office, or work from his desk in the study. On any other day, he would have gone into the office; lately, it had been with the intent to see Hermione, however brief their contact might have been.

Tomorrow, however, he already had Hermione in his clutches, so to speak. It would be no effort at all to convince the young witch to take a day of rest with him.

It wasn't exactly a coincidence that Draco's day promised to be hectic, as he was meeting with a high-profile client on a number of lucrative donations.

He would have Hermione to himself, and he intended to make good use of his upper hand. Draco had an advantage at present, and he had no qualms with levelling the playing field.

Unfortunately for Lucius, the playing field had other plans.

"I'm so sorry, but I really can't skive off today. I promised Draco I'd help with his write-up...it's really too much work for him to be doing on his own."

Lucius resisted the urge to glare daggers at his rather smug looking son. Draco had heard Lucius ask Hermione to spend the day with him, and his offspring was enjoying Hermione's refusal.

"Do not worry yourself over it. The weekend is nearly upon us; maybe we can all enjoy some time together?" Lucius said, almost too sweetly.

Hermione stepped up for a soft kiss, and he obliged, lovingly caressing her lips with his for a moment of watched intimacy.

"I would love that," she whispered, looking to Draco for a seconding notion. He nodded, still looking the cat that got the cream.

"Sounds brilliant, Father. Do you have anything in mind?"

"I hadn't thought on it yet, but I will have time to do so today."

Draco saw Hermione through the Floo, after a soft kiss to cheek. Once their witch was off to work, Draco turned to his father.

"I'd like to speak with you privately, Father. About this whole triad business." His son looked uncharacteristically hesitant, and Lucius felt a twinge of unease.

"Are you having second thoughts?" He tried to keep his voice level, but he so hoped he was wrong.

"Not exactly. Just... my *first* thoughts still need clarifying." He lightly bit his lower lip, which Lucius recognized as a nervous habit that only manifested itself around those Draco felt most comfortable and safe.

"I would be more than happy to talk with you, of course. Tonight?"

"That would be great." Already, Draco looked more at ease. Giving Lucius a brief hug, which Lucius was too surprised to return wholeheartedly, his son turned to the Floo and left for work.

Draco had had a lot of time to think. He didn't tend to deliberate so much. Usually, his decisions were quick and easy; a benefit, he thought, of knowing oneself thoroughly. But perhaps that had been a misjudgement. Because he *did* know himself, his faults, his flaws and his redeeming and positive attributes alike. But that was not helping him now.

He knew what he wanted. He wanted *Hermione*. She was the focus around which everything circled. When he thought of his future, he thought of her. When he thought of his life, she was the star. That part was easy enough.

It somewhat made his decision for him. Because without Hermione, he wouldn't be happy, and in order to have her, he had to have *all*. His father, the triad, the magic, everything.

And for the first time in his life, Draco didn't know if he *wanted* all the bells and whistles that came with the object of his desire.

It was odd. If dinner included dessert, it was better than dinner without it. If a house came furnished with antiques, it was better than a house without them. If a ring had emeralds and diamonds, it was better than a plain gold band. He *knew* these things, had known them all his life. He had been raised by these standards and had never questioned them before.

But here he was, half wishing that Hermione wasn't a package deal; that he had only her, all to himself.

His father: a good, decent man. A good father. An excellent business man. Someone he'd always looked up to, whether wrong or right. Someone he always saw as part of his life, as a father, a grandfather to his eventual children, a mentor, a safety net. But in his bed?

The triad: Celeste, Michael and Thello had scared him. He didn't want *that*. He'd thought a triad would be unity, togetherness, *wholeness*. But the other triad had been anything but. Would *they* be different? Would they eventually fall apart?

The magic: it was amazing, in theory. Draco was drawn to power, he always had been. He was like his father in that respect. But he learned...they'd both learned...that the person with the most power was not necessarily the person who deserved to be in control. Could he handle the magic? Would it change him? *Did he deserve it?*

There was so much to think about, and Draco was glad his father had offered to talk to him that night. He might still have a child's naïve trust in his father to tell the truth and do the right thing, but the years after the war had shown him that his trust was well-placed. Lucius really did want to do his best by their family, minute though it was at the moment.

How would it feel to belong to something bigger than himself?

Hermione spent most of the day helping Draco. Some of the help was unwarranted because the man truly did have a handle on his business, but Hermione found it difficult, at times, to let go of a project. It was easy, as always, to work together. She'd worried that their intimacy might make things uncomfortable or difficult between them, but, if anything, it brought them to a new level of co-operation.

By the end of the day, she became aware that her presence was likely as much of a nuisance as it was a help, despite her best intentions. Draco smiled magnanimously at her when she told him she was sure he could handle the finishing touches himself.

He leaned in for a sweet kiss, tongue only just tickling her lower lip, before he turned her and sent her out of his office.

Once at her own desk, Hermione decided not to think about the things that had transpired. She'd been doing that so much lately that she suspected her actual feelings were being clouded by her analytical mind's machinations. Maybe it would be better to just *feel*... after all, it had worked wonders the night before, when Draco had...

Well, maybe it was better to just turn her brain off altogether, at least until she could see her two sexy men again...in private.

"Where's Hermione?"

"Taking a bath, I believe," Draco answered, pouring tea for himself and his father. Both men allowed their eyes to glaze over for a mutual moment of imagined voyeurism before coming back to the present.

"Would you like to have that talk now, Son?"

"I would. I hope you don't think me ungrateful," Draco began, wringing his hands together once before placing them on his thighs determinedly. "I just have many questions. Many concerns."

Lucius believed he knew what was coming. He'd had the day to think about it, and he suspected the majority of the problem came with the sheer *unusualness* of the situation. Draco had always had a bit of a problem standing out from the crowd, at least when it meant he was the object of scrutiny rather than adoration.

"Go ahead, Draco. I can't admit to knowing much more about any of this than you, but perhaps I can at least alleviate some of your more... understandable fears."

"It's not that I'm afraid," Draco insisted, voice certain but face contradicting his words. "I wonder... I wonder how much I really deserve everything that's happening. *want* it, I'm pretty sure I do. But, don't you wonder... what we did right to warrant such a bounty?"

Lucius sighed. His son had changed more than either of them had really known. "I don't think it's a question of *obeserving* it... maybe it's a question of *earning* it. I don't think for a moment that I've been... forgiven, I suppose you might say, for my actions before and during the war. But I do believe in second chances, and even if I don't deserve this *now*, I plan on spending the rest of my life making sure I do."

Draco sat silently a long time, looking as though he was absorbing Lucius' words. Draco's fears had surprised him. He'd thought his son would be worried about what people thought, about how very different this all was. But instead, he'd shown an unprecedented reticence about what he saw as a reward for bad behaviour. Draco had never been entitled, *per se*, but he'd certainly believed that he deserved whatever came to him, and now he was nervous that he hadn't earned the happiness they were being offered. It was rather humbling, both as his father, and as another person in the same situation.

"What if I can't handle the magic?" Draco asked softly.

"You've always been in control of your magic, Draco. Even before Hogwarts taught you precision and restraint you had an excellent handle on it."

"That's not what I meant, Father. What if..." Draco took a deep breath and looked Lucius in the eye. "What if it makes me like Him?"

Lucius had never been prouder of his son. "You are *nothing* like him. You and I know why we did what we did, what we had to do. You *not* evil, nor do you have the capacity to become evil. If you have half the faith in yourself that I have in you, I know you'll see that. Don't let your fear hold you back from what you really want. And if either Hermione or I were to ever suspect you turning Dark, you know we wouldn't let you continue down that path. We care too much for you."

Lucius stood and gestured for Draco to do so as well. He took his son into his arms in an embrace that was all the more special for its rarity. Lucius regretted all the years he'd spent distanced from his own son, and he was so grateful for the opportunity to change that. Their second chance was about more than a relationship with Hermione, more than magic...it was also about the two of them, finding something in the other that had been missing for far too long.

Draco folded into the hug easily, making Lucius realize how hungry the young man really was for his attention.

"I trust you to do the right thing, Draco, no matter what. And you can trust me, as well," he assured him, pulling back slightly to place a kiss on Draco's temple.

"Thank you," Draco answered simply. It appeared that the crisis was averted, for the time being; but Lucius did not doubt his son's fears would make themselves known again over time. He was only thankful for the opportunity to ease them.

"Now, let's find out exactly how much our Hermione heard, shall we?"

Draco's eyes widened, and they heard a surprised squeak on the other side of the study door. Lucius waved his wand at the door, which swung open to reveal a pyjama-attired young woman who looked indecisive as to whether to stay and be embarrassed or flee.

"Well, Hermione? Anything you'd like to add?" Lucius said, a smile in his voice if not on his face.

"No, no," she said shyly. "You covered the bases, I think." She stepped into the room, crossing the floor to Draco, who seemed to be having a hard time meeting her eyes. "Draco... you are a *good man*. Your magic will be stronger, but it won't be different. It's still you. I'm nervous too, but I don't think any of us will be the next Voldemort, and I don't think you really believe that either. If you're having second thoughts..."

"No, that's not it. It's just so much to absorb, and while I *downt* it, I just hope we know what we're really getting into."

"Well, to be perfectly honest... at this point, I feel like there is no other option. I want to be with you, with both of you. If I have to give both of you up, I'd regret it for the rest of my life. I don't think what we have will be perfect; in fact, I hope it isn't, because where's the fun in that? But I know it can be *real*, I know it can be *good*. And I know it doesn't have to be like the other triad, because we aren't like them. We just have to stay open, always talk, and hide nothing."

She nodded her head firmly, as if she'd said all that needed to be said, and quite possibly, she had.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione awoke to that intensely peaceful feeling that one only gets when one *thinks* it is a weekday, only to discover moments later, that it is, in fact, *Saturday*.

Her stretch was utterly leonine, her yawn positively grotesque. It took her a little by surprise to wake up in an unfamiliar room. Her suite was beautiful, so beautiful she hated the thought of going back to her old flat, even if it was just to pack. And she intended to do that, the very next day in fact. Her men were intent on having her at the Manor, and as Draco had said, it made so much more financial sense to let go of her place.

The extra money could be very useful to numerous organizations; although, she might keep a little of the surplus to herself. At this point, she donated about half of her income every month, but she was beginning to feel the stretch, not to mention a rather irresponsible sensation at not having a retirement savings plan or anything like that. It would be wise to put money away from the future, in the disagreeable event that things did not work out exactly as she hoped with the Malfoys.

She thought about the exact distribution of her extra funds as she showered and dressed. Draco tended to sleep in on weekends, from what she'd heard, but Lucius would

have been awake for some time now. She sometimes suspected the man did not sleep at all, from his horribly long days at work, sometimes extending into the wee morning hours, to his absurdly early rising in the mornings.

She walked out to her patio as was becoming her routine. Breathing in the cool morning breeze, she smiled self-satisfactorily. She may never have pictured her life like this, but now that she was in it, it seemed pretty perfect.

Draco's uncertainties the day before had only humanized him more. They were each feeling a little lost, she thought, and it didn't make Draco weak or cowardly. He was the type that needed to know everything about something before he made a decision, though she suspected that once his mind was made up, there would be no stopping him.

On that thought, Hermione decided to test her magic. She wouldn't lie to herself...she wanted wandless magic. It would be amazing. The only person alive who she knew could do it was Harry. Thinking of him made her realize she really needed to visit with him; it had been too long.

She reached out a hand and clearly stated, "Accio Hermione's white scarf!"

Nothing happened.

It's okay, she told herself. She had seen the scarf in her wardrobe, so she walked over to it and opened the door. It was sitting there perfectly still. She took two steps back and repeated the words, imagining the movements of her wand for that particular spell.

The scarf fluttered softly, but it might have been the wind. Closing the patio doors, Hermione tried it once more. This time, she imagined her magic reaching out and grabbing the scarf, bringing it to her as she repeated the command.

The scarf flew off the shelf and landed about halfway between Hermione and the wardrobe. Hermione gasped softly, eyes wide. Imagining the same thing again...her magic gently picking up the scarf as though with fingers and bringing it to her...she spoke the command a final time.

It rose from the ground and gently floated into her waiting hand. She went downstairs wearing the scarf, feeling complete satisfaction at her ability and absolutely *avenous* to share with someone. The soft cashmere of the scarf against her skin was the feeling of *triumph*, and she hoped she always associated the two.

She found Lucius in his study, the warm mahogany wood that reigned there making her feel at home because it was so similar to the wood in her own bedroom. He was reading the paper and making notes in a large ledger.

She watched him for a moment, but when his eyes rose to meet hers a few moments later, she knew he'd been aware of her presence the entire time. *How does he do that?* she wondered...first the night before when she'd... *happened*... to overhear Draco's comments, and now she couldn't even peek in on him unawares?

"Good morning, Hermione. Did you have a pleasant sleep?"

She walked over to sit in one of the wing-backed chairs in front of his massive desk. Fingering the buttery leather, she smiled at him. "I did. And this morning, I made a discovery."

"Oh? And what did you discover?" He was only half paying attention, most of his mind obviously still on his notes.

"I can do wandless magic, Lucius."

He slowly looked up from his papers, eyes narrowed at her.

"It's true," she continued. "I *Accioed* a scarf from my wardrobe. It took three tries, but I got it." She gestured to the garment around her neck as though its presence was irrefutable evidence.

"Did you? What prompted you to try? I must admit, I was under the impression that the wandless magic would not manifest itself until we had probably... consummated the unions."

Hermione got up from her comfy seat and made her way behind the desk. Propping one hip against it, she folded her arms over her chest and raised an eyebrow in a watered-down version of the Malfoy quirk.

"Apparently, Lucius, our magic has already..." she lowered her voice to a whisper and leaned forward slightly, "...consummated."

He smiled at her cheek and pulled her willing body into his lap, her side against his front, holding her tightly with his arms pinning hers against her upper body. "And now your magic is ready for the real world, hmm?" he said huskily in her ear, his thumb caressing one of her bound arms.

"I think my... magic... is *very* ready. Dear." She punctuated her words with a kiss on the tip of his nose, which he did not really seem to appreciate. It didn't matter, because she liked doing it, so she did it again.

"Enough," he said quietly. "Kiss me properly or I shan't be inclined to let you go."

Hermione leaned forward until her lips brushed his, whispering against them, "What if I don't want you to let me go?"

He groaned softly and captured her lips, and any thoughts of games wisped away when his tongue smoothed over her lower lip.

"Then I shall make sure you get what you want," he said, voice perfectly proper but eyes burning with a fire she was ill-prepared to deny.

His wicked tongue traced her lips softly, wetting them lightly and making them feel cool when she inhaled. Finally, she gave in and pressed her lips firmly against his, moving her mouth with certainty. His lips were so soft, so sure. She succumbed to the kiss and let him lead and he immediately took it over.

His arms released hers, one lowering to encircle her waist, the other to rest on the outside of her thigh, on top of her skirt which was slowly riding up with all the squirming she was doing. She couldn't help herself; she felt the evidence of his desire for her against her bottom and her body just took over.

"Hermione, you are testing the limits of my self-control," Lucius groaned when she wriggled again.

"You don't have to limit it with me," she whispered seductively, uncaring that they were sitting in his desk chair with the door to the room wide open.

In response to her words, Lucius' hand was suddenly beneath her skirt instead of on top of it, his smooth, certain fingers against her bare thigh, moving in slow circles, inching higher.

She leaned to kiss his neck. She unbuttoned the top few buttons of his shirt, enjoying the way his pale, perfectly formed chest peeked out like an invitation. *RSVPing*es, Hermione kissed and licked the skin where his collarbones met, a perfect little space for her tongue to explore. His hand was shifting around to her inner thigh, and Hermione hummed softly against his flesh, making her approval known. She nipped his shoulder soundly, and he chuckled in response.

Finally his fingers brushed between her thighs, and her underwear had never been more unwelcome. Luckily, Lucius seemed to agree, and with a hand on his wand and a whispered spell, the barrier was removed.

Hermione had felt a soft thrill run over her when he'd said the incantation, more than just the cool air against her damp flesh. It was like a kiss from his magic.

Her mind was quickly taken off her musing when his fingers caressed her folds. She exhaled sharply, unable to keep up her teasing exploration of his delicious chest. Raising her face for a kiss, Hermione moaned when one long finger slid within her.

"Put your leg on the desk," Lucius demanded softly. She did so immediately, flushing a little at being spread, thankful that her skirt at least covered where his hand was. Lucius shifted her slightly so her back was mostly against his chest, though she could still easily kiss him, and she was half-reclining in his lap.

As a second finger entered her, she tried not to think about how utterly selfless the Malfoys were being with her. She vowed to return the favour, as soon as she could think clearly.

Lucius' kisses were alternating between harsh and demanding, and soft and soothing, and his hand on her was playing the opposite game so that when his kisses were bruising, his hand was teasing, and when his mouth was feather-light, his fingers thrust deeply.

She was alight with sensation, unable to believe just the feeling of his fingers could bring her to such new heights. His thumb was circling her clit relentlessly, and Hermione was shamelessly grinding into his lap, making the most wanton moaning noises.

Suddenly, both his kisses and his hand became fierce, and Hermione could feel her orgasm building, fleeting along her veins and flooding her every nerve ending. He kept her right on the precipice, and she almost cursed him, but then he spoke.

"I want you to come when I tell you to, all right? Not before. When I say it. Understand?" His words were soft but commanding, and Hermione didn't believe she had any other choice. She whimpered pleadingly, but whimpered, "Yes," all the same.

"Good girl. Wait."

His fingers were keeping up a brutal pace, a third entering her and stretching her deliciously. He did not slow his pace or allow her to adjust, and she shook with the effort to hold back.

"Please," she whispered, knowing that she wasn't strong enough to contain her orgasm much longer.

"Hermione... I want you to come, *now*."

She couldn't bite back the scream, her body exploding in ecstasy as she came. Her vision went grey at the edges and she cried out his name, a pathetic noise but all she could say as the pounding waves subsided.

Lucius kissed her softly, slowly. As though he was thanking her for something. What, she didn't particularly care at this point.

She returned the kiss for a few lazy minutes before an insistent hardness made itself known beneath her arse.

Grinning wickedly, Hermione slowly sank to the floor between Lucius' thighs, exulting in the look of surprise on his face. Her body felt weak and sated, but she wanted to taste him, to make him feel good. She'd wanted to do the same with Draco after he'd... but he'd been insistent that that night had been for her. She hadn't known how to say that she wanted to go down on him for her as well as him.

She undid the placard of Lucius' dress pants and was shocked to see he wore no underpants *Another pleasant surprise*, she thought, lowering his trousers enough to free her prize.

Having it in her hand was infinitely better than trapped beneath her. She took a moment just to *admire* his impressive cock, though she suspected he was growing impatient. It was throbbing and hot in her grip, and she moved her hand lightly along its length, her fingers meeting around it only when she squeezed firmly.

Sighing softly, Hermione licked a trail from the base to tip, dipping her tongue into the slit and taking up the offering there.

When she took the silky head into her mouth, she relished the noise her lover made, halfway between frustration and raw pleasure. Suspecting he might like a firm blow job rather than a teasing one, Hermione immediately took as much of him as she could, relaxing her throat muscles and swallowing lightly against the head.

Her hand on his thigh felt his trembling, but he otherwise did not move. Most men had thrust into her mouth or tried to push her down father onto their cocks, but Lucius was caressing the back of her neck lightly with one hand, the other clenched brutally on the arm of his chair.

Getting into the act, Hermione bobbed on his cock, one hand stroking the length she couldn't fit, the other caressing and lightly rolling his balls. His hand was now gripping the chair rhythmically, and Hermione suspected it wouldn't be long now.

She sucked firmly on the upstroke, and his feral growl reinforced her theory that he liked it a little rough. After another moment, she tested her theory, ever so lightly scraping her bottom teeth along his length, ending at the little spot under his head that made men crazy.

Lucius shouted a warning, but Hermione just repeated her actions, a little more firmly this time, and he gasped, hips finally moving, flooding her mouth with his salty essence. She swallowed quickly, milking him for every last drop until a slight change in the pressure of the hand on her neck alerted her that he was becoming too sensitive for her ministrations. Licking him once more for her own pleasure, Hermione sat back on her heels, looking, she was sure, exceedingly pleased with herself. Luckily, Lucius looked just as pleased with her, smiling freely in a way she rarely saw.

"Father, don't you have a meeting in about five minutes?"

Hermione's mouth dropped, even though her jaw disapproved. She looked pleadingly at Lucius, but he appeared frozen as well. It wasn't as though she was cheating on Draco, but she wasn't sure what the protocol here was.

Lucius cleared his throat, saying, "I rescheduled it. I do so hate to have to work on the weekends."

She heard Draco laugh, though she couldn't see him. "Yes, I suppose there are many more enjoyable things to be doing on Saturday mornings." He paused for a beat, before adding, "Wouldn't you say, Hermione?"

Now that she'd tried to hide, showing her face would be even more embarrassing than if she'd gotten up right away upon his arrival.

Groaning under her breath, Hermione accepted Lucius' hand to help her up. Straightening her alarmingly hitched skirt, Hermione smiled at Draco as calmly as possible.

"I think I would have to agree with you, Draco," she said, face furiously red.

"I thought you would, love."

Hermione and Lucius both blushed when Draco laughed knowingly and walked out of the room.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

After his talk with his father, Draco felt relieved. All the questions he'd had had been answered, and his largest fear abated.

Draco honestly didn't think he had the capacity to become a Dark Lord. He didn't think he was inherently evil. But he knew better than anyone (except possibly Lucius) that power was very seductive.

And that if you didn't have a reason to succumb to its pull, it was very, very easy *to invent* a reason.

But the triad magic didn't feel seductive to him. It felt... comforting. As though it would always be there if he needed it, but it wouldn't change him or ask too much of him. He wondered if his father and Hermione felt the same way, but he didn't suppose it mattered very much. He knew his father was equally incapable of being truly Dark. Lucius had joined the Dark Lord for his own personal gain, at first. Lucius had told him all about it in the hopes that Draco would not make the same mistakes.

Voldemort had promised a great many things, for so little a cost. Obedience, that was all. And while the Malfoys bowed to no one in their hearts, Lucius had deemed it worth it to bow physically in order to get all that was promised him.

From what his father had told him, all that changed with Draco. Suddenly, Lucius was fighting instead of following. Promises were made and broken and the Dark Lord went mad, no longer deserving of a Malfoy's loyalty. But Lucius' youthful avarice had tied him permanently, despite attempts to escape one way or another. Draco was merely a bargaining chip to Voldemort, until he was old enough to become useful.

Lucius had saved him from taking the Dark Mark, but only just. He had suffered great pain the day he'd refused to hand Draco over. Despite Draco's failure to complete his task at the Astronomy Tower, Voldemort had still wanted Draco, most likely to keep Lucius in better check.

In the end, they all suffered to keep the family together, even his mother. She bore the Dark Mark as well, and despite all Lucius' sacrifices to keep the family together, Voldemort had barely fallen before she'd left.

The house was so different with her gone. She'd always been so cool, even to Draco. He'd so rarely seen her mask slip that he suspected it had become her true visage. At least at home, Lucius had always been warmer, more approachable, and available.

Hermione's influence on the house was patently obvious when he'd walked into his father's study only to see a suspicious look of abandon on his sire's face. Crossing his arms and leaning against the door jamb, Draco watched.

It wasn't that he was turned on, because he wasn't, not really. Maybe if he'd actually been able to see Hermione it would have been different; if he watched her swollen lips slide up and down, her eyes closed in concentration, her slender fingers stroking.... Yes, that would have been enticing.

But all he'd seen was his father's face and upper body. When he'd watched Lucius come, he had felt a strange sense of... satisfaction. It came over him as quickly as Lucius' orgasm came upon him.

And he didn't feel jealous in a way he'd expected. He, of course, wanted Hermione's mouth on him. But it was more desire than envy. He knew his father deserved and needed Hermione as much as he himself did. And Draco knew he'd get his turn, time and again... for the rest of their lives.

So seeing Lucius with Hermione in that way only cemented his own desires and inspired a mischievous announcement of his presence.

Relishing the mortification on Hermione's face and the sated but slightly embarrassed look on his father's, Draco walked away to sit down for breakfast.

Joined by the paramours a few minutes later, Draco couldn't keep the smirk off of his face. It was so rare that he got to see his father undone.

"Hermione has made an interesting discovery this morning," Lucius drawled, reaching for the tea to and pouring some for each of them.

"Oh, did she?" Draco asked innocently. "I daresay it wasn't a discovery of unfavourable comparison, since she does not have all the... information *to measure*."

Hermione barked out an astonished laugh, but Lucius raised an eyebrow at his son's uncouthness.

"Can we act like adults about this, or will I be forced to relive the more vulgar moments of your teenaged years?"

"I'm sure we *can* act like adults, Father," Draco quipped. "But it's just that you have so much more experience at it."

"Draco!" Hermione admonished. "What's gotten into you?"

Draco was fit to bursting with a retort and couldn't contain himself. "Luckily not the same thing that's gotten into you, love."

"That's enough, Draco." Lucius' voice was stern, but he knew the nuances of his father's intonations and heard amusement there. Hermione's face was flushed but her eyes were sparkling, and Draco knew his humour had not been wholly unappreciated.

"As I was saying, before a third of us reverted to adolescence, Hermione tested her magic this morning and found she was able to do it wandlessly."

Draco gaped at Hermione, all thoughts of dirty innuendoes fleeing his mind. "What did you do? What happened? I can't believe I haven't tried that!"

"I *Accioed* my scarf. It did take a few tries, but I really did it. I just imagined my magic reaching out into the world and doing what it needed to do, like a hand grabbing the scarf and bringing it to me. It was incredible."

Draco immediately focused on the salt shaker in the middle of the table and imperiously announced, "*Accio* salt shaker!"

Nothing happened.

Draco tossed his hair out of his eyes and focused his thoughts *Magic, go get me that salt shaker!* He repeated the command as Hermione and Lucius watched intently.

It shook a little, but did not come closer. Draco looked at Hermione to see her fairly squirming in her seat and he could tell she wanted to say something.

"Yes, dearest?" he asked sarcastically.

Rolling her eyes, she said, "You really must focus. Imagine your magic is an extension of your body. Don't bother picturing the wand movements; don't think of your wand at all."

Nodding, Draco thought about how easy it would be to just *reach out* and grab the salt shaker, but how nice it would be of his magic to fetch it for him. Once more calling out, "*Accio salt shaker!*" the object in question shot into his hand at an impressive speed, white granules spilling at the impact.

Lucius stifled a gasp, but Draco heard it and looked to him. His father was looking at him with a mixture of astonishment and pride. Draco preened under the attention, doubly so when Hermione smiled widely and praised him.

"Are you going to try, Lucius?" Hermione asked.

"Perhaps later," he said casually, but Draco looked at him searchingly. There was something in his voice that made Draco pause.

"So, what do you Malfoys do on the weekend? Something utterly formal and posh, I bet," Hermione quipped, looking between the two blonds. Draco laughed and Lucius smiled patronizingly.

"Yes, it's all equestrian shows and operas, I'm afraid," Lucius rejoined.

"And don't forget the tea parties," Draco added.

"Well, maybe we could do something a little more pedestrian today," Hermione said hopefully.

The Malfoys kept their masks firmly in place, but Draco was simultaneously concerned and afraid for what she might suggest. He might enjoy pubs in Muggle London, but he expected his father would not be amenable to such an idea.

"And what did you have in mind, precisely?" Lucius' cultured drawl belied his contempt, ostensibly at the word "pedestrian."

"A picnic," she announced proudly.

Draco huffed a slightly relieved laugh, though he had rather looked forward to seeing his father's reaction to something like the zoo or the circus.

"That sounds like fun, love. Where would you like to go?" Draco asked, dabbing at his mouth with his napkin before calling for Tippy to clear the dishes.

"I just thought we might have it on the grounds. I'm sure they are extensive, and maybe I could get to know the area a little better. If I'm to be staying here, you know."

"That's a good idea. We've hate for you to get lost trying to find the stable," Draco joked. It was entirely possible, after all.

"Oh, you have horses? I've always wanted to go horseback riding," Hermione said with a slightly dreamy quality to her voice.

"Yes, we have a few thoroughbreds, show horses mostly, but there are a couple we could ride. I wasn't actually joking about the equestrian shows, but that was more my mother's hobby."

"Just so we're clear," Lucius interjected slowly. "You want to take food from the Manor and go eat it on the grass? Like homeless people or animals?"

"Lucius!" Hermione cried. "What a horrible comparison!"

"I wasn't comparing them; I was just ascertaining that you actually wanted to eat on the ground as though we do not have a perfectly acceptable dining room table, at which we are sitting at this very moment."

Draco snickered, allowing Hermione to field this one. She would have to get used to it, after all. Just as his father would have to get used to her "crazy" notions like picnics.

"I think it will be fun. We'll take a blanket, and some wine, and just enjoy the sunshine. We don't have to." Hermione shrugged. "We could do something else."

"No," Draco said firmly, looking reproachfully at his father. "We will have a picnic and it shall be grand. And we could have it by the lake."

"There's a lake on your property?"

Lucius answered, "It's not really a lake, but too large to be a pond. It is actually quite nice. Good idea, Draco. Well, I should like to get some work done first, and then I expect I will scour my wardrobe for something I shouldn't mind getting covered in dirt and grass."

"Can we swim in the lake?"

Draco nodded and she grinned widely. "Then bring bathing suits, boys! We'll meet back here at one, is that good for you?" she asked them both.

They agreed and everyone escaped to their own area of the manor until it was time to sit in the dirt.

Hermione didn't have a bathing suit at the Manor. She had planned to go back to her flat today and pack her things, but the picnic would be so much more fun. There would be time later in the day to go back.

Looking through her scant lingerie drawer, Hermione Transfigured a pale pink bra and panty set into a plain black two-piece swim suit. It wasn't very original, nor was it incredibly sexy, but it would definitely do the trick.

Hermione sat back on the bed. It was strange, going from being single and living in a tiny flat to having two men and living in a giant manor. It was downright unnerving. She hadn't had much time to think about what people would say except in an abstract way, but now she had to wonder what Harry would think. And Ron.

Harry dealt with Draco much better than before. They often saw one another at Ministry functions or parties thrown by former Hogwarts students. After the defeat of Voldemort, house rivalry just didn't seem to matter, and Draco had never taken the Dark Mark, so their schoolyard animosity was diminished if not completely dissipated.

Lucius, on the other hand, would be a harder sell. He had tried to kill them, after all. Harry didn't forget things like that. He was fiercely loyal and tremendously protective of her. But he also knew that she would not back down from doing something she thought was right. She could count on him to help Ron understand.

Eventually she would have to tell her friends.

When the time to meet came around, Hermione was feeling a little less jubilant. Thoughts of her friends had made her miss them, and she worried about what they would think. Donning her newly Transfigured bathing suit and wrestling her hair into what might be called a bun in some parts of the world, she made her way back to the dining

room.

Her men were waiting for her, Draco wearing white swim shorts that came to about his knees in a Muggle fashion she was shocked to see he followed. He wore nothing else. Lucius was dressed casually...for him...in tan pants and a dark green long sleeved shirt. He had a large picnic basket in hand and Draco was holding a blanket. They both smiled an eerily similar smile, and Hermione was glad she'd thrown on a sundress overtop her swim suit or she'd feel particularly exposed at the moment.

"Ready?" Draco drawled, eyeing her frame exaggeratedly.

"To the dirt!" she announced, leading the way outside.

They walked a way around the Manor, through a copse of trees and finally arrived at a clearing. Hermione gasped when she saw the "pond." It was practically a lagoon! There was even a waterfall, with the large pond located at the base of a steep rocky incline. There was both sand leading into the water and rock, and one could jump into the "deep end" by walking around to the large, flat stones on the far side. It was beautiful.

Draco dumped the blanket and jumped right in, splashing around like a true child. Lucius laughed heartily and Hermione smiled at both Draco's antics and Lucius' happiness. She realized she rarely heard him laugh, and it was a noise she would endeavour to coax out of him more often.

"How's the water?" she asked Draco, who was floating on his back.

"It's a little cool, but you get used to it quickly. The water's very clear. You'll love it!"

Hermione smiled and set up the blanket in the grass a little way from the water. Lucius took a seat (quite gingerly, as if the grass would contaminate him through the blanket) and started pulling out the wine glasses and wine. There was a flat stone beside the blanket, perfect to set the glasses on. Hermione was sure she'd never seen a nicer picnic.

Lucius didn't pour the wine, however. He stood and undressed, and Hermione couldn't help staring. She'd managed not to eye Draco too overtly, but she'd been keenly aware of his slender, lithe form and his rosy muscles, skin fairly gleaming in the sunlight. Now with Lucius undressing, she was sure her brain was melting.

As he removed his shirt, Hermione watched him from the corner of her eye. He was larger than Draco, more muscular and broader across. They were equally pale and flawless, though Lucius' perfection was marred by the Dark Mark. He stripped off his pants revealing firmly muscled thighs on long, strong legs. His bathing suit was a little more... revealing than Draco's. They were small black shorts, perfectly snug and altogether too delicious.

She was made aware of the fact that both Malfoys knew she was staring by two lascivious and arrogant smirks directed at her. She blushed to roots of her hair and knew this really was the best picnic she'd ever been on in her life.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Lucius dove into the water gracefully, his body streamlined and creating a minimal splash. She watched father and son for a few moments, contemplating the differences and similarities between them.

Lucius was reserved and rational, every move and word carefully planned. He didn't do much for the simple pleasure of doing it. Most of his actions had an end, a goal to which he strived. Physically, he was the stronger of the two. Though equal in the height, Lucius' structure was more solid and broad. His facial features were only slightly softer than those of his son, his eyes varied more than Draco's, changing from light grey to mottled to granite with his moods.

Draco, on the other hand, was more impulsive. He was obviously spoiled, though not in the entitled way he had been during school. Now, it was more of an appreciation of the finer things. He liked his life, and he knew how to have fun. He wasn't as conscious of himself as his father was; he did not weigh every word and action. He was more slender than his father, his waist narrow but shoulders broad, hinting that when he was older, his form would be more like Lucius'. His pointed features sometimes gave him an elfin appearance, and he always looked mischievous. His slate eyes only darkened in desire.

Both men were fucking gorgeous.

Hermione poured herself a well-deserved glass of wine. Lucius was swimming laps while Draco was floating around on his back. Whenever Lucius would pass by, Draco would launch himself onto his father's back, submerging him completely. Lucius would mostly ignore his son, swimming away without even a glance back. This obviously annoyed Draco, who would make more of an effort to get a rise on the next pass.

Hermione had to hide her giggles at the younger Malfoy's antics. Honestly. She took a fortifying gulp of the wine (which should probably not be gulped at all, but no one was watching) and reached for the hem of her dress.

As though he had radar, Draco righted himself so he was treading water, catching her eye and raising a blond eyebrow challengingly.

Feeling bold from the wine and the sunlight, Hermione smile flirtatiously and toyed with the strap on her dress. When she slid one over her shoulder, he smiled broadly, swimming for the sand by the blanket.

"Need help?" he asked softly, coming to sit beside her but on the grass to spare the blanket.

"The zipper," she said, meeting his heated gaze. He moved behind her, tracing his hands up the sun kissed flesh of her arms, a touch too light to be satisfying. His hand settled on the zipper and he slowly tugged it down, brushing her skin with his fingertips on the way.

"You feel warm," he told her. "Will you be going in?"

She nodded, looking back over her shoulder at him. "Yes, I love to swim."

"Hmm," he said, kissing her shoulder. He wrapped his arms around her and nuzzled the soft skin below her ear. She leaned back into his embrace and sighed contentedly. Draco nipped her skin lightly, making her gasp and open her eyes.

"Delicious," he whispered against her skin, biting her again before kissing the sensitized skin. He slid the dress down her body, urging her to raise her hips so he could slip it away entirely. His hands smoothed over the expanse of her back before settling on her bikini strings and giving a threatening tug.

"Draco," she admonished, reaching behind herself to retie the bow.

"Can't help myself," he laughed. He stood quickly and yanked her to her feet. Taking her hand, he led her to the sandy incline, but just as the water touched her toes, he picked her up and hauled her over his shoulder, running around the side of the pond to where he'd jumped in before...the deep end. Hermione shrieked. She was the type to go in inch by inch; she was sure the shock would kill her.

"Look out!" Draco yelled to his father, who quickly swam out of the way. Draco jumped in, Hermione and all, resulting in a huge splash and a very disgruntled young witch.

She emerged from the cold water spluttering and glaring. She tried to jump at Draco with the intention to at least dunk him, but the slippery prat was gone in a flash, laughing raucously all the while.

Hermione felt like crossing her arms petulantly, but she needed them to swim.

"A damsel in distress? Could I be so lucky?" Lucius swam up behind her and took her into his arms. Turning so she faced him, she steadied herself on his water-slicked shoulders, legs kicking to keep her afloat.

"I don't need rescuing, but I could use a hit man," she said seriously, wrapping her arms slowly around his neck and bringing her body closer.

"Well," he began. "I can't kill him, but I do know how to make him regret his actions." He smiled that Malfoy smile and Hermione drew even closer. Lucius swam them over a few feet to where he could touch the sandy bottom, though it was still too deep for her to stand.

"Oh, really? And how would you..." Lucius cut her off by pressing his lips to hers, kissing her soundly. She vaguely heard Draco shout, "Hey!" in the background, but her goal to antagonize him went by the wayside as Lucius' demanding tongue slid over her lower lip, sucking into his mouth to part them. Her legs slid around his hips, locking at his back and bringing her body flush against his. She could feel his hard waist between her thighs and moaned. His hands slid over her back to cup her bottom, fingertips exploring her skin, covered and uncovered.

His kisses grew more passionate when his tongue slipped into her expectant mouth, and she met him stroke for stroke before retreating and allowing him to dominate the kiss the way she knew he wanted.

Hermione was suddenly distracted by a body pressing against her back. Draco was kissing her neck and nibbling her ear, which was completely unfair because she was mad at him. So she told him so.

"I'm not sorry," he told her, hands roaming over her arms and to her waist. Lucius was kissing her neck and ignoring the discussion going on beside his head. "You would have done the same thing," Draco continued.

Hermione huffed. "Yes, but the difference is I *can't* do the same thing. Go away." She waved her hand at him dismissively, but ruined the effect by smiling.

"I don't think you want me to go away, love," Draco whispered. She was about to refute his statement when his hand slipped between his father's grip on her arse and caressed her bikini-covered slit.

She gasped softly, squirming a little in their combined grasp. One of Lucius' hands made quick work of her bathing suit top, and she didn't even notice its absence until she heard the wet smack of it hitting the rocks to the side. Draco moved his hand from its teasing position between her legs to cup her breasts, weightless under the water.

Lucius took her mouth again as Draco planted kisses along her shoulders and neck. One of the hands on her behind slid around to the front and into her bathing suit. Lucius' sure fingers rolled and stroked her clit, somehow in time with Draco's light pinches on her nipples.

Her body was a mess of nerve endings and sensation, the water gently caressing her skin, soothing her rapidly heating flesh as her men played her body like an instrument.

"Still angry?" Draco asked, pressing his arousal into the small of her back, rocking her into Lucius who responded in kind. She moaned, but it was swallowed by devouring kisses, which she broke only momentarily to whisper, "No."

Lucius pulled away from her searching lips to ask, "Should we maybe take this to land?" But he didn't wait for an answer, pulling her away from Draco and carrying her out of the water. She could have put her legs down and walked, but she was too busy marking the skin of her transportation.

He laid her back on the blanket, wetting it with both their bodies. He immediately settled between her thighs, and Hermione was flooded with heat when she felt the incredible hardness pressing against her apex.

Suddenly Lucius was moving them both so they were on their sides, never breaking the kiss. Draco settled behind her, running his hands all over her near-frenzied body. She'd never felt so aroused in her life.

Lucius broke the kiss and softly turned her face to the side, over her shoulder. Draco was right there, leaning up slightly and kissing her ferociously. She barely had a moment to compare Lucius' calculating and seductive kisses to Draco's slightly less schooled, passionate ones before lips closed around one of her swollen nipples. She moaned into Draco's mouth, her hips writhing in a continuous circle.

Her bikini bottoms were removed in mere moments, and two pairs of hands explored the newly bared flesh. With her eyes closed and her mind occupied with the myriad of sensations, she couldn't tell whose thumb was massaging her clit, whose fingers were slipping within her, whose hand was kneading her behind... all she knew was that it was perfect.

Reaching behind her, she tugged at Draco's swim trunks enough to get her point across and then did the same to Lucius' shorts. In no time, all three were naked and panting, hot despite the cool breeze travelling over the pond.

"Oh, gods," she whispered. It was impossible to say more.

"Who, Hermione?" Draco asked softly, and she knew what he meant. She shook her head, closing her eyes and relinquishing responsibility of that decision.

"Draco," she heard Lucius say in a quiet but determined voice. Hermione opened her eyes to see the man before her nod over her shoulder at his son. He caught her eye and kissed her softly, a sweet kiss that promised more than words ever could.

Draco lifted Hermione's leg and draped it over Lucius' hip. She moved closer to Lucius and in turn, Draco pressed himself closer against her back. She could feel Lucius' throbbing cock against her belly, and her breath began to come more quickly.

"Okay?" Draco murmured, kissing her neck softly and caressing her thigh. She nodded, biting her lip before Lucius swept in to bite it for her.

She felt Draco's cock press against her entrance, causing her to gasp softly. He slowly slid within her, stopping when he could go no deeper. "More," she demanded in a

low voice, wondering why he'd stopped, before his harsh breaths gave her an idea.

He pulled gently from her body before filling her again, and that amazing fullness made her moan in a manner more wanton than she'd like to admit. His gentle rocking caused her to move against Lucius' body, his arousal pressing insistently against her belly until he shifted slightly, making her cry out as his cock pressed perfectly against her desperate clit.

Draco's hand was cupping and massaging her breast, pulling her nipple in time with his thrusts, which were becoming harder and deeper. Lucius' hands were everywhere, never giving her nerve-wracked body a moment's peace. Hermione had one arm around Lucius' neck and then other reaching behind her, holding onto Draco's hip and encouraging his thrusts.

As Draco's movements became more frenzied, so did her own, her hips gyrating against Lucius' cock, her hand sliding down to grip his member, stroking as her body was thrust against his.

It became too much for Hermione: her nipples pinched, her arse gripped, her pussy pounded, her clit assaulted... it was unbelievable, it was too much. She cried out in orgasm, her body jerking and stilling as her blood pounded in her ears and a crackle of magic flooded her, giving her gooseflesh and setting off fireworks behind her eyes.

She vaguely heard Draco gasp and thrust deeply into her pliant body, a second wave of magic mingling with the first. Miraculously, her hand was still pumping Lucius' shaft, and he bit her neck, crying out a muffled noise as his come splashed onto her belly and a third magical pulse rolled over her skin.

Her skin was still tingling ten minutes later, when Lucius was the first to speak.

"I hope I'm correct in assuming I was not the only recipient of that powerful magic."

Draco grunted his agreement, his hand moving Hermione's hair off both their faces, baring her neck so he could press his face into it.

"I felt it," Hermione confirmed. She laughed softly, a residual tickle of the magic sweeping over her like butterfly wings. "I still feel it."

It seemed impossible, but somehow Lucius pressed himself even closer against her body. She groaned as she pulled her leg back from where it had been resting high on his waist. The movement forced Draco to pull back slightly, and he rolled over to lie on his back. Hermione turned to face him, cuddling up to his exhausted body and kissing him softly on the lips. She wanted to tell him he'd been amazing, but she didn't want him to ruin the moment with one of his trademark smirks, so she let her eyes speak for her.

"This was perfect," he told her in a reverent voice, making her feel guilty for not wanting to compliment him.

"It was," she agreed, nestling into his arm and groping behind her to pull Lucius closer.

"I think I need a nap, though," she confessed, yawning and laughing as both Malfoys repeated the gesture. The warm sun beat down on them, but the leaves around them were rustling with a most welcomed breeze, and the sound of the lightly lapping water lulled all three to sleep.

Hermione stood in the middle of her flat.

Her previous flat.

The flat which once had been her hideaway, her sanctuary, and was now nothing more than a few walls containing memories but not a life.

It was very strange to be standing in the same place she had stood every single day for the past three years, knowing that it was no longer hers. That feeling of belonging, of ownership was gone. She would never be able to come home and hide away from the world. From now on, there would always be other people around.

She wouldn't be cooking for herself unless she wanted house elves to go all hara-kiri on her.

She wouldn't be decorating her own space because it had been done for her. Beautifully, of course.

She wouldn't have a list on the fridge of things falling apart so that Harry or Ron would see it and take pity on her, fixing it furtively because they knew how irritated it made her to be unable to do it herself.

She would never cut her toe on that stubborn strip of laminate. She would never glare weakly at the hole in the wall from overzealous movers. She would never flip aimlessly through the channels of her haphazardly spelled television....

Actually, screw that. The TV was coming with her.

Nodding decisively, Hermione shrank the television and stuck it in her purse. She could see Draco packing up the last of her books, so she hurriedly shrank the DVD player, game console, and surround sound as well. In for a Sickle, in for a Galleon.

Lucius suddenly Apparated in front of her, giving her a guilty start.

"Are you all right, Hermione?" he asked quietly, in that cultured tone that meant either he didn't really like the company, or he was worried about something. Since Hermione knew Lucius very much enjoyed her company, she knew he was concerned about her.

"Just saying goodbye," she told him. And she was. She didn't actually *want* to stay, that wasn't the problem. There was no problem, really. She would just miss it, that was all. And one could miss the past without wanting to ignore the future. And these men were her future, and she theirs. It was the way things were supposed to be.

He took her into her arms, holding her lightly and making her eyes water unbidden. She felt another warm body wrap itself around her back, and Draco kissed the top of her head. *This was home. Not a floor and walls, not a town, not a country. Here.*

Author's Note: This might seem like the end, but it is far from it. At this point, the story is less than half over. Thanks for reading!

Chapter 19

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

While Lucius and Draco were indulging in their usual rapid-fire banter at the dinner table, Hermione was letting her mind wander to the day before.

Being a member of a triad hadn't quite hit her until after they'd made love by the water. It was, without question or contemplation, the most erotic sex she'd ever had. She had tingled from the orgasm long into the night and had nearly gone wandering through the halls to find one of them to satisfy her desire, brought on by a very detailed recollection.

She hadn't, though.

Hermione still felt a little awkward about the situation. She honestly hadn't expected all three to be together for her first time in the triad. She'd sort of thought she'd go from one to the other until they were all more comfortable. But it had felt so beautiful, so perfect, that she knew it was the right thing to do.

And she tried not to feel embarrassment or shame at sharing herself with two men, but it was hard. She'd spent her whole life thinking that sex was between two people only, and that anyone who indulged outside those two people was a cheater.

But it seemed the rules had changed for her, and that in itself made her nervous. She didn't want to break the rules, if there even *were* rules. And it felt like there were.

Hermione was nervous about telling Harry, Ron, Ginny and the other Weasleys about her new arrangement. She was certainly beginning to wish she'd told them *before* she'd moved in; but maybe this way, when she did tell them, they'd know she was serious.

Because now that she'd had a taste, there was no way she'd consider giving them up.

She must have blushed, because Draco was suddenly leering at her.

"Something on your mind, Granger?" he asked silkily.

She only smiled and took a sip of her water. She was beginning to understand Draco's moods and comments. Right now, he wanted reassurance that she was thinking about him, which was fine...except that if she told him she was, he would get all peacock-y about it and embarrass her. If his voice had been just a little quieter, she would have indulged him without a care. But as it was, he was looking to show off, and she wasn't going to play his game. So she smiled back, saying nothing.

"Hermione, I was thinking of having Celeste and Michael over for dinner on Friday. Would that be amenable to you?" Lucius asked, putting down the economic newsletter he was reading.

"Not Thello?" she asked. She was very fond of the pseudo-Snape, and she thought about him quite often. It was hard not to, when their triad seemed to be the example of what *not* to do.

"I believe Michael mentioned that Thello has a work conference to attend this weekend. I can reschedule for a time when he is available, if you'd like."

"No, no," Hermione assured, thankful for the soft smile Lucius gave her once he'd heard the disappointment in her voice. "But maybe we could have Thello over for tea sometime this week? I found him very interesting, and I'd like to speak with him more."

"What," Draco asked, "two men not enough for you, you want to pilfer one from another triad?"

He was smiling, so he wasn't being serious, but there was an undercurrent of jealousy there that surprised her. But then, when she thought about it, perhaps not. He wasn't jealous of his father, he'd proven that; but he wasn't immune to jealousy of other men. And he'd always struck her as the possessive type. But he need not worry...Hermione's hands were more than full. Or rather, they were just full enough.

"I don't want to *pilfer* Thello. I just want to get to know him better. He seems like the type to not have a lot of friends."

Lucius snorted delicately. "I knew you would want to take in strays."

"He's not a stray!" Hermione protested. "He seems really lonely. And... well, he reminds me of..."

"Snape." Draco finished. "Me, too."

Hermione sighed, flashing a thankful grin for his understanding. "I never got to thank Snape... or say I was sorry. We... we thought some horrible things about him. But he..." she trailed off, not knowing how sore of a topic the Potions master might be in this house. She knew he had been Draco's godfather and Lucius' close friend, and the guilt she felt at assuming the worst about the man had not diminished over the years. And now that he was gone, she suspected she'd rather built him up in her head a little, to overcompensate for her utter misconceptions of him.

"That was what he wanted, Hermione," Lucius said in that soft but forceful voice of his. "He didn't want you to understand him, or like him. He wanted you, all of you, to fear him so he could do his job properly. The only thing that mattered to him was protecting Potter. And he succeeded. He would not want your pity."

Hermione knew that was true. Her pity would probably feel like knives to a man like Severus Snape. Accepting the matter as closed for the time being, Hermione tried to steer the conversation back on track.

"In any case, I think Thello could use a friend. You two don't have to be here...I can entertain myself," she said in a final tone.

"We'll be here," both Malfoys responded, Draco looking rather put off by her suggestion, and Lucius looking amusedly resigned.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Now, I wanted to talk about going public. I'd like to tell my friends first. Having them find out from the *Daily Prophet* would not be ideal."

"You can tell whomever you want, Hermione," Lucius told her, picking his newsletter back up. "The rest of the Wizarding World can figure it out for itself."

"So we aren't going to do a news release or anything like that?" Draco asked.

"I don't think that's necessary, to be perfectly honest. With Hermione involved, news will travel quickly enough. She is still a hot commodity, so to speak, in the news world."

Hermione didn't much like being spoken of as though she weren't in the room, but she used Lucius' apparent obliviousness to her presence to watch the way his sardonic lips curled and caressed his words. He took a sip of tea, licking his lips afterward and causing her to sigh.

Both Malfoys looked at her, and she pretended not to notice. "I don't want to do an article or press release," she said as though she hadn't just been watching Lucius rather voyeuristically. And it was true; she couldn't think of any reason to play nice with Skeeter. If she did sit with the woman and try to tell their story, the article would still be embellished and full of falsehoods, except it would have her name, and by proxy her approval, splashed all over it. If she chose not to do an article, people would still *read*

the story, but they would (hopefully) take it with a grain of salt, knowing Skeeter's history of "journalistic integrity," and give Hermione the benefit of the doubt.

Not that Hermione particularly believed that the Wizarding World had any right to her private life. But for some reason, they seemed to want details, and she'd provided them with absolutely no juicy gossip over the boring years of celibacy and tame romances. This was going to drive the public mad.

Maybe Harry would have some tips on how to deal with the fallout. Though he was quite skilled in avoiding publicity these days, he tended, however, to get aggressive and personal with the press. He might not be the best person after all.

It took Hermione a couple minutes to realize who the perfect man to deal with the ravenous press was.

Or rather, men.

Tall, blond, full of sex and snide remarks. Sipping tea and looking at her expectantly.

"Maybe we should let word get out naturally and then speak to the press after a few weeks. I don't relish the conjecture I'm sure they'll print, and speaking to the public might stave off the speculation. I don't want people thinking the worst about us."

"Good idea," Draco said. "But I do think you should be prepared. Even if we do speak with the press, people are going to have very vocal opinions about us, you especially."

"He's right, Hermione," Lucius said, putting down his paper once more and looking at her earnestly. "Are you sure you wouldn't prefer publicly dating only one of us?"

"And who would it be, Lucius?" Hermione demanded. She already knew the answer. There was no way she could allow that. And given Lucius' subtle insistence that Draco make love to her first, she knew that, while he was not self-sacrificing in any normal stretch of the word, he would insist Draco be the "public boyfriend." He was beyond generous when it came to his son and didn't seem capable of denying him any happiness.

Before Lucius could answer, Draco interjected, "She's right, Father. I don't want that. We all deserve to be happy, and while we might not feel traditional jealousy within the triad, I don't think I could stand seeing the two of you acting like a couple while I trailed behind like a child. And I wouldn't want you to have to pretend to be nothing more than her father-in-law. It wouldn't be fair. People will just have to deal with it, and before we know it, we'll have started a new fashion trend. I can see it now... 'Golden Triad starts threesome fad!'"

"Golden Triad?" Hermione smirked.

"Catchy, isn't it?" Draco winked playfully.

"Very," she agreed, rolling her eyes at Lucius, who smiled at her before fixing his son with a raised eyebrow. Draco shrugged and they all smiled. She marvelled at their easy familiarity.

The Golden Triad, as Draco was now insisting on calling them...though Lucius mentioned a certain resentment of the word "Golden," and suggested "Silver" might be more apt...was sitting in the main study. It was larger than Lucius' private study, and it was where Hermione intended to spend most of her time, since it was also set up with a comprehensive *Accio* system, where simply calling out the name of any book, title, or author, would bring the book directly to desk.

It almost took the fun out of even having a library, until Hermione went a little overboard and called no less than fifty books to her, just to see the extent of the collection and the capability of the spell.

The library was extensive. The spell was capable. Hermione was in her element.

Currently perusing an antiquated edition of *Moste Potente Potions*, just because she could, Hermione wiggled around on the sofa until her head was resting on Lucius' thigh. It wasn't exactly soft, but it was warm and brought her close enough to... inhale his delicious scent.

Right.

Lucius was doing something boring on his other thigh, like balancing an asset and liability table. He scribbled away with his right hand, while his left hand idly traced her collarbones. He didn't seem to even realize he was doing it, and she had no intention of breaking the spell, even though it made her want to squirm.

Draco was not involved in their tranquillity. In fact, he was rather disturbing it.

"Can't you just owl me the details so I can get the report in on Monday?"

The familiar face of their boss was grimacing in the Floo, and Hermione felt guilty for being pleased that Draco was the one getting pestered on a Sunday. It might have been that they'd found her Floo to have been disconnected, of course. But this only reinforced her decision to wait a few days before giving them an updated address. She rarely indulged in irresponsibility, but as Lucius' fingers made another sweep across her clavicle before tracing up her throat and lingering just behind her ear, irresponsibility was feeling pretty damn good.

"But why on Earth would he want to meet on a Sunday?" Draco was demanding.

Because he can, Hermione surmised, and the actual answer was not far off.

She absently listened to Draco grumble, something he actually rarely did about his work, before cutting off the call and stomping over to where Lucius and Hermione were casually lounging in a way that was certain to annoy him right now.

"I get to go to work right now...isn't that thrilling?" he demanded, and Hermione smiled at his petulance.

"Draco, surely I needn't remind you that I work almost every weekend and have for longer than you've been alive, and Hermione works more overtime than nearly anyone else in the Ministry. One Sunday shift isn't going to ruin your life."

Draco sighed dramatically, *Accio*ing his coat and briefcase and glaring at the indolent recliners.

"Kiss, Draco?" Hermione asked sweetly. He looked ready to breathe fire, and while his passion usually kindled her own, now he was just being excessive.

His face immediately softened, and he sighed. Bending down, he placed a soft, slow kiss against her lips, tasting her thoroughly and nibbling a little before straightening.

"Hopefully I'll be back earlier rather than later. And I wouldn't have to go in at all if those incompetents could file the proper paperwork in the first place..." he trailed off, stopping his grouching only to say goodbye and announce his destination into the Floo before spiriting off in a shock of flame.

After Draco left, it didn't take long for the overly heavy tome to settle against Hermione's stomach and her eyes drift close to the soothing smoothness of Lucius' fingertips dancing lightly over her bared skin.

Lucius smiled to himself, something he rarely did in privacy. Something he rarely did in public.

Something he rarely did.

But it seemed like those particular muscles were getting a strenuous work out these past few weeks. Having Hermione in his life was an unexpected boon, and he recognized that he was treading dangerous waters.

It was definitely too soon to acknowledge any sort of *feelings*. Wasn't it? But it was difficult not to when she was so feisty and funny and *fun*. But beyond that, he'd never seen her sleep before. He hadn't watched anyone other than his son sleep for a number of years. Narcissa and he had not shared rooms in the last years of their marriage, and any romantic feelings between the two had dwindled long before that. Even when their love had been in full bloom, he couldn't recall watching her sleep and feeling so protective over her.

But Hermione in repose was entirely different than Hermione awake. Her features, though always youthful, seemed impossibly young. She looked completely unspoiled, as though she'd never heard a dirty word, never touched herself in the dead of night, and certainly never let a father and son make love to her in the grass.

But the dichotomy intrigued him. *She* intrigued him. And aroused him. Lucius carefully moved a little, making sure not to jolt her as she slept against his thigh. He wished he'd been the one to make love to her. It wasn't a matter of who went *first*; he didn't regret his decision or begrudge Draco for taking her first. It was just that he wished he'd had her *at all*.

Hermione rolled a little on the narrow sofa, and Lucius had to hold her shoulders so she didn't slip off. She whimpered a little in her sleep at being restrained, and Lucius groaned internally. Carefully shifting out from beneath her, Lucius stood, stretching in a way he'd never allow anyone to see. He'd been sitting for far too long, having finished what he was working on over an hour ago, watching Hermione sleep and contemplating his new life.

He bent down to haul her into his arms, one beneath her bent knees and the other supporting her shoulder. Her arms came up automatically to encircle his neck, and she nuzzled into his chest with a soft mewl that tugged at his heart and his cock.

He carried her to her bedroom. It was still early in the day, but it seemed as though she needed the rest. He knew she rarely got more than five or six hours of sleep during the week, so it was possible her body was playing catch-up. He hoped living at the Manor would relieve some of her responsibilities and ease her stress. He'd never lived without money, but he could imagine the lack of it would be quite preoccupying.

When he went to settle her against the soft cotton sheets, her arms wouldn't release his neck. Lucius sighed in a way that an outsider would interpret as long-suffering and resigned, but was actually contented. He removed his robes, shoes, and silk shirt before lying beside her. She immediately squirmed into his arms, and he had no choice but to embrace her.

No choice at all.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

When Hermione woke up, it was to a most welcome feeling.

A warm, hard body was pressed against her back, and she knew, both from the wideness of his form and from some innate, instinctual knowledge that it was Lucius.

He'd never been in her bed before. Hermione decided she quite liked it and would do whatever was in her power to make sure he returned on a regular basis.

Rolling her shoulders in lieu of a stretch, which would dislodge Lucius' hold on her and that was something she absolutely did not want, Hermione slowly turned in his arms.

He was wearing only black slacks, and when she looked down under the covers, she saw even his feet were bare. It was strange, she mused, as she considered his long, pale, perfectly arched and pedicured feet, seeing a man of Lucius' magnificent power, barefoot. It meant something. It meant he was willing to be weak with her, to be off guard. He wanted her to see that he could be vulnerable, that he trusted her with his flaws and his foibles.

Or, she mentally amended, it could be that he was much too polite to put his shoes beneath her covers. But Hermione rather liked the first option better.

In sleep, Lucius was a kitten. Or at least a declawed, vegetarian panther. His face was completely relaxed, and in repose, not a wrinkle could be seen. His skin was flawless, in a way that made her teeny freckles and imperfect pores look like leprosy in comparison.

His chest, so broad and perfectly muscled, portrayed his power. It was lightly haired, the dusting so blonde it was nearly invisible, but her fingers felt the crisp strands, tugging them lightly and watching his face to see if he woke up.

She rarely got to see Lucius unaware. He was almost always completely in tune with everything around him. Not a wince, not a twitch got by him. But now he was blind to her scrutiny, and she knew it would irk him when he awoke, to have been caught slumbering in her bed.

So when he drew a deep breath that deregulated his even inhalations, Hermione closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep, giving him the upper hand.

"I know you're awake," he said softly, a smile evident in his voice even if she couldn't see it.

"I wasn't," she denied, cracking an eye open to see if he bought it. He certainly didn't.

Moving them both so she was lying on top of him and his arms wrapped firmly around her waist, he nipped her shoulder and said, "I could feel your eyes on me the moment you awoke. And I felt the blanket shift when you checked out what was underneath. Your disappointment was palpable."

Hermione struggled to get out of his grip. "I was looking at your *feet!*" she cried.

"And what possible fascination could you have with my feet? I assure you there are more palatable appendages for your *viewing*... pleasure."

"You are so... so..." Hermione sputtered, wishing she had a little less Gryffindor indignation and a little more Slytherin wit.

"Hmm," Lucius hummed, arranging her body so she was straddling him and their groins were aligned. "All that and more, I assure you," he purred.

Giving in, Hermione decided, was not so bad when the reward was an absurdly hot kiss from Lucius Malfoy.

Though she was on top, he was clearly controlling the kiss. His hand was buried in her hair, tilting her head so the kiss could deepen. Whenever she went to take charge a little and guide the kiss, he would use his grip on her hair to pull her back, licking or nibbling on her lips until she was pliant and submissive again. Then he would lower her head and the impassioned mating of their mouths would begin again.

Lucius was quickly undressing her, and he did it so expertly that she barely noticed she was naked until a cool breeze from her open patio door licked her skin and gave her gooseflesh.

Hermione shimmied down Lucius' body to take off his trousers and pants, smiling at Lucius' soft moan when his cock was finally freed.

"Eager?" she teased, crawling back up his body to settle atop him again.

"For you? Always," he said softly, no trace of sarcasm in his words. He allowed Hermione to rule the kiss this time, but when she felt his cock slide through her folds and over her entrance, she suspected he only permitted it to distract her.

"I want you," he whispered against her lips.

"I want you, too, Lucius," she told him, kissing along his strong jaw line to his ear, where she nibbled lightly, delighting in his shiver. She moved her body down to take in his cock, slowly, to ensure they both felt every inch.

Hermione had never really been a fan of this position, preferring to be beneath that man she made love to. But something about having Lucius Malfoy beneath her, watching her every move and only lightly guiding her, gave her a blooming sense of power that was eagerly matched by their magic, travelling in soothing waves over their sensitized skin.

When she was fully seated, Hermione sat up straight and let her head fall back. Comparing Lucius to Draco was inevitable, but she was capable of nothing more cohesive than an impression of *so different but so similar*.

Placing her hands on his chest to steady herself, Hermione began to move. At first her motions were slightly tentative. She wasn't used to taking a more dominant position in bed. But at his encouraging noises and the sheer arousal beating down on her, she became more confident, moving higher off his cock before nearly slamming back down onto it.

Lucius' hands rested on her hips, letting her do all the work while he only watched and enjoyed. She found she didn't mind, though, because along with appreciation there was adoration in his features.

"Lucius, gods," she whispered when his thumb travelled along her hip to settle on her clit. To focus on that sensation, her movements became less frantic. She didn't rise high off of him anymore, but ground her body down onto his hardness, letting his single finger take her away.

She didn't notice her nails digging into his chest, but she felt the reciprocating reaction of his hand clenching around her side, sliding down to cup her behind and encourage her circular movements.

She came hard, crying out louder than she could ever remember doing, since last time with Draco her sounds had been muffled by kisses. She fell forward on Lucius, and he bore her weight easily.

He thrust into her from beneath only a few times before he let out a guttural, wordless exclamation and came deep inside her. She was panting against his chest, trying to absorb the strange tickling of his magic flowing over her and inside her. It felt like the deepest kiss, and though it only caressed her lightly, it penetrated into the depths of her being. Their magic was twining together inextricably.

"We should get up. I think we've rested much too long," Lucius murmured into her hair.

But Hermione was already drifting off again, and when Lucius gently placed her on the bed beside him, the only thing that she felt was missing was Draco.

Thello was a little friendlier when he came to visit Hermione and the Malfoys at the Manor a few days later.

But that was like saying a venomous snake only injected you with half a dose of lethal venom. Either way, you were going to feel it.

"So, what sort of conference are you attending this weekend?" Hermione asked, determined to kill the surly wizard with kindness, if he didn't kill her first for trying. Lucius and Draco were absolutely no help. They were sitting on either side of her, smiling patiently and looking at Thello with undisguised sympathy as she tried time and again to strike up conversation.

"It's a potions convention, actually. It will be the first one I've been able to attend, and it promises to be very informative."

Hermione smiled. The similarities between Thello and Snape were apparently limitless. She had no doubt her dour former professor would have enjoyed a great rapport with Thello.

"Why have you been unable to attend before? It sounds like something you find very interesting," she pressed, knowing she was being nosy when Lucius placed a hand on her knee as if to warn her.

"Conflicting schedules," Thello offered flatly.

Hermione sighed, surreptitiously looking to Draco for some sort of support or rescue. She'd wanted to meet with Thello to get a better feel of what made him happy, even though she had absolutely no idea what she would do with that information if he ever revealed it.

"So," Draco started congenially. "How are Celeste and Michael?"

Lucius stiffened beside her, and Hermione wondered why. However, even she knew that plaguing the young man with questions about the man he loved and the woman who kept them apart...even if they were *all* supposed to be together...was not the right way to make Thello feel comfortable.

"They are fine, thank you for asking," Thello replied stiffly, meeting Draco's eyes with a clear warning. Draco seemed to shrug it off, opting, instead, to search for more buttons in need of pressing.

"We're sorry they were unable to join us today. Why was that, again?"

Hermione opened her mouth to speak, but Thello started first. "They were unfortunately indisposed." Thello seemed to be of that school that believed politeness equalled amiability, that being strictly socially formal was the same as being friendly.

"Together?" Draco pressed, one last time.

Lucius stood, apparently having decided enough was enough, and for that, Hermione was grateful. She knew Draco wasn't trying to be rude; he was just trying to get answers the only way he knew how. But it seemed as though he'd abandoned Slytherin cunning for Gryffindor brashness, and Lucius probably took more offence to his approach than his intentions.

"Draco," Lucius said. "I need your assistance in the other room."

Draco duly stood and followed his father out of the room. None of them were fooled that Lucius actually needed some obscure form of assistance, but the facade was maintained and decorum upheld.

"I'm very sorry," Hermione said quietly. "I'm not sure what he was trying to prove..."

Thello laughed a little bitterly. "I do. And it would have worked, but Lucius is and always will be one step ahead of his son. Their cleverness is matched, but their methods vary greatly, and Lucius could spot Draco's obvious attempt from a mile away." He shrugged lazily, leaning back a little in chair, looking more relaxed now that the main antagonist was gone.

"What was he doing, then?" Hermione asked, a little baffled.

"A number of things. Trying to get me to admit that I love Michael. Or that I hate Celeste. Or that I'm jealous of the time they spend together. Or to point out that I spend most of my time alone, despite the fact that I am in a triad. Even the two of them sitting so close to you was a pointed jab at how different our relationships are."

Hermione shook her head in denial. "I don't think so, Thello. They aren't cruel."

"It wasn't cruel," he told her. "It was their way of being honest. You have to understand something about Slytherins, current or former. They almost never say what they mean, but their actions always speak louder than words. Rather than asking me why I put up with such a loveless relationship, as you no doubt intended to, they wanted to show me that there is something better out there. But the difference is I already knew that. I know exactly what I want and what I'm willing to do to get it. In my case, it just happens that what I want comes with a lot of extras that I *don't* want. But I will accept and deal with those extras if it means I get to keep what I do want."

"But how long can you live unhappily?" she asked quietly, trying to comprehend how he could be simultaneously selfish and selfless.

"Forever, Hermione," he said. "For Michael? Forever."

After that, the two struggled to find any sort of common ground between them. They were from entirely different worlds, literally, and did not have much to talk about. When Hermione brought up the fact that she now lived here with Lucius and Draco, he smirked knowingly and only *just* refrained from saying "I told you so."

She told him a little about her world, telling him about the Muggle television, DVD player, stereo system and game console she'd smuggled out of her apartment. He seemed very curious, asking all sort of questions about the game console, especially.

She would need to have Harry come over to set it up one of these days. Of course, that would necessitate she actually ~~be~~ Harry where she lived now. She'd only written him and Ron brief owls saying she'd moved, since they had frequently Floo'd or owled her apartment and would have been very worried to have done so only to be blocked. But she hadn't given them an updated address, and she knew the day was coming. She wasn't sure what she was so afraid of, only that she didn't want to hear inflammatory comments about the men with whom she had chosen to share her life.

She wondered if they would care about her electronics. Draco might think they were very interesting, and she would bet ten Galleons that he would have a blast on her game console, if he let himself. Lucius might be a little harder to convince. He didn't exactly prescribe to strictly *Pureblood* traditions, but that's what they inevitably were, since the only families old enough in the wizarding world to even have traditions like that were Purebloods.

She could think of a couple ways to persuade him, of course.

Hermione promised to invite Thello over when she had the gaming system hooked up, and the first flash of smile she'd seen grace his features that day made her grin in response. She even said that maybe Michael could come as well, though Celeste would probably not enjoy it as much as the men would. She had no idea if that was true, since she herself had a blast on it, but it made Thello share a secret smile with her, and she felt like they were friends.

He even bore with quiet grace the hug she forced upon him when he took his leave. He didn't return the hug, but Hermione was very familiar with taking small steps.

After telling Draco and Lucius, who had been working quietly together in the study (giving her time with her "pet project" as Draco called Thello) that their guest had left, Hermione retired to her room.

She had a couple owls to write. It was time.

Dear Harry,

I am writing to invite you to my new home! I'd very much like for you and Ron to help me set up the TV and accessories like you did last time. I find myself missing our discussions about certain shows that absolutely baffle and confuse Ron in the most endearing ways!

When would be good for you? I'm free any time after five, as always. Please let Ron see this letter to save the owl another trip.

I hope to see you both soon.

All my love,

Hermione

P.S. I now live at Malfoy Manor.

The Malfoys' beautiful and elegant eagle owl took the missive most delicately, raising its head as though it knew it had been charged with a very important mission. Hermione took a moment to give it the attention it deserved, and it positively preened under her ministrations.

After it flew out her open patio doors, Hermione stepped outside and sat on one of the decadently cushioned chairs. It was a beautiful night. The stars were glittering like they were underwater, a white glow suffusing the night. She loved spending time out here at night. There were never any insects to swarm her or make any noises; even the birds dared only make lovely songs and nary a warble or screech was ever heard.

She had told Lucius and Draco about telling Harry and Ron, and while Draco had jokingly asked if she ~~had~~ to tell them, Lucius had confided that he'd been surprised she hadn't earlier.

And honestly, she was as well. She *should* have told them before. It was only delaying the inevitable, and now Harry and Ron would feel she didn't care about their input. Which wasn't entirely untrue. She cared what they thought, but they wouldn't change her mind.

But after watching the graceful bird disappear with her tidings, Hermione had to wonder if this had been the right way to go about it. She could vividly picture the explosion, Ron's, especially, and she decided that the owl was really the only option. Doing it in person might have caused a serious fight.

When she ambled off to bed about an hour later, her intention to get a good night's sleep was waylaid by the return of the owl. Landing on her bedside table, it offered the rolled paper to her.

Hermione held her breath as she opened it, not honestly believing it could be anything other than bad news.

We are not coming there. You have some serious explaining to do. The Burrow, six tomorrow.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

As Hermione dressed for her meeting with Harry and Ron, she began to question the intelligence of her "band-aid" approach to telling them about her new home.

Maybe it would have been better to ease them into it.

But she knew there was no easy way of telling her friends about her new life. No matter how she'd approached it, they were going to be upset. This way, at least, they will have had some time to get used to the idea.

Or so she told herself as she buttoned her blouse at a rate so slow it was absurd.

"You shouldn't be so nervous, you know," Draco said, watching her from her bed. Lucius had left a few moments ago, unable to watch her anxious dawdling any longer.

"Why not?" she asked fairly. She had every reason to be nervous. She didn't have many friends, and those she did have might hate her before the night was over. She'd barely gotten through the workday without having a nervous breakdown, knowing that Harry and Ron were only a few floors away, in the Auror department, possibly talking about her and questioning her sanity. Or even starting the paperwork for her commitment.

"Because they are your friends, Hermione. They love you. Even they won't let something like this push you apart. You're all friends for a reason. Don't condemn them before you know how they feel."

Hearing words like that from Draco was almost enough to make Hermione check for Polyjuice. On one hand, it seemed wholly out of character for him to be so reasonable toward her friends. But on the other hand, he seemed to be very understanding when it came to her, and he and Harry *had* been getting along better these days.

"You're right," she sighed. "I just wish this whole confrontation was over already and we were all sitting around in the garden, laughing about it."

Draco sighed, coming to stand behind her. He expertly finished the buttons she'd been avoiding with the idea that if she didn't finish dressing, there would be no way she could go to the Burrow. He ran his hands up her arms in a comforting gesture, and she leaned back into his embrace.

"I can't lose them," she admitted. Her unspoken fear said aloud, Hermione closed her eyes against the prickling behind her lids. She didn't want her friends to think she had betrayed them. Ron, especially, still saw Lucius as being evil and Draco as evil-in-training. The years had done nothing to temper the redhead's prejudices, and he certainly wasn't the only one. The prejudices went both ways, and many, many people still abided by them.

"You won't, love. Come on. You're supposed to be the brave one, remember? And if they do upset you, just leave. Tell them you'll only talk to them through owl post until they calm down. And I can always talk to Harry, though I suspect he won't be the one you'll need to convince."

"I don't want to *convince* anyone. I just want my choices to be accepted!"

"Ah, if only it were that easy. Everyone has to explain themselves sometimes. But explanations are different than excuses. Don't excuse or belittle your decision, because then you'll be belittling us. Stay true to your choice."

Hermione let herself be gathered into Draco's reassuring embrace. She had a hard time figuring him out at times. Like the day before, his attitude with Thello had been bracing and unexpected. But now he was treating her with gentleness and patience. It was almost as though *he* didn't even know who he truly was.

As ready as she was going to be, Hermione led Draco to the parlour where Lucius was sitting.

"I'm ready," she announced.

Lucius rose and took her into his arms. She melted into his arms, taking strength from his wordless confidence. Draco stood behind her, smoothing his hands up and down her arms. She sighed, feeling much better about what she had to do.

Taking a bolstering breath, Hermione Disappeared.

"Do you think they're going to accept this?" Draco asked of his father, the two of them sitting in comfortable silence after Hermione's departure.

"No. Do you?"

"No," Draco admitted. "But I wish they would. She puts an annoying amount of stock in their opinions. It would be better for us if they approved."

"Why, Draco," Lucius began teasingly. Draco was already rolling his eyes. "I never knew you to be so concerned about the opinions of others."

Draco looked incredulously at Lucius. Of course he cared; their entire lives were built on public image.

"Well, the opinions of those whom you deem not to matter," his father amended.

"They matter to her," Draco rejoined, pouting slightly.

Lucius softly laughed. "Why don't you get us a drink? It might help with the wait."

Draco began to get up, but Lucius halted him with a hand on his arm. "Why not try your new talent?" he suggested.

Draco smiled. He loved practising his wandless magic. He was getting better at it, although he noticed he'd acquired the annoying habit of announcing spells more loudly as if to compensate for the lack of directional tool. He was working on that.

With determination, Draco said, "Accio brandy and two snifters."

A tremendously expensive bottle of brandy began its journey toward them a little stiltedly, and Draco tried not to cringe when he saw his father stiffen from the corner of his eye. The brandy's slow and jerky journey did not bode well for either the aged liquid or the ostentatious carpet beneath it. Finally, the bottle landed safely in Draco's hand, followed by one of the glasses.

His concentration must have slipped upon catching the first two items, because the second glass promptly fell to the floor and shattered, startling them both.

Draco laughed a little embarrassedly. "Perhaps you should try this time?"

Lucius smiled his forgiveness, waving his wand over the broken glass on the carpet and using it to *Accio* another snifter.

Draco said nothing about his father's apparent hesitance to use his wandless magic, but instead, poured them both a reserved amount of spirits.

"Come in," Ron offered, holding the patchwork front door open for Hermione. She smiled gratefully and stepped inside.

It was, of course, just as she remembered. She hadn't been to the Burrow in some time. After she and Ron had split, she'd come back only sporadically, to visit Ginny or drop off presents at the holidays. But over the years, very few things had changed. It still looked ready to collapse under the weight of an intense stare, and it still smelled...and likely always would...like home cooking.

Still. There was something missing. She had once felt at home here, and now she felt like a guest. An unwelcome one, if the look Ron was giving her was any indication.

"So, Malfoy Manor, huh?" Ron said, taking a seat beside Harry and indicating that Hermione should sit across from them.

She smiled wryly and took the proffered chair, trying not to cringe as it trembled under her weight.

"Well, let's just cut to the chase, shall we?" she quipped, determined to keep this discussion light. Ron looked disturbed, and Harry seemed to be uncomfortable, but he smiled widely at her. She realized it had been a while since she'd seen either of them.

"Why on Earth are you living at Malfoy Manor? Have you...are they...were you...? Well?"

Hermione extrapolated from that that Ron wanted to know if she was staying against her will. Harry rolled his eyes, and Hermione relaxed. These were her friends...they weren't going to be angry with her.

"I'm staying there because I want to. Because it makes sense."

"Why, Hermione? I mean, I thought you loved your flat. Are you... renting a room there, or something?" Harry asked softly, looking hopeful.

She shook her head slowly. When she went to speak, Ron beat her to it

"Well, explain yourself, Hermione! What's going on?"

She bit her lip. She hadn't liked the tone of their owl in the first place, and she certainly didn't like being ordered about.

"I am not here to *explain* myself, Ronald. I'm here to tell you my news. I'm sorry about the way I said it, but I thought telling you I lived there was better than hedging around the topic. Now, I'm here to talk, but I won't put up with accusations and demands. If you can't listen rationally, I'll leave."

Ron looked ready to interject at any moment, but Harry stilled him with a hand on his arm. "That's more than fair. We just want to know that you're safe."

"And sane, Harry!" Ron exclaimed, looking searchingly at Hermione as though he could detect the presence of spells and curses just by looking at her.

"I am safe. And sane," she added, looking pointedly at Ron. "I'm living at the Manor because I'm in a relationship. Now, you may not like it or understand it, but it's real and I'm happy. I hope you can respect that."

Her friends took in her words, Ron looking positively purple, but Harry's restraining hand on his arm clenching viciously to keep Ron silent.

"With Malfoy, then?" Harry asked quietly, as though resigned.

Hermione smiled. She thought she could probably get away with not telling them *which* Malfoy, or the fact that it was *both*, but they would find out sooner or later, and they deserved to know the truth. Not to mention the fact that she really didn't want to have to do this again.

"With Draco, yes. And... Lucius."

Ron gasped dramatically and started choking. Harry was too dumbfounded to even clap him on the back; he was staring at Hermione with his mouth open and eyes perfectly round.

"With... both?" he choked out. Ron finally inhaled, his face returning to a nice, normal fire-engine red.

"But Hermione... they'll find out, eventually!" Ron cried, looking aghast and utterly lost.

"What?" Hermione said, a little lost herself. "Oh! Ronald! Of course, they *know* about each other. We're all... you know... in it together," she finished, bracing herself for more reaction.

Harry was nodding slowly, though he looked miles away from true comprehension. Ron had looked appeased for about a split second when he'd found out she wasn't cheating, but went straight back to appalled when he absorbed what she was doing.

"And they... together... that's just sick! How can you be a part of that...*sickness*?"

Harry nodded more emphatically, as if to agree. Hermione sighed.

"It's not *sick*. And remember what I said about leaving if you started to make judgements. No, they aren't intimate together, as if that's any of your business. Any other part of our sex life you'd like to pry in to, or have I been sufficiently chastened?"

"Mione," Harry began, apparently having found language again. "Why? Why them? Why... like that?"

Hermione hasn't intended to explain about the triad magic right away, but they both looked as though they needed to understand, needed some sort of explanation other than *dearmerlinsexissogood*, which she was half-inclined to give, just to see Ron change colours again.

Through her lengthy and somewhat pedagogical explanation, the men both looked a little more understanding. Harry was nodding in a way that showcased something other than incredulity, and Ron looked almost pleased.

"So, you're just in it for the wicked magic, right?" he asked eagerly, after she'd finished.

"Okay, I'm leaving," Hermione announced, rising to her feet with every intention of walking out to Disapparate. They would never understand.

"Hermione! Wait," Harry said, coming around the side of the table to stall her. She faced him wearily.

"Harry, I care about them. I know it's hard to understand, and I know you don't like them. But I've learned a lot about them in the time I've spent there, and they aren't what we thought. Not anymore. People change, Harry. I've been able to move past the things that happened years ago. So have they. The magic, for me, wasn't the deciding factor. And I'm happy, Harry. Please... *understand*."

"You say the magic wasn't the deciding factor *for you*... was it for them?" Harry asked softly.

Hermione paused. She knew that Harry wanted to know that the Malfoys weren't taking advantage of her, but.... Even though the magic wasn't the *deciding* factor, it had been a huge part of the process. If her magic hadn't gone haywire, she honestly never would have considered *both* of them. Maybe Draco, but only because he had been so persistent. She didn't know exactly how they had come about their own decisions.

"Harry, I don't know. I don't know what they thought about or considered when they made up their minds. I do know that they *both* care about me, and they *both* respect me. You don't have to worry about that."

Harry heaved a sigh, and Ron dropped his head heavily onto the table. Harry raised smiling eyes to her, and Hermione inwardly rejoiced. It was going to be okay.

She impulsively hugged Harry, silently thanking him for being the voice of reason... even if said voice had gone on a brief vacation a few moments ago.

"Okay," Ron said. "Okay. It's okay. We'll just... you know. And then... it'll be. Okay. Okay?"

Hermione laughed. "Okay, Ron." He looked relieved, so she figured she'd said the right thing. He came up to hug her as well, and Hermione allowed herself to really breathe.

"I think we should come visit, though. You know, to make sure they're treating you right and all."

"I'd like you to visit, Ron. But you have to behave. Neither of them will tolerate you making light of our decision. Or questioning me."

"I'll be good, promise. Harry'll keep me in line, won't you, mate?" Ron smiled widely, but Hermione could see it was a little shaky.

"Of course," Harry said agreeably.

"They have a beautiful pond for swimming, too. I'm sure you'll both love it... if you can bear to be around the Malfoys, of course."

Ron's eyes widened, and Hermione knew she had bribe material.

"So, let's see this wandless magic," Harry suggested, a glint in his eyes reminding Hermione that her friend was the most powerful wizard in the world. He could do wandless, non-verbal magic automatically, but he still looked eager to see her try.

Looking around, Hermione's eyes settled on something in the middle of the table. Thinking back to Draco's first attempt on the day that they'd first been together, Hermione smiled.

"*Accio* salt shaker!"

Draco yawned, pressing his bony skull into Hermione's stomach.

"Hey!" she cried, trying to push him away. He wouldn't allow her to, grabbing her wrists and pinning them tightly beside her body. When he pressed soft kisses onto her knuckles, she forgave his trespass and went back to stroking her fingers through his silky, fine hair.

"Kids," Lucius admonished, a playful twitch of his lip belying his chastisement.

Hermione was reclining on the couch, her head on Lucius' thigh. It was a familiar position for her, as she enjoyed lying like this as she read in the evenings. Draco was sitting on the floor, doing nothing but apparently enjoying the sensations of having his hair touched. He purred like a cat and butted into her hands almost comically, trying to prolong the pleasure.

Lucius was running light fingers over her collarbones and throat, as he was wont to do when she used him as a pillow like this. It was so comfortable, she reflected, the three of them sitting around, saying little, doing nothing. Only Lucius was using his time wisely, reading an economic newsletter. Hermione had batted it out of his hands earlier, but Draco had *Accioed* it back and given it to his father. Lucius had continued reading as though there had been no interruption at all.

They could be so irritating sometimes.

But, she mentally amended, rubbing her cheek over the impossibly soft cotton of his black dress pants, he could also be very sweet. And funny. And *sexy*. And Draco was those things as well.

Hermione was thinking she'd been Ghandi in another life, to deserve such an amazing one this time around.

Hermione shifted, causing Draco to sit up and turn, facing her. Her shirt had ridden up a little, and Draco placed a soft kiss on her bared belly. She smiled softly, still petting his hair.

He winked devilishly as her before placing another kiss below her navel, pairing it with a soft flick of his tongue. She hummed in contentment, wriggling a little before she could stop herself. His kisses trailed a little lower until he held the button of her jeans in his mouth. He looked up at her with one eyebrow raised, as if for permission, and she smiled widely.

"Draco," Lucius intoned without looking away from his paper. "Why don't you show Hermione your room?"

It was the tone that parents use when their child has a friend over and they've become hyper and uncontrollable. Hermione flushed, feeling strangely chagrined.

"Mmm... Want to see my room, Granger?" Draco drawled as lasciviously as humanly possible, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

Hermione snorted, but sat up. She very much did want to see Draco's room.

"Lucius?" she said softly. "Do you want to...?" She felt strange offering a man an invitation to his own son's bed, but nothing about them was usual.

He looked up at her, seeming surprised before smiling softly. "I shouldn't. Too much work to do and I'd like to get caught up."

Hermione nodded, disappointed. But Lucius took his work very seriously, and Hermione respected that. She bent down to kiss him, intending to show him a little of what he was missing. The kiss became intense, and Hermione almost went to straddle the older blond, but Draco cleared his throat impatiently, and Lucius broke the kiss.

"Good night, Hermione," he said in a low voice, pressing one more kiss to her lips before leaning back.

"Good night, Lucius."

"Let's go, Granger," Draco said, pulling on her arm and leading her to the serpent's den.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

"So, why haven't you shown me your room before, Draco?" Hermione asked as she allowed herself to be led up the ostentatious marble staircase to where her lover's bedroom was ostensibly located.

"I don't let many people see it," he admitted, stopping in front of a large set of double doors. It wasn't exactly close to her own room, but the Manor was so large that they could occupy various corners and probably never see one another.

"Why not?" she asked, curious. Draco's hand was warm and reassuring in hers and his smile was endearingly hesitant. She briefly wondered if maybe the walls were decked in chains and leather and instruments of torture, or perhaps the decor was taken from the illustrated pages of Beedle the Bard. Surely there was no such explanation for his reticence.

"No real reason," he answered casually, opening the doors and stepping inside. "Just a private person, I suppose."

Hermione followed him in, finding herself more shocked at the absolute *ordinariness* of the room than any strange motif her over-imaginative mind could have dreamt up.

The walls were as dark as beige could be without being tan or sand or some other variation of not-white. The furniture was all matching, as was true throughout the Manor. An armoire, tallboy dresser, vanity table and bench, low dresser, poster bed, bedside tables and several oblong mirrors were all of a rich cherry wood. Like her own room, his had a sitting area centred around a fireplace, the loveseat and armchairs a rich brown leather, more supple than the stiff leather Lucius seemed to favour in his study.

It looked... comfortable. Wholly inhabitable. Hermione wasn't sure what she'd been expecting (Slytherin green, silver and black with snakes everywhere, her mind supplied), but it hadn't been this classy and understated style.

"Wow, Draco... you have great taste," she said, admiring the vanity. Surprisingly, it didn't look well-used. Books were stacked on the surface and the mirror was almost entirely covered in photographs and mementoes. She wondered if she would seem rude to peruse the photos, and decided to do so at a later time. She did catch glimpses of Blaise Zabini's smiling face, and a few of Narcissa and Lucius, but not in the same frame.

"Thank you," he said simply. "Actually, my mother mostly decorated it as a gift for my seventeenth birthday. Before that, it was a little less... adult. Quidditch posters and the like," he said smiling, crossing his arms and looking as though he was trying to picture the room through Hermione's eyes.

She nodded, still looking around. He had at least five doors in his bedroom, and Hermione wondered where they led. Bathroom, closet, main doors... maybe a balcony like hers? And another closet? If anyone's wardrobe warranted two closets, it was Draco Malfoy's.

He came up behind her, arms encircling her waist. A kiss was placed on her ear, and he whispered, "Want to see the bed?"

His subtlety knew no bounds. Hermione wondered how Lucius would respond to such an obvious seduction. Instead of saying that, she innocently replied, "I see it. It's very lovely."

Draco chuckled softly, turning her to face him. His hand snaked around to cup the back of her neck, tilting her head up to receive his kiss. His lips moved slowly against hers, as though he was trying to hold himself back. Hermione parted her lips, no longer willing to tease, and he made a low growl in his throat, immediately deepening the kiss.

His arm slipped around her waist to pull her hard against him, and she shivered at feeling his hardness press insistently against her belly.

"I really think you ought to see my bed," he said in a low voice.

She only nodded in agreement, and he led her over, parting the silky curtains and pressing her down onto the bed. The sheets and coverlet were all black silk, and Hermione moaned at the decadence. The silk felt like sin against her skin, and she suddenly wished she was naked.

Draco's gaze upon her made her realize that she wasn't the only one with that wish, his eyes making a mockery of her modesty. He lowered himself over her body, shifting them to the centre of the massive bed. His blond hair fell in a sheet over his cheek, and Hermione dazedly pushed it behind his ear. He turned his mouth to press his lips against her palm, kissing her lightly and flicking his tongue out to taste her hand.

"Tease," she whispered, writhing a little under his heavier body. He seemed to agree with her assessment, because he immediately set to work disrobing her. Only when she remained in her bra and panties did he allow her to return the favour. As she had with Lucius, she undressed him slowly, savouring each inch of skin as it was revealed to her. His skin against the black sheets was so white that he seemed to glow. The light in the room was negligible, only the fire truly breaking through the canopy to cast erotic dancing shadows on the curtains.

Once he was naked, Hermione pulled back a little to admire him. He truly was perfect. The only scar she could see was the one on his arm, a thin slice of pearl against white. She realized it was from the owl that had attacked him in their office before they'd realized their magic was causing problems. The scar was sort of the precursor to everything that had happened, and she felt obliged to pay it homage. She pressed her lips against it, barely feeling where the skin was raised, even when her tongue snaked out to explore.

"Now who's teasing?" Draco tried to drawl, but the thickness in his voice belied his casualness.

In answer, Hermione reached behind her back to unclip her bra. Draco's tongue came out to lick his lips, and she smiled, wondering if he did that consciously. Both Draco and his father had the uncanny ability to make her feel absolutely stunning and desirable. She had never felt more beautiful than in the short time she'd been at the Manor.

"Amazing," Draco whispered, as though hearing her thoughts. He pulled her down onto the bed next to him, his hand lightly cupping her breast before he leaned in to kiss her. As always, his mouth left her reeling, and it was no less true when his kisses moved to her breast instead.

She moaned when he traced her taut nipple with his tongue, nipping it once it had hardened enough to merit such treatment. His hand moved inexorably between her thighs, moving quickly to meet her steadily rising arousal. When his fingers slipped inside her, Hermione cried out, only just then remembering that she should participate more than just making appreciative noises. Something about Draco's sure but not-quite-expert lovemaking made her lose her head.

She lowered her hand to grip his cock, swallowing the groan that her movement elicited. His kisses became more passionate as her hand stroked him. Her thumb flicked over the head of his cock, using the slickness there to ease her movements. Draco gasped against her mouth in appreciation, and Hermione decided that participating was just as good as enjoying.

"Draco, now," she urged, parting her thighs further in invitation. As soon as the words left her mouth, Draco rose up and settled between her knees. Removing his fingers from her brought a soft, disappointed sound that she hadn't quite been able to hold back, but when his serious features melted into a grin, she knew her noises were welcomed.

He leaned over her supine form, bracing himself on his elbows beside her head. She felt caged in, but never more safe.

"Gods, Hermione, it's so hard to hold back, so hard not to just..." he trailed off, pressing kisses against her throat. She could feel the heat of his cock so close to her entrance that she almost cried.

"Why hold back?" she asked, sounding a little desperate. She moved her hips and rejoiced when she felt the head of his cock slide against her. "You know I want you. Want this."

Draco groaned, biting the flesh on her neck and worrying it gently between his teeth. "Want it to last," he confessed, a warm sigh gracing her wet skin and making her shudder.

"Don't want to wait," she insisted, knowing it wouldn't take long at all for her climax to reach her.

Taking her words as truth, Draco aligned himself at her entrance and slowly slid in. He filled her so perfectly, so slowly, so completely, that Hermione's eyes fell closed and her body melted into his touch.

"Fuck," he grunted, grabbing her leg and wrapping it around his waist. She took the hint and encircled his waist with her thighs, locking her ankles and using them to make him move faster. His thrusts were deep and hard, making her cry out with abandon. His kisses were the only thing centring her, and she met his mouth with desperation.

"Draco," she moaned, moving a hand to finger her clit lightly, quickly bringing her orgasm to the surface. When she came, she shouted his name again, clenching down around him as her body tightened and the pulsing tension rocked her.

Draco thrust into her for only a few moments before biting down rather sharply on her shoulder and grinding deeply into her still-throbbing sheath. A long groan escaped him and he exhaled sharply, body pumping lightly as he filled her.

Hermione held him there for as long as he would allow it. But he made to move off of her, and she had to bring her legs down. They felt stiff and slightly cramped, but it was worth it to have Draco so near to her.

"Stay here tonight?" Draco said, pulling Hermione's pliant body into an embrace. He pulled the covers over both of them, not waiting for an answer.

"Draco?" she said softly, curling up into his warm, hard body.

"Hmm?"

"Why don't you let many people see your room? I mean, you must have had friends over... lovers...."

Draco pushed an unruly curl away from Hermione's face, kissing her temple. He sighed quietly and looked up at the top of the canopy.

"I never really thought about it. When my friends came over, they always stayed in one of the guest rooms. During the day, we were always outside or in one of the play rooms. And later... well, anyone I had over generally didn't stay the night."

Hermione pondered this. "Am I the first person to stay, then?"

Draco was quiet for a minute, but he pulled her even tighter against his chest and whispered, "Yes."

Satisfied and slightly surprised, Hermione let the night take her under, safe in the arms of a man who continued to take her breath away.

When Friday finally came, Hermione only knew it because of the lack of work in the in-box on her desk. Her colleagues were fairly adamant about leaving weekends free from work unless a big client made a request for a meeting, and when that happened, it was almost always Hermione or Draco who were trusted to handle the project.

Hermione had been working overtime trying to gain enough recognition for the Werewolf Emancipation Project, taking it upon herself to visit other floors in the Ministry to sign people up for donations and pledges. She sometimes felt as though warnings with her face were plastered all over the lunch rooms, because people tended to hide when she appeared.

Nonetheless, she felt chuffed about a day well spent when she packed up, walking to Draco's office to meet him.

"Is Lucius coming home with us today?" she asked, leaning on the doorjamb and watching her lover pack his briefcase neatly.

"No, he came down about an hour ago to say he'd be about half an hour late. You weren't there. He was *quite* desolate to have been deprived of your presence."

Hermione pouted. She must have been off championing. "But he'll be home before Celeste, Michael and Thello arrive, right?" Thello had had the potions convention to attend, but Michael had owed them to say the speaker he'd been going to see had been rescheduled to lead discussion the next day instead. Hermione was secretly very pleased, because she found Celeste a little intimidating, and she quite liked Thello.

"Of course," Draco assured her, taking her arm and leading her to the elevators. Their relationship wasn't quite public, but most people in their department seemed to accept that there was something between them. "He wouldn't expect us to host without him."

"Doesn't trust us?" she quipped, knowing full well that she *shouldn't* be trusted hosting a dinner. She was epically unsuited for that type of formality, though Lucius seemed to take great pleasure in teaching her more quickly than she could possibly absorb.

"And rightfully so," Draco agreed easily. They had the elevator to themselves, and Draco wasted no time pushing her against the wall and snogging her quickly and efficiently, leaving her mouth swollen, hair dishevelled, and eyes glazed by the time they arrived at the common Floors.

True to his word, Lucius arrived just as Hermione was stepping out of her shower. The door to her bedroom was knocked upon, and Lucius announced himself. She wondered if Lucius or Draco would ever get to the point where they would enter her room without such propriety, but she suspected it was so ingrained that they would never think to stop. She wouldn't mind; though as an only child she was used to having her own room, years at Hogwarts and camping with Harry and Ron during the war had fairly demolished any sense of personal space.

"Come in!" she called, walking to her wardrobe in a short white towel. She had absolutely no idea what to wear.

Lucius and Draco both stepped into her room. Draco immediately lounged on her bed, dressed immaculately in dark green dress robes, a perfectly knotted black and green tie at his throat. His hair was loose, straight in a way her hair could only envy from afar, hanging to his chin in a silver-blond wave.

Lucius came up behind her, enfolding her loosely in his arms. She didn't lean back onto him, knowing that her wet hair might ruin his pristine garb. Lucius was wearing charcoal robes in a style very similar to Draco's. She wondered briefly if they had coordinated purposefully.

"And what are we wearing this evening?" Lucius purred, mouthing her neck with intoxicating deliberation.

"Oh, I don't know," Hermione sighed, frustrated. "You pick."

She went back to the bathroom and performed an unwise drying spell on her hair before twisting it in an angry chignon. After applying only the most basic make-up, she re-entered the room. Draco was gone, but Lucius met her with a dark red cocktail dress. It was wonderfully simple, with a square neck and thin straps, fitted bodice and slightly flaring skirt. She had no idea where it had come from, but that was true for a lot of clothing in her closet.

"Lovely," she said, taking it off the hanger and tossing it onto the bed to wait while she picked out undergarments. After a pointed look to Lucius, who smirked and turned around, Hermione quickly dressed.

Lucius pointed at a pair of black pumps by the bed, and Hermione tried not to grimace. She would never get used to wearing such shoes, and she hated the sound they made as they echoed hatefully throughout the massive manor.

"You look beautiful," Lucius whispered, tenderly cupping her face and kissing her.

"I don't know why I'm nervous," she admitted, smoothing the dress over her slim hips.

"You needn't be," he assured her. "Thello adores you and Celeste and Michael find you charming."

Hermione scoffed. "There is no way Thello adores me."

Lucius shrugged in that annoyingly aristocratic way of his. "Maybe not in the obvious and overbearing way you're used to, but he does. Now, you're ready, yes?"

Draco was greeting the other triad by the time Hermione and Lucius made it downstairs. Her lips were decidedly swollen, and she'd discovered that when Lucius asked if she was ready, it was sometimes just a plot to make her become un-ready with kisses.

Greetings were exchanged, and Thello even gave Hermione a one-armed hug, which she returned two-armedly, smiling at his discomfort. *Slytherins*.

Celeste was coolly polite, kissing the air beside Hermione's cheeks before following Lucius into the dining room where dinner was waiting.

Hermione brought up the rear, wishing she'd had Harry over to set up her gaming system. She made a mental note to ask him to come over in the next couple days. It might also be a good time for him to get used to the idea of her living with the Malfoys.

Draco and Thello began a quiet conversation about potions and the speaker Thello was going to see the following day. Celeste and Lucius were discussing Ministry policy, and Hermione thought about joining in that conversation, but Michael was looking pleasantly disinterested, so she engaged him instead.

"So, what exactly do you do, Michael?" she asked, catching the softest of wincing on Lucius' face, causing her to wonder what she'd said wrong.

But Michael didn't appear to mind for he answered brightly, "I work in an apothecary, actually. In Diagon Alley. It's very small, but we get a lot of repeat business."

"Oh, that's lovely!" Hermione had always had a soft spot for retail. She often wondered if she'd be happier in a job like that, but she knew she was needed in her own. "Very fortuitous, with Thello being a potioneer," she continued.

"Ah, well, the employee discount isn't the greatest, but I have access to ingredients that Thello might have a hard time acquiring on his own."

"Why is that?" Hermione questioned.

"Oh, you know," Michael hedged, quickly glancing over to where Thello sat. Hermione followed his gaze in time to see Thello catch Michael's eye and hold it before turning back to Draco. Hermione looked back to Michael, surprised to see him blushing rather furiously. He smiled softly at Hermione, who grinned in return.

Celeste cleared her throat loudly, and this time, Hermione knew the exact cause of Lucius' wince. Hermione internally crowed, knowing she wasn't the rudest one at this table.

"Oh, Thello," she said in a voice loud enough to stop all conversation. "Not your potions talk again? Isn't the reason you go to these conventions so that you'll have someone to talk to who is actually *interested*?" Hermione knew Celeste was talking about potions on the surface, but she'd spent enough time with Slytherins to see that she was none-too-subtly insinuating that Thello had *nothing* interesting to say.

"Not at all, Celeste," Thello began, his voice quiet and soft, making Celeste seem braying in comparison. "I go *tdisten* to people who actually have something of note to say."

Celeste laughed, a forced and harsh laugh. She opened her mouth to speak, but Michael interrupted.

"Hermione," he said loudly, causing Thello to look over at him, seemingly chagrined, and Celeste to clamp her mouth shut, eyes narrowed. "Last time we were here, Lucius and Draco were telling us about your efforts to eradicate werewolf registration and make the Wolfsbane potion free to all werewolves. That's fascinating work. I know a

werewolf, myself, and he is a very kind and sweet man. He comes into the shop for Wolfsbane ingredients, but he can only afford to have it brewed once every few months. The other transformations he spends locked in a cellar lined with silver. Horrifying, isn't it? The way werewolves are treated? And we call ourselves a modern society." He shook his head sadly, and Hermione was speechless. Thello was looking at his plate, and Celeste was staring at the wall, lips pursed.

Hermione suddenly realized that they must constantly battle like this, with Michael in the middle as the referee.

"Yes," she agreed softly. "Very unfair." A quick look to Thello and back at Michael impressed that she was not just speaking about werewolves. Celeste made a humming noise and very much looked as though she wanted to say something.

Michael and Hermione took up the majority of the conversation, with Michael promising to donate to her foundation, and Thello and Celeste both stating they would as well. Michael even took several of her flyers for the werewolf cause and promised to put them up in his shop. Hermione asked for the name of the werewolf Michael had spoken of, intending to owl him and see if she could do anything to help. The manor had dungeons galore made of impenetrable stone; it would take a lot of convincing, but Hermione might be able to swing it so that he could transform there, rather than scarring and harming himself with the silver cell.

It would never feel like enough, she knew, but it was a start.

Celeste didn't speak much the rest of the night, and when the other triad got up to leave, the sour look on her face had only intensified. Hermione, Draco, and Lucius saw them to the front door, and after saying their goodbyes, Celeste stomped across the lawn to the Apparition point beyond the wards, Thello following only slightly behind Michael.

Hermione watched from the front door as Celeste said something briskly and Disapparated with a muted pop. Her heart broke a little when Thello grabbed Michael and pulled him into a brutal, desperate kiss.

She expected Michael to pull away, but he returned the kiss just as eagerly, gripping Thello's robes as though drowning. Thello pulled away first, caressing the shorter man's cheek with a loving hand. He, too, Disapparated.

Michael stood there, alone, for a few moments. Even from the distance, she could see he was breathing heavily. He raised a hand slowly to his face, and Hermione knew he was touching his lips. And then he was gone as well.

A soft sob left her throat, and before she could even turn, Lucius had her in his arms.

"They are not us," he whispered, wiping a tear away with his thumb and kissing her lips.

"No," she agreed shakily. "But they are *them*. And they deserve better." Even Celeste deserved to have the whole of someone's heart.

Hermione kicked off her shoes and took them in her hand. She said goodnight to Lucius and Draco, who looked disappointed, but let her go.

She didn't feel like enjoying her triad tonight.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

The next week crept by for Hermione. She knew she was letting herself become much too affected by the other triad, but she couldn't seem to help it. It was in her nature to want to *fix* things, and knowing that her friends, for she considered them thus, were unhappy made her utterly miserable.

She remembered her first talk with Lucius on the subject of triads. He'd told her that no two of a triad could have a relationship without the third. So, even if Celeste left their triad, which she was very unlikely to do, Michael and Thello wouldn't be able to stay together and use their magic. Celeste did seem to love Michael, though a cool and distant love that Hermione equated with Narcissa Malfoy. Celeste and Michael were married, and as far as anyone else knew, Thello was just a friend. The injustice of that burned Hermione, making her ever surer of her own triad's decision to be public.

When exactly they would come out as a triad was another issue. Hermione didn't see the point *in hiding*, but people would see what they wanted to see. Hermione had been seen with each Malfoy individually on dates. She'd also been seen with both in similar situations. The public was rather slow to pick up on the nuances of such a relationship. She suspected it was because triads were so rare. Like she had at first, people probably doubted that such a thing was truly possible, outside of sexual encounters, at least.

So, while she had no idea how to help Thello's triad, she did have to work on her own. Her distance over the past week had been wearing on Draco and Lucius. She could tell in the way Lucius kept to his study and Draco wandered around a little aimlessly. Neither pressured her for her time or her attention, but she knew they were struggling to remain stoical.

She was sitting on the outdoor sofa on her patio, wondering what the wizarding world would think of her when they knew the truth. There was a certain amount of pressure in being the Golden Girl of the selfsame Trio, and the public had been outraged when she and Ron had split up. People had immediately assumed it was because she'd begun a relationship with Harry, which had made Ginny ferocious with the press. Harry had seemed surprised by the sudden influx of mail telling him which woman was better for him.

Eventually, people had gotten the idea that Ron's and Hermione's break-up had been amicable, and Harry and Ginny were happy together. So, the idea that she would have to face coming out as the lover of not one, but both Malfoy men, was a little nerve-wracking. She didn't want to be eaten alive. She didn't want to be fodder for gossip. She just wanted to live in this perfect little bubble with Lucius and Draco. It was possible that they could be very happy, never leaving the Manor.

That thought percolated for all of thirty seconds before Hermione dropped her head into her hands.

"Hermione?" a voice called from inside her room. That answered her earlier question about whether Draco or Lucius would ever feel comfortable enough to just come inside her room without formalities.

"Out here!" she called.

Both Malfoys passed through the French doors, looking a little concerned. Since she was curled up in the corner of her sofa, Lucius sat beside her, and Draco took the other end. Lucius put his hand on her knee, rubbing soothingly. And it did soothe her. She was slowly realizing that she didn't have to face things alone anymore. That she had support, if only she was smart enough to use it.

"Nice out here, isn't it?" Draco asked casually, stretching out his legs.

"I like it," Hermione answered softly. She looked out over the grounds, a flash of ginger near the trees making her dart back to see if they'd noticed.

Unfortunately, Lucius had.

"Hermione," he began slowly, not looking at her. "You had a pet, didn't you? A feline?"

"Yes," she said very slowly.

"I don't suppose you left it at that wretched apartment," he continued, still perusing the tree line.

"No..."

"And you didn't leave it with friends, did you?"

"I did not..."

"So, I would not be incorrect to presume that said feline is currently wandering near the forest?"

"You would not."

"Would I also be safe to say that said feline was the culprit in our recent rosebush assassination?"

"Now, I don't know about that," she began, but it was useless. Crookshanks had smelled of roses the other day, and the petals in his fur were pretty much a giveaway. She'd asked the animal not to cause any damage or be seen, but Crookshanks seemed to only listen when it suited him in some capacity. Despite the fact that she'd left abundant food near the back gate, he'd apparently seen fit to make his displeasure at being forced outside known.

"That's a *cat*? I saw that thing the other night! I thought it was a wolverine or something!"

Hermione pouted, crossing her arms over her chest. *Wolverine, indeed.*

"Why don't you let it inside?" Draco continued, looking puzzled.

She looked quickly at Lucius, who was looking at her the same way.

"You wouldn't have minded?" Hermione was beginning to feel pretty foolish. She'd made her poor half Kneazle, who was used to being indoors and indulged, stay outside because she'd just assumed that they wouldn't let a creature such as hers inside their home.

Lucius sighed, leaning back. He looked to Draco, who said, "Hermione, this is your home now. If you're with us, you have to realize it's going to be for a long time. Hopefully forever. Did you expect your cat-thing to remain outdoors forever? Or do you really see this arrangement as being temporary?"

"No!" Hermione cried. But she could easily see how he could think that. "I just... I should have asked. I'm really sorry. I want to be with you, Draco, Lucius. Really. I love it here. Please don't think that I don't want this forever."

"All right, pet," Lucius said. "Your cat can come inside. I'll have a house-elf tend to its food and... other necessities."

The look of extreme displeasure on Lucius' face was almost enough to make her transgression worth it.

She snuggled into Lucius' side, reaching an arm across his middle to take Draco's hand in hers.

Draco squeezed once before pulling on her hand, causing her to sprawl over Lucius' lap and halfway onto Draco's.

"Hey!" she cried, squirming around so she was at least lying on her back. Both Malfoys suddenly looked very predatory, and she wondered for a moment if this was what Crookshanks' dinner felt like, right before...

Draco put a hand behind her head and pulled her up into his kiss. She melted immediately, relaxing into his hold. She felt Lucius' hands on her ankle, her thigh, and kissed Draco harder in reaction. He groaned into her mouth, breaking the kiss to bite at her lower lip. With every bite came a soothing lave of his dedicated tongue, until her mouth was swollen and her mind mush.

But then a hand slid between her thighs, which parted quite without her express permission, and Hermione knew she was truly lost. Having spent time alone with each Malfoy, she knew that, while amazing solitarily, together, they were a force.

"Perhaps we should move this to a location more conducive to such activities," Lucius suggested in a thick voice.

Draco leaned down and whispered conspiratorially, "That's Father's way of saying, 'Get your pretty arse in a bed!'"

Hermione shivered at the words, but a low heat flared when Draco said, "Father." There was just something so deliciously depraved about being intimate with Draco and Lucius at the same time. It was taboo, forbidden, and Hermione wanted it very, very much.

Since the majority of her weight was still on Lucius, he picked her up and let Draco hold open the doors for them. Hermione curled into the embrace, remembering back to the time by the pond where they'd been together for the first time. She wanted that again; she wanted that *always*.

"Hermione?" Draco said in a soft, questioning voice. He looked toward the door and back at her with a raised eyebrow.

She shook her head. "Both," she whispered, biting her lip.

Draco grinned, Lucius growled, and Hermione quivered.

Lucius placed her on her feet near her bed. Suddenly it seemed very small. Both men undressed her, Lucius her top half, Draco her lower. They worked in such perfect tandem that, if Hermione didn't know better, she'd have thought they'd done it before.

But she knew she had the honour of being the first thusly shared.

She set her hands to undressing Lucius, who did nothing to help except lean in and steal kisses. She saw Draco undress himself from the corner of her eye and moaned when his fully erect cock came into view. He moved to recline on the bed, sitting up by the headboard and watching her and Lucius avidly.

When Lucius' pants finally fell to the ground, he pulled her body against his, his arousal pressing into her belly in a way that brooked no denial. It felt scorching hot, and her hand moved of its own accord to encircle it.

Lucius leaned in to kiss her, a kiss that skipped subtlety and dove into devouring. His tongue slid against hers, his hands smoothed over her arse, pressing her even more insistently against him.

Hermione was dazed when Lucius gave her a little push toward the bed. She clambered up and crawled toward Draco, who watched with hooded eyes, a small smirk playing on the corner of his lips.

"You like being on your hands and knees?" he asked in a sensual whisper. He pulled her in for a kiss without waiting for an answer, though she was sure he would have like hers if she'd given it.

Her hand unerringly found his cock, and she felt quite victorious at the noise her steady stroke elicited.

She felt the bed shift, and she moved between Draco's widespread legs to accommodate Lucius behind her. She knew what she wanted.

Lucius' hands caressed all over the stretch of her bare back, fingertips lingering over her bottom and moving down her thighs. Behind every touch trailed fire.

Then, without warning, Lucius grabbed Hermione's hips and yanked her backward. She was torn off Draco and forced to brace her hands on either side of his hips to avoid falling face first onto his cock. As it was, it left her in a perfect position to do what she desired.

Lucius' hands continued to explore her body, stopping every few moments to dip into her wetness and linger there, while she moaned in anticipation.

Hermione bent her head and took Draco deep into her mouth, learning his length the way she'd learned his father's. She kissed the rounded tip, licking the pre-come off her lips slowly, relishing the salty taste. She knew Draco was watching her every move, and that flooded her body with more heat than she could bear.

As Lucius' fingers slipped into her, Hermione sucked on Draco's straining cock. His hand was lightly resting on the back of her neck, his other one clenching the bedclothes. Triumph was only her secondary emotion as Lucius continued to work his magic on her throbbing pussy.

When Hermione broke her suction to lick teasingly around the head of Draco's cock, he gasped and said, "Father!"

Hermione inhaled sharply, feeling her fingertips go numb with that first sign that her orgasm was imminent. Her pussy was clenching, desperate to be filled, and only a second after Draco's exclamation, Lucius' thick cock impaled her.

"Don't think I can last," Draco added, apparently having said that forbidden word in an effort to get Lucius to hurry before he came.

It still made Hermione think about what it might be like to hear Draco cry out that word in different circumstances.

Hermione backed off Draco's cock, resorting to teasing. She wanted him and Lucius to come at the same time, filling her together....

"Hermione, you feel so good," Lucius moaned, his fingers digging into her hips with every inward thrust. His cock stretched her so deliciously that Hermione was moaning wantonly, which made Draco tense as the vibrations assaulted his cock.

Draco's hand slipped under her chest, seeking out a nipple and pinching the tightened nub. Only a moment later, making her think yet again that they had some sort of communication that she couldn't begin to fathom, Lucius began to lightly press her clit. The dual-assault brought stars to her eyes, especially when, every few moments, a thrust and a press and a pinch would all coincide to turn her completely inside out.

"Gods," she whimpered, breaking contact with Draco to speak. She licked a long line from his base to tip, using the moisture to stroke him a little easier, fingers tightening over the vein on the underside. "Need to come," she finished, her words nearly drowned by Draco's hearty moan.

Lucius began to move faster inside her, his finger rubbing her clit with perfect precision. When his pounding movements became frenzied, Hermione began to suck on Draco in earnest, her own body responded to the additional stimulus by racing toward climax.

Draco cried out first, hand tightening on her neck without holding her there, and Hermione's mouth was flooded with his essence. She swallowed eagerly, the taste somehow familiar, as he fucked her mouth until he had nothing left to give.

She rested her head on Draco's sweaty thigh, letting Lucius take her to where she needed to be. Only a few more moments of merciless pounding passed before she felt her blood begin to roil in waves. She knew she wanted to scream out names, but that required more coherency than she was capable of. A hoarse scream was enough, and it was echoed seconds later by Lucius, louder than she'd heard him before. He plunged into her one final time and stiffened, his shout fading to a drawn-out groan as he rocked into her until he, too, had nothing left.

"Holy fuck," Draco drawled, his language a sure sign of his ineloquence.

"Indeed," Hermione said in a perfect imitation of Lucius' polished tones. She heard his teeth click behind her, and she knew he'd been about to say just that.

"Quite," he said instead, releasing her hips and laying on his back beside her.

Draco moved from beneath her head, stretching out of her other side. Despite the night air flowing in through the open patio doors and the distinct lack of coverings on her and her lovers, no one felt the need to draw the blankets up.

Lucius turned onto his stomach, facing Hermione. He rose up on his elbow to give her a lingering kiss, whispering, "Perfect," in her ear. His hand smoothed over her abdomen and rested there, thumb lightly caressing.

Draco was more verbal, explaining in explicit detail how much he'd enjoyed himself, and how he intended to have his father's role the next time. Hermione listened with the sardonic patience she'd learned to deal with Draco's different moods. Finally, he, too, kissed her solidly on her swollen mouth before pulling back and planting a kiss on the tip of her nose.

Another hand stretched across her stomach. The last thing she was aware of before blissful sleep stole her was two pale, flawless, aristocratic hands linking together, fingers interlocking on top of her belly. She smiled.

"Harry!" Hermione shouted into the Floo, hoping to goodness her friend was home. It was very rare that both of her men were gone while she remained at the Manor, and she intended to make very good use of her time.

"Mione? What's up?" came Harry's reply, sounding suspiciously sleepy.

"You weren't in bed, were you?" she admonished, taking in his bedraggled appearance. But that was no real clue; Harry always looked a little dishevelled.

"Yeah, but I'm up now. Is everything okay? Do you need to make a fast exit? Do I need to find you an alibi?"

Hermione chuckled. "No, Harry. I want you to come over for a bit."

Harry looked as if she'd asked him to, for fun, AK an orphanage. "Um, now's not a good..." he hedged.

"Harry!" she said, exasperated. "They're not here. I want you to set up the television and my other stuff. They won't be back for hours. Draco's at a meeting and Lucius is stuck at work. Trust me."

"Are you sure they won't come back? I love you, but I don't want to get thrown in the dungeons for besmirching your honour or something."

Secretly, Hermione wondered if there was anything left to besmirch. Aloud, she said, "I'm sure. And they are perfectly harmless. Now, come through!"

Mumbling something about muzzles and leashes, the latter of which gave her very interesting visuals, Harry came through the Floo. Hermione caught him before he fell flat on his arse, and he thanked her sheepishly.

"Come on," she said after she'd hugged him. "I have everything in my room."

Harry followed her through the maze of corridors to her room, which he entered behind her.

"Bloody hell, Hermione. This room is bigger than your apartment!"

"My *old* apartment," she corrected. Better get him used to the permanence of her situation.

"Yeah," he said agreeably. "I didn't think..."

"What?" she prompted. Again, he looked sheepish, and Hermione knew.

"You thought what? That they'd have me staying in some tiny, out-of-the-way guest room with no space for my things? Or that it would be decorated in red velvet and black leather, with whips and chains? Or maybe you thought we'd all share a bedroom with a great, round, porno bed with tassels!"

She was panting at the end of her outburst, and Harry looked more impressed than chastened. Harrumphing, she walked over to the bureau where her electronics were still in a box. Restoring them to their normal size, Hermione waved Harry over.

"I wasn't thinking what you thought I was," Harry started, and then he grinned. "Though *now* I am!"

"Yeah, me, too," she muttered. Especially the chains bit. Yikes.

Harry's eyes widened.

"Oh, for Merlin's...yes, Harry, we have sex. Yes, we have it together. Yes, it's bloody *amazing*! Anything else, or can we be adults now?"

Harry was nodding dazedly, his eyes inexorably moving toward her bed. He gulped before visibly shaking himself. Turning back to her, he said, "Okay, I'm good."

And he was. Only light-hearted banter followed, punctuated occasionally with Harry's frustrated cussing at the difficulties of spelling a television to work within a place as heavily warded as Malfoy Manor. But if anyone could do it, it was Harry.

Eventually, he had it all set up. He even charmed the armoire in her sitting area to contain the television behind a Disillusionment spell that would only deactivate if she pressed an appropriate button on the remote control. When pressed, the armoire's doors would open, the television appear, and everything would be ready for her viewing pleasure.

The PlayStation took a little more finesse, but Hermione thought that might be because Harry kept wanting to try out a new game she'd picked up. She denied him, though, until the job was finished.

Lastly, her beloved stereo system and surround sound were installed. The former was fitted into the armoire as well, on a lower shelf, and the latter was magically placed at strategic points in her room, invisible to the eye but incredibly powerful. The subwoofer was installed directly by her bed, so that if she was watching a movie while lying there, the vibrations would make it seem as though the action was happening to her.

Harry was, in short, a genius.

"You could do this for a living," she marvelled, lying on the bed across the room while Harry battled zombies, each explosion sending an answering shockwave through her body.

"Maybe one day," Harry said, groaning as a zombie got a little too friendly. "When I burn out as an Auror."

"Harry! Don't you like what you're doing anymore?"

He shrugged, a mockery of nonchalance that she'd learned many years ago. "It's okay, for now. I just thought I'd be helping more, you know? Less drudgery, less paperwork."

Hermione knew exactly what he meant and told him so. "At the end of the day, only a tiny fraction of what I do actually does any good." She sighed. She hated being pessimistic about her job, but it was hard not to be.

"But at least people are grateful for your help. You know, most of the time when I arrest someone for domestic assault, the charges are dropped a week later and the happy couple are back together."

"Oh, Harry," she said softly, coming to sit on the floor beside him.

"Golf?" he offered, obviously trying to lighten the suddenly heavy mood.

"I get to be player one, though!" she cried, snatching his controller.

"It's your house!" he laughed agreeably, switching out the discs. Then he paused for a moment. When he settled back down next to her, he looked at her, really looked. "It is, isn't it? This is your home now. Your life."

Hermione nodded. "This is it, Harry. And I'm happy."

He took a deep breath. "Then I'm happy," he declared.

She attacked him with a hug, happier than she expected to be by his easy (comparatively) acceptance. All the pressure and anxiety she'd felt the last week about coming out as a triad settled into a faraway thought. Of course everything was going to be fine. She had Lucius and Draco, Harry and eventually Ron, and everyone else's opinions weren't worth worrying over.

Harry, blushing, gestured toward her controller, indicating that she had the power to begin the game. Using said power, she promptly annihilated Harry's arse at golf, though he was, admittedly, very good-natured about it.

Almost two hours later, Hermione and Harry both started at the knock on her door. Though huge and bearing thick walls, there was no way the noise of their game, nor of their laughter, had not reverberated throughout the house. Harry looked at Hermione, his eyes bulging. Hermione laughed at his horror, rising to open the door.

"Hermione!" he hissed as she went to open it.

"What?" she whispered back. "They're going to find out eventually! I don't think they'll be mad, Harry."

"What am I to find out?" an arch voice called from the other side of the door.

With a reassuring smile at Harry, who sat frozen with the controller in hand almost like a wand, she opened the door. Draco strode through, barely looking at her.

His mouth was open as if he wanted to say something, but then he frowned. He took in Harry, sitting on the floor, apparently having decided that glaring at Draco was the best way to deal with the situation. Then he looked at the television screen, where a computerized golfer, complete with plaid clam-diggers, was frozen in mid-swing. His gaze settled on the other remote on the floor. Walking further into the room, Draco nudged the innocent controller with his foot. Lastly, he looked at Hermione, clearly needing answers.

"It's a television. And a game console. And a stereo. You watch... things... on the TV... or play games. And you can listen to music."

"It's Muggle stuff, right?" Draco asked, crossing the floor to finally greet his lover. He leaned in for a slow kiss, moaning for his audience before Hermione pushed him away, laughing. Harry flushed, eyes on the floor.

"Yes," she answered his assertion primly, raising her chin stubbornly.

He held his hands up, palms facing her. "Only asking! I've never seen it better. Hey, Potter. So, who's that?" he asked, indicating the golfer.

"That's Hermione," Harry answered helpfully after returning Draco's half-hearted greeting. Draco looked at Harry as if to say that was the stupidest thing he'd ever heard, raising an eyebrow to add that coming from Harry, that was saying a lot.

"It's my player. I press buttons and make the player... play. Try it!"

Another hour later, Harry was begging off, citing a home life of some sort. Draco walked him to the Floo, the two deep in conversation about the Quidditch video game they were going to invent, with real people as the players, starring themselves as the Seekers, of course.

Hermione was graciously offered a face in the audience, which Draco amended to include a "Muggle pom-pom lady outfit." Hermione didn't want to know where he'd seen that. Harry looked a little sceptical as well.

After Harry left, Draco helped her clean up the mess the three of them had made of wires and refreshments and game boxes.

She was so grateful that he'd been human to Harry that she rewarded him vigorously while the bed vibrated away to Muggle music.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Now that Lucius and Draco had spoken to Hermione about Crookshanks and how the Manor was really her home now, Hermione found herself *feeling* much more at home.

Before, she tended to spend most of her time in her room, unless she was with Lucius or Draco. She avoided being in any of the main rooms alone, because it had felt as though she wasn't really welcome. Not that the Malfoys had made her feel that way, not at all. But she'd never been in a house so large or so... cold, and it was hard not to feel like a guest.

Now that it had been made clear that Malfoy Manor was her home, she felt much better wandering around, sitting alone in the larger rooms, using the library, and exploring the grounds. She got to know her house a little better.

It made her nervous for the future, when she would have children here. They would certainly get lost; there would be no avoiding it. She wondered if there was some sort of master plan for the house, like a Marauder's Map.

Which had her wondering if that map had been so difficult to make in the first place. Lupin had been the brains behind it, from what she'd heard, and he'd called her the smartest witch of her age... so that meant that it was likely she could replicate the map, only for the Manor instead.

It wasn't that she needed to know where the men were at all times, in fact, she usually did know. But it might be a wise investment for the future.

Thinking about having children always brought a smile to her face. She knew she wasn't ready now, not by far, but she wanted to have a large family. She was sure Draco, as another only child, would agree with her, and Lucius seemed to want more children as well.

Would it matter that she might not know who the fathers were? Was it important? Hermione had the feeling the eyes would tell. Draco's were varied grey, with streaks of darker and lighter shading. Lucius' were solid grey throughout.

Now, if the children happened to have her light brown eyes, there might not be any way of knowing. Draco's face was a little narrower; Lucius a little taller and broader, Draco's lips slightly thinner, and the arches of Draco's feet were higher.

But none of those were things that would become evident for years, if at all.

It didn't matter to her, she knew. She also had the feeling Lucius wouldn't mind the uncertainty. After all, he already had his heir. But it was more than that. Lucius just seemed genuinely happy these days, in a way of which she never would have believed him capable. She'd seen him smile more in the days since she'd moved in than in

her entire life, even only counting his smiles at work.

Draco might mind not knowing if his children were his own. She had nothing to back up her gut feeling, it was just an instinct. But this was all something they could contend with when it became an issue. Right now, there was nothing to do but enjoy the calm passion of her new life.

Until she got fired from work, that is.

The owl came just as she was getting dressed to go in. Draco had already left, having a meeting on his schedule.

Ms. Granger,

It has come to our attention that you and another employee of the Ministry of Magic have become romantically involved. As you well know, this type of behaviour between employees within the same department is strictly prohibited.

Upon further investigation, it has become clear that you and Mr. Draco Malfoy have engaged in inappropriate conduct within your office. We simply cannot allow you to carry on thusly whilst on the Ministry payroll.

Please see Section 14, subsection T, paragraph 19 for more information on the matter.

Your final paycheque will be awarded only when time is docked for your non-professional activities.

Have a good day.

Sincerely,

Tiresius Crackelhopper

Just as the owl note slipped through her numb fingers, Hermione heard the Floo activate. She went back into her room and quietly closed the door.

She had so loved that job.

"Hermione!" That was Draco. He must have been fired as well. "Where are you?"

She didn't answer. She could hear him running up the stairs. Any minute, he'd be at her door. How could she have been so stupid? She'd ~~known~~ all the offices were monitored, but she'd still let Draco kiss her there, and often. And she'd kissed him in his office, as well.

And Lucius. Hermione gasped. Lucius had been in her office many times, in ways that were very obviously not work-related.

But he wasn't in her department, she reminded herself; her letter clearly stated only in-office dating was prohibited. Well, at least Lucius still had his job.

Draco burst in through the door, surprising Hermione. She'd forgotten that he no longer knocked.

"You got one, too," he noted, staring at the letter at her feet.

She nodded mutely.

He crossed the floor, taking her in his arms. "I'm so sorry, love, so sorry. I never would have..."

A sob choked Hermione, cutting him off. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her face into his chest. His robes were rough, so she pushed them off. Draco slipped out of them, holding her against his cashmere sweater instead. Her tears felt foreign.

All the work she'd been doing, all the campaigning, all the fundraising... no one knew the charities like she did. Her co-workers were going to fuck it all up, and people were going to *suffer*, and it was all her fault.

"Shh," Draco whispered, stroking her hair. "We'll get something else, something better. I promise. You were wasted there, anyway, Hermione. You know that."

She shook her head violently. She'd never felt more necessary than she had working there.

"I'm sorry, Draco," she said, sniffing loudly. A white handkerchief was pressed into her hand, and she viciously swiped her tears away.

"It's okay, love. I didn't really like it there, you know. Too much bureaucracy."

"But we didn't even get a *warning*," she whimpered.

Draco pulled her away slightly. "What would a warning have done? They'd have told us to stop seeing one another!"

It was true. They would have done exactly that, and then Draco and Hermione would have been forced to either break up, or resign. Resignation from the Ministry meant being blacklisted, and not just from there. Harry had told her about a woman who'd quit the Auror corps without notice, and now she couldn't even get a job as a nanny.

But now that she thought about it, a warning was protocol.... They shouldn't have been fired.

"Draco, we were wrongfully dismissed! They have to take us back! They were supposed to give us a warning! We'll just have to find the person who signed the dismissals and explain we never got our warnings!"

"I signed the papers," Lucius said, stepping into the room.

"What?" she gasped, looking from him to Draco, who didn't seem surprised.

"I'm so sorry, pet. I didn't have a choice. If you'd gotten the warning, you'd have been given an ultimatum. I didn't want that to happen."

Hermione stepped away from Draco, closing in on Lucius. "Why? Did you think I would choose my job over Draco? Over you?"

"No!" Lucius protested vehemently. "The opposite. I knew you'd choose Draco, and then you would have had to resign. A forced resignation isn't the same as being fired. Your reputation would have been ruined. The Ministry would have made public the reason behind your leaving. No one would hire either of you for fear of the Ministry's wrath. The Board wanted to give you both warnings, but I stepped in. I said you should be fired. They took me at my word and let you both go."

"When did you know?" Draco asked.

"Only this morning, first thing. I had to sign the papers before I could start my own work. Trying to delay did not work."

"Father... how did you convince them to let you? It would have benefitted them more to force the ultimatum, for surely they'd never have thought we'd choose one another."

They would have thought it was simply a dalliance."

"Draco...."

"What did you say?" Draco demanded, taking Hermione in his arms. Hermione was watching Lucius intently. She didn't know what Draco was getting at, but now she knew Lucius was hiding something.

"I said... I said that if they didn't fire Hermione... then I would quit."

"And they can't afford to lose you, now, can they?" Draco shook his head. "But that isn't all, is it, Father? That wouldn't be enough to convince them."

Lucius turned away. "Draco, I did what I had to for the sake of both of your reputations."

"Mudblood?"

Hermione gasped, pulling away from Draco. But he wasn't looking at her.

"And worse," Lucius said in a confirming voice. He wouldn't look at either of them.

Hermione suddenly felt sick. Lucius had... called her those things to the Board of Directors to get his way.

"Once we were told who was involved, it was *expected* of me," Lucius spat.

"Not by me," Draco said cuttingly. Lucius winced.

"But Lucius... they said they were going to go over the monitoring charms to dock my pay for time wasted. They'll see you *They'll see us!*" Hermione's voice was bordering on hysterical. Lucius' actions, while hated, had been done with the best intentions. But he'd dug his own grave.

Lucius paled. Draco laughed mirthlessly. "The man who thinks of everything missed such an important point? Father, you *know* they go over the monitors when they fire people, especially people as high-profile as Hermione."

"Oh, Lucius," Hermione whispered. She hated to think of the things he must have said about her, but it had been an act, an attempt to save her and Draco from being blackballed. The more important thing was that Lucius had said those things and then demanded that Hermione be fired. It would look very suspicious, once the board saw them together, kissing and such, in her office.

"You know what they'll do," Draco said, almost casually, but Hermione knew him well enough to hear the beginnings of panic in his voice.

"What?" she asked quietly, almost not wanting to know the answer.

Draco looked pointedly at Lucius, who cleared his throat and met her eyes for the first time.

"They're going to release it to the press. They may not be able to ruin you and Draco because technically they fired you, but they can ruin you in other ways. They'll release the magical feed of you and Draco, and of you and I. It's the only way they'll be able to explain firing two such high-profile employees, and it will put me in my place as well. They will not take kindly to my deception. This punishes all of us."

"Oh, my gods," Hermione whispered. "Everyone's going to think I'm a whore... cheating on you both... they won't understand!"

Lucius strode quickly toward her, but Draco stopped him with a hand. She heard them whispering, but she was too busy thinking about how to fix this.

"Hermione, the things I said... they made me ill. I haven't thought anything like that since before our relationship began, I promise you. I was only trying to..."

"I know," she said. She opened her arms to both of them, needing their strength, as hers seemed to be faltering. Lucius enveloped her wholly, and Draco stepped behind her and held her. Now she felt safe. Now she felt strong.

"I know you both say it doesn't matter what the public thinks, but this is worse. People will never believe that you both knew. I'll be the slag, and you'll both be cuckolds."

Lucius and Draco offered no reassurance but that of their arms, and Hermione was glad. Empty platitudes would only have hurt her more at this point.

"There is something we can do," Draco said slowly. She felt Lucius nodding, and she looked up to catch the end of a silent conversation going on over her shoulder.

"We can go public...now. Today," Lucius said.

Both men pulled away, Draco coming around so she could see them both. Their faces were set with certainty, and she knew they would go along with whatever choice she made.

Only, there didn't really seem to be a choice. They were going to have to come out sooner or later, and if they didn't do it today, their reputations would be on the line. Revealing their triad would cause ripples, certainly, but coming out after the public already believed her to be cheating with both men would just seem like damage control.

"I want to do it," she said firmly. Lucius nodded, his eyes revealing his approval of her decision.

"Are you absolutely certain?" Draco asked, taking her hand.

"It's the only way to stop all this. We won't get our jobs back, but at least the truth will be known."

"All right, then. Father, what do we do?"

"I'll write a few owls," Lucius responded, turning to leave. "Be ready by seven this evening. I want this in the morning paper. The Ministry won't have had time to go through all the feeds by then. Hermione, is there anyone you want to be here for the press release?"

Hermione didn't have to think long. "Harry and Ron," she said promptly. "I'll owl them myself."

"Good. Having Aurors there will increase security, and having Potter will increase credibility. Good thinking."

Hermione didn't bother telling him she didn't want her friends there for practical purposes, but for support. She simply nodded and went to write her letter.

"Draco? Anyone you think should be there?"

"No one I wouldn't mind finding out about it in the paper," Draco declined. "But what about... Mother?"

Hermione paused in her letter, but tried to look as though she hadn't.

"Draco... even if we send her an owl now, it won't get there before the paper is out. You know the *Prophet* is international. She'll be reading about it while our owl is still in

the air. That's if she's even in the same place. You haven't gotten a letter from her in..."

"I know," Draco said. "I'll write her anyway. That way, we can at least explain that time was of the essence."

Lucius nodded, leaving the room.

"Parchment?" Hermione offered, handing him some, as well as a quill.

They wrote silently and tied the missives to the same owl at Hermione's insistence. The owl was told to see Harry first before being released into the sky.

"Are you okay with this?" Draco asked, brushing his fingers over her bottom lip.

"I think so," she answered honestly. "It's come faster than I'd anticipated, but I don't really mind. In a way, I'm glad. I'm not happy I've lost my job, but after today, I won't have to think about hiding the truth anymore. Everyone will know, and sure, some will hate us, but most won't even care after a while."

Draco and Hermione sat on the loveseat in Lucius' study while he furiously jotted owl after owl. The poor creatures were flying in and out of the window in a steady stream, with Draco flinching whenever they flew about the room. He harboured a resentment for owls, after having been attacked by one, thanks to his disrupted magic. She tried not to laugh, but upon catching Lucius' eye after Draco threw up his hands and cried that the damn things were *trying* to drive him mad, she couldn't help a giggle. Lucius looked relieved to see her smile, and even Draco settled down a little, leaning back and pulling her on top of him.

"Think we have time?" he asked in a low voice, pushing her hair behind her ear.

"No," Lucius answered for her, glowering at Draco as another owl dropped a response onto his overloaded desk.

She shook her head, smiling at Draco's pout.

Hermione cheered to see Hedwig fly in the open window, bypassing the desk to come straight to Hermione. Draco jerked and stiffened beside her, but she ignored him, untying the response and directing Hedwig toward the basket of owl treats. Hedwig was dallying, which meant Harry wanted an answer back.

Hermione,

Are you sure about this? This isn't something you can take back. I know that you are doing what's right for you and your magic, and I can respect that. I just want to make sure you know what you're doing. I can't see you hurt.

If you do decide to go through with it, I will be there. I'll come early to secure the area. I've asked a couple mates from work to come with.

Mione, Ron isn't coming. After that day, when you told us, he's been acting strange. He's been researching mind control spells, long term ones. I tried to explain that we'd have been able to detect any spells (hell, we're trained to...he knows that!) but he won't listen. I'm really sorry. I'm still trying to talk to him.

See you at six.

Harry

"Harry will be here," she announced, folding the missive and pocketing it. She wrote a quick affirmation and gave it to Hedwig, who took off. "He's bringing Auror friends." She'd think about Ron later.

"Not Weasley?" Lucius asked distractedly, signing something with a flourish.

"He thinks we've got her under Imperius," Draco said, having read along with her.

Lucius raised an eyebrow. "Well, that's not very original," he drawled, winking at Hermione.

Hermione felt a little queasy at the reference to Lucius and many other Death Eaters making that claim after the first fall of Voldemort. She grimaced, but noticed that Lucius had paled. He started to shake his head, but Hermione smiled weakly. It didn't matter.

After allowing the Malfoys to dress her in a smart, cream-coloured pencil skirt and emerald silk blouse, she waited for Harry. Draco and Lucius would take twice as long to get ready.

When Harry arrived, she hugged him. Quickly explaining what had forced her hand, she took Harry around the grounds. He sent his friends around to secure key areas and to guard the perimeter, with instructions to one exceptionally large man to stay close and watch only Hermione, which the man appeared to take very seriously.

She showed Harry where everyone would arrive, and where the announcement would take place. A small platform and podium had been set up already, stunning Hermione with Lucius' efficacy.

"And you're *sure*?" he confirmed, searching her face.

"Yes, Harry. Completely. This is what I want." They both knew she was talking about more than the press release.

"Okay. Go inside. I'll come get you all when everyone is here and settled."

Hermione kissed him on the cheek and went back in.

She soon began to hear crack after crack of Apparition, signalling the arrival of the reporters, friends, associates, and anyone else Lucius had deigned to invite.

Lucius came down first, wearing dark grey robes with emerald lining, deliberately matching Hermione's top. His public smile was in place already. She wrinkled her nose at him, and immediately his smile turned genuine.

"It's going to be fine, Hermione," he promised, kissing her softly.

"Yes, I think so," she agreed.

Draco came running down the stairs wearing light grey robes not unlike Lucius', but he slowed to a more reserved stride when he saw Lucius and Hermione standing by the entrance. He came up to them both and pulled Hermione into a full-body hug.

"I'm glad we're doing this," he confessed into her hair.

She kissed him in response, not quite able to answer in kind. Harry opened the front door, nodded to Lucius and Draco, and smiled at Hermione. "Show time." He quickly left.

"Should we go?" Draco wasn't letting her break the embrace.

"I love you," Draco said, his face hidden in her neck. Hermione's eyes widened in shock, and she tried to pull back to see his face, but he held tight. Lucius' face was surprised and almost sad, though he was smiling softly.

Draco finally straightened, looking her in the eye. "I do. I love you."

Time stretched between all of them. Hermione wanted to say it, she really did. But something about the timing felt so wrong.

Lucius saved her. "You have your mother's dramatic timing," he said, that strange smile turning back into his public smile. "We have to go."

Draco nodded, looking at Hermione. He looked uncertain, but not sorry. A wide grin broke out on his face, and he strode to the door.

Hermione quickly followed, feeling dazed. Lucius brought up the rear, his steadying presence calming her.

Draco and Hermione ascended the platform first. Lucius held back, talking to Harry. They surveyed the crowd. Hermione didn't recognize many people at all. She had no idea what they all were doing here. She did wave to Luna Lovegood, a representative of the Quibbler, Hermione assumed. She also saw Rita Skeeter, who just wouldn't retire, no matter how many readers abhorred her, Hermione vehemently included.

Lucius came to stand between Hermione and Draco, stepping up to the podium. As per his instructions and her desires, he was going to do most of the talking.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming on such short notice. We have some news to share, good news, we like to think."

Skeeter immediately interrupted. "An engagement? Oh, how nice!" she crowed, quill flying of its own accord.

Lucius carried on as if she hadn't spoken. "As you may know, triad relationships are very rare in the wizarding world, but very, very powerful." As he spoke, whispers broke out. Skeeter interjected again, but Lucius smoothly raised his voice and continued. "We three...my son, Draco Malfoy, the lovely Ms. Hermione Granger, and myself...are lucky enough to have been chosen by our magic to have such a relationship."

Hermione knew that telling the public their magic had chosen alleviated some of the responsibility from them, making them look like victims of happenstance.

"Now, we would like to confirm that our relationship is completely consensual *on everyone's* behalf. We are very happy and would very much like to live our lives with the decency afforded any deserving person."

Someone from the back of the small crowd pushed his way to the front, causing a disturbance and making other people cry out. Harry was immediately in the fray, hauling out the small form. The man protested at being manhandled until he saw it was Harry Potter doing the handling. He immediately stilled, smiling beatifically at the saviour. Harry rolled his eyes, making Hermione smile. The fuss had taken eyes off her, and for that, she was grateful.

Everyone seemed to have noticed Harry for the first time, and silence reigned.

However, one person was not distracted. "Miss Granger!" came the oily voice of Rita Skeeter, never one to have learned a valuable lesson. "However do you keep two such handsome and... *virile* men satisfied?"

Hermione shook her head. A voice in the crowd called out for Skeeter to be decent, and Lucius snapped, "We will not answer such improper questions, Ms. Skeeter. Please, contain yourself and prove to your public that you can be objective and considerate."

A flash of gold teeth in an unpleasant smile told Hermione that Skeeter wasn't quite through, and she would have been right, but Harry had allowed the smaller man back into the crowd and was now pulling Skeeter out.

Hermione heard Lucius answering other more general questions ("How did you know?" "What are your plans for the future?" "How will you use your new power?" There was one question about the nature of Lucius and Draco's involvement with one another, which Draco deftly confirmed as being strictly father and son, and Luna asked if they believed a triad relationship could help stave off Marmenhammer infestations, at which Lucius stared blankly), but Hermione watched Harry verbally berate Skeeter. Looking wholly unapologetic, the vile woman spun on a heel, walked briskly to the designated Apparition point, turned to give Hermione a smile that promised nasty things, and disappeared.

Lucius ended the session when the questions became suggestive in nature and no one appeared to have any further questions that weren't about sex.

Draco winked lasciviously at the crowd, immediately setting off an array of flashbulbs, and Hermione was thrilled that she hadn't had to speak once. Lucius had handled them flawlessly.

Lucius held his hand out for Hermione to take, assisting her off the foot-high platform. A voice called her name, and she automatically turned. It was the small man who'd caused the fuss.

"Miss Granger, you seem like such *nice* girl," he began, and Draco stepped protectively close to her. "Why couldn't you settle down with a nice boy? Why, if it's power you like, there isn't any so powerful as Harry Potter...and everyone knows you used to date!"

The crowd, which had been turning away, angled back to hear her response. A quick look to Harry showed he was blushing furiously but willing to step in should she need it.

"Harry and I have never dated, Mr...?" she began. She would have done the same even if she'd known his name. Lucius had told her a dismissive attitude toward the press was the best way to appear aloof.

"Triptenhoof," the small man said, nodding kindly. "Franklin Triptenhoof."

"Mr. Triptenhoof," she said in a low voice. Speaking quietly forced people to listen, and if you did it right, they wouldn't interrupt. That was Draco. "Harry is in a happy relationship with Ginevra Weasley, as you well know, or should, considering your occupation. Now, as to your other... accusation..." she paused, taking in the furious scribbling of the other reporters, and the pride practically rolling off Draco and Lucius. "...It is also *quite* unfounded. I am not in this relationship for the power. Draco, Lucius, and I are very happy together. I would still be here if my power suffered instead of flourished. This is something I want very much."

The three walked back toward the Manor, Draco's hand squeezing hers, and Lucius' hand on the small of her back, reassuring her.

This is something I want very much.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione and Lucius were enjoying a quiet morning, drinking tea and talking about places they'd travelled, neither mentioning the fact that they were both, rather obviously, awaiting the arrival of the morning owls with their newspapers. Lucius had subscriptions to the *Daily Prophet*, several business, economic, and Ministry-centred newsletters, while Hermione had had her subscriptions...which consisted of the *Free News*, a non-profit, left-wing paper that lacked the dissembling the *Prophet* revelled in, and *Wizarding World Today*, a reliable news source with competent journalists...both rerouted to the Manor.

Though neither was saying anything, the quick and unsubtle glances toward the open dining room window was evidence enough of their anxiety.

Draco was glorying in the upside of being unemployed, sleeping in greedily, barely even stirring when both Lucius and Hermione had left his bed.

Hermione took a thoughtful sip of her tea, sweet and strong and made perfectly for her by Lucius. The night before had been an adventure, to say the least. True to Draco's promise the last time they'd made love, the men had switched positions, with Draco taking her hard and fast while Lucius filled her mouth. Both men were as intent on her pleasure as they were on their own, if not more so, and Hermione had gone to sleep extremely satisfied.

But more than that, there had been a certain freedom to their lovemaking. Before yesterday and the press release, their lives together had been clandestine, and Hermione hadn't even been fully aware of the discomfort that secrecy had been causing her. She felt as though a weight had been lifted; though, while awaiting the news, that weight might have redistributed itself.

She knew Draco felt the same way as she did the night before...weightless, free. Hermione had been on the edge of sleep when she'd heard him repeat those three words he'd first said before they'd ventured into the fray, so to speak.

Yesterday had been too taxing for Draco's confession of love to truly settle into her psyche, but this morning she'd thought of nothing else, between sporadic flashes of panic when she thought of what the reporters, and Rita Skeeter specifically, would have to say about her.

For the Malfoys were, as ever, made of Teflon, and nothing bad said could be made to stick. Not with all the money and power behind their name. People were still afraid of their influence and of getting into their bad graces, but with Hermione, the press had nothing to lose. They could easily skin her alive and be no worse for the wear themselves. It was true that now, as an official member of the Malfoy household, people might be persuaded to hold their tongues a little in deference to the notorious name, but Skeeter would doubtlessly cast aside such considerations. There was no love lost between them, and Hermione's inquiry, through Harry, into the Ministry's Animagus Registration had revealed that Hermione had nothing left with which to "bargain." Skeeter was registered, and Hermione found herself at the mercy of a tongue so sharp, Hermione suspected she might need goggles to read the morning paper.

"Don't be so nervous, pet," Lucius said softly, reaching across the table and taking her hand. Her fingers curled around his gratefully. Hermione was thankful to be Muggle-born, as she had no relatives who would be disturbed or alarmed at the news.

"I just hate that it has to be like this," she said. A slight tug on her hand made her come around the overlarge table and sit next to Lucius. He usually liked for them to employ decorum at the dining table, but he seemed to be making an exception for her anxiety. Hermione went on, "Don't you ever just wish that no one knew our names...that no one *cares*? And *why* do they care? Why do they act as though I owe them something?"

Lucius put a steadying arm around her shoulder, tilting her face to meet his. "When you are in the public eye, they will always think they own you. That they made you. Of course, we both know that you don't want this, but they don't realise that. When all they see of you is what biased, subjective journalists choose to write, you can hardly expect them to know the truth of it."

Hermione thought about that. She felt bad for complaining. Harry had it a hundred times worse; the press still followed him around, and most papers even had a running column on where he was, what he was up to on a daily basis, what sort of shampoo bottles found their way into his trash, and what food was left on his plate after an evening at a restaurant. She had so little to worry about, in comparison.

"But why am I so interesting to them, Lucius? I mean, I never do anything to encourage this sort of behaviour. I'm so completely normal that I don't understand how it isn't boring to them!"

"Ah," Lucius drawled in the tone of someone who'd just had his point made for him. "But you *are* interesting, Hermione. You are a Muggle-born witch who has easily outstripped decades of pure-bloods when it comes to intelligence and the mastering of spells. You are an enigma. You are proof, to everyone, including me, that so many beliefs espoused for *centuries* are wrong. And now you are the head of a triad with two of the most infamous villains against whom you fought during a war that was not long enough ago for people to have forgotten. People will be confused, angry, disappointed, shocked, proud, supportive, and more. We can only hope that, amongst all those things, that hateful and vindictive does not lie."

Though she knew his words to be honest and wise, Hermione latched on to something he'd said in the beginning. "So because I'm clever and smart, I changed your mind about blood politics?"

Lucius kissed her on the top of the head, but not dismissively. More like he was thinking. "In many ways, yes. My beliefs were born from generations upon generations of bigotry, so ingrained that it was barely noticeable from the inside. But in all those years, there had never been anyone to challenge those beliefs. Half-bloods, yes, but never a Muggle-born. And Draco's reports of how he was beaten, time and again, by you during your school days used to infuriate me. But once I'd learned of your role as Potter's... sidekick, shall we say, I knew that the beliefs I held, whose foundations were already falling into disrepair, needed to be torn down completely."

"What needs to be torn down?" came Draco's voice as he settled gracefully in the chair on the other side of Hermione.

"Your father's prejudices, of course," Hermione said smartly, sipping her now-cold tea. She waved her hand experimentally over it; she'd be able to do the simple warming spell non-verbally for years, but she'd always needed a wand. To her delight, the tea immediately steamed, releasing a refreshed aroma to her nose.

"See that?" she asked excitedly, poking Draco and smiling at Lucius. Lucius nodded with the aura of someone long-patient, and Draco smiled genuinely. A moment later,

he waved his hand over the pot of tea, laughing as steam rose gently from the spout. He poured himself a cup and doused it liberally with sugar.

They both looked at Lucius expectantly. He stared back a moment, as though unsure as to what they were indicating, but eventually he waved a determined hand over his cup of lukewarm tea. Hermione frowned as nothing happened, and Draco was about to say something when an owl flew into the room, and all eyes moved toward it.

"It's the *Daily Prophet*," Hermione whispered, picking it up with only the tips of her fingers.

"Who's going to do the honours?" Draco asked when Hermione didn't move to open it.

"I shall," Lucius offered, "as it was my idea to go public in such a way."

Hermione handed the paper over, but said, "This wasn't your fault, you know. And I'm still glad it's out, no matter what that...woman has to say."

Lucius nodded, unrolling the paper. Predictably, she saw a glimpse of the three of them looking rather impassively over the crowd. As Lucius turned the paper, she read the headline, "Former Golden Girl Turned Servant to Snakes? Or Master of Them?"

Hermione groaned, and Draco immediately wrapped his arms around her. They both faced Lucius as he began to read.

"Lucius and Draco Malfoy, infamous defectors of You-Know-Who, revealed to the press only yesterday that they are involved in a torrid affair with none other than the Golden Trio's resident brain, Hermione Granger, writes *Special Correspondent Rita Skeeter*."

Lucius Malfoy did most of the talking as he revealed the steamy details of his new sexual relationship with Granger, more than twenty years his junior. His stormy eyes pierced the crowd as he elaborated on the intimate details of the nature of his relationship with the best friend and former love interest of Harry Potter, Saviour of the Wizarding World. His arm enveloped Granger possessively as the young woman remained uncharacteristically silent, instead choosing to gaze almost dazedly over the crowd. This reporter has to wonder if the relationship is as mutually consensual as the elder Malfoy was quick to insist.

Harry Potter himself attended the proceedings, looking dashing in his Auror robes and all too ready to take charge of the events if need be. And his welcome intervention was needed as rival reporter for *Wizarding World News* made a spectacle of himself. This reporter was only too grateful for the ready abatement of whatever Mr. Franklin Triptenhoof had in mind.

Harry Potter personally escorted this reporter to the Apparition point, with a guiding hand and the gentle attentions we've come to expect from our Hero. He had no words for the *Daily Prophet* on Granger's new enterprise, but he did look a little weary when asked.

Perhaps Hermione Granger should spend a little less time exerting control over two such eligible bachelors, and a little more thinking about what Harry Potter has to say about her choice of lifestyle."

Lucius took a deep breath. Draco's arms had tightened around her to the point of discomfort. But Hermione wouldn't be held. She twisted out of the grip and stood up shakily.

"I... am going to... *murder*... that bitch," she growled before turning on a heel and stalking out of the dining room. She absently heard two chairs scrap hastily against the marble floor, but she was already on her way out the front door.

"Hermione!" Draco called from behind her. "Where are you going?"

She didn't answer him or Lucius, when the latter ran up beside her and tried to hold her back.

"You will only regret whatever you do if you choose to act now," he warned, falling easily into step beside her despite her angry stride.

"Oh, no, I don't think so," she said, scoffing. Once at the Malfoys' Apparition point, she turned to Lucius and Draco, who had quickly caught up.

"If you come with me, you'll both be accessories. I'm not going to kill her, I promise. But I don't think you two should be there. You've only just restored your family name. I have no such title to protect."

"Yes, you do!" Draco cried, holding onto her arm. "You're a part of our family, and our name is your name. If you care about us, it's hypocritical not to care about yourself."

"Draco, you heard the things she wrote. People read that; people *believe* it! I thought I'd taught her a lesson before, but this will be one she takes to heart," Hermione vowed before shaking off Draco's hand and Disapparating.

Standing in front of the *Daily Prophet* building, Hermione's rage only grew. She stormed inside, passed the cubicles of diligently working subordinates, and walked directly into Skeeter's office, so ostentatiously labelled in gilt.

"Skeeter!" she said, commanding the hated woman's attention. Rita Skeeter looked older up close, shark's grin widening and gold teeth glinting viciously in the scant sunlight streaming in.

"Ah, Ms. Granger. So nice of you to stop by. Perhaps you'd like the opportunity to get your side of the story told?"

"Are you insane? That's why we called the press release in the first place! But you had to twist our words and our relationship into something ugly and dirty! And Harry didn't *escort* you out, he kicked you out! What gives you the right to tell such lies?"

Skeeter only looked thrilled beyond what Hermione thought was normal for such a confrontation. Maybe Hermione wasn't the most intimidating witch at first sight, but she had power beyond what Skeeter could even dream of!

In fact...

"*Animus laqueus!*" she cried, throwing her hand out at Skeeter. The woman only had time to blink before she shrank to a beetle, landing on her desktop, skittering around before seeming to lay eyes on Hermione. The beetle froze, and Hermione laughed.

"Not so full of spite now, are you?" she taunted, the power of the wandless magic thrumming through her.

The door behind her flew open, and Hermione stilled, realisation flooding her. She slowly turned, exhaling deeply when she saw Lucius and Draco.

"Hermione," Draco said slowly, surveying the room. "What did you do?"

"I... I locked her in her Animagus form. I think I... invented the spell. I've never heard it before...." Hermione looked to Lucius for answers, but he was studying the beetle, which flinched whenever someone's gaze fell upon it.

"Is that her?" Draco asked incredulously, pointing at the insect. Hermione nodded, and Draco chuckled. "Not very scary, is she? I mean... really, we could just..."

"Draco! Do not finish that sentence. Do you know how much trouble Hermione is facing right now? This... borders on Dark magic," Lucius said sternly, closing the door and casting several silencing and Notice-Me-Not spells.

"But I didn't really mean to!" Hermione protested, but it sounded weak, even to her ears. "I mean, I did mean to do ~~something~~, but not that. Not really."

"Regardless of your intentions, we have a situation to deal with. Draco, make sure that thing doesn't get away," Lucius commanded, and Draco immediately trapped the befuddled creature under an empty teacup.

"Can you undo the spell?" Lucius asked quietly.

"I... I don't know. I think so. I think it was more intent than an actual incantation, because it's no spell I've ever heard."

"Good. Draco, get ready to free her while I cast *petrificus*. She needs to be totally still while we Oblivate her."

"Whoa!" Hermione interjected, grabbing hold of Lucius' arm. "We can't go around Obliviating people, Lucius. That's illegal. We'll be no better than...."

"I know how you are feeling right now, and I sympathise. But I have no desire to see you carted off to Azkaban because your temper outran your common sense and you gave your newfound powers free rein when you should have been controlling yourself!" Lucius tirade ended in an exasperated shout, and even Draco looked shocked.

"Father," Draco began, hand on the overturned teacup. He seemed to think better of whatever it was he'd been about to say, however, turning to Hermione instead. "He's right, you know. We have to do this. If we don't, we'll lose you, and that's not something I can even think about."

Hermione hung her head. She felt angry and disappointed at herself, but she was also upset that they seemed to think she couldn't control herself. And yet another part of her was saddened for letting them down.

"Okay. Okay, let's do it, then."

"You'll have to Oblivate her, Hermione. You were here before us, and we might not be able to get the entirety of the memory," Lucius said softly, his anger visibly escaping him.

"Oh, gods," she whispered.

"It's going to be okay, love," Draco reassured her, smiling softly, though it didn't come close to being reflected in his eyes. It was evident that they were both upset at having been forced into a position to be casting illegal spells, when they'd done so much to avoid that. Or at least, that was how Hermione saw the regret in their faces.

"Draco, you'll lift the teacup. Hermione, reverse the spell. I'll Body-Bind her, and then you'll have to Oblivate her. Have you ever done that?" Lucius asked her.

Hermione's fingertips had gone numb, but it was almost as though she wasn't really here, wasn't really dealing with the consequences of her actions. "Of course not."

"All right. It's fairly simple, based mostly on intention, rather like the spell you apparently invented. Just think about how much you want her to forget and have that amalgam of moments firmly in mind when you say the spell. If you... do something unintended, Draco and I will deal with it."

Hermione wanted to object to whatever he was implying with those cryptic words, but she was too shocked. She nodded.

Draco freed the beetle, which immediately set to scurrying. Hermione held her hand out, whispered, "*Animus libero!*" and watched in detached amazement as Skeeter regained her human form, sitting gracelessly on her desk, mouth open to begin berating or screaming for Aurors any second. Lucius headed her off with a strong "*Petrificus totalus!*" His wand was firmly in hand and trained on the stiffened witch, whose face was a perfect mask of outrage.

Hermione walked up to Skeeter, feeling regret, but also as though she'd been pushed beyond her limits. "I know you won't remember this, but I wish you would learn your lesson. You hurt people, and that isn't right. You should work on that."

Skeeter's eyes flashed, but no other movement betrayed her consciousness. Hermione once again raised her hand to the witch, thinking of this entire conversation and her own initial outburst. She saw Draco and Lucius slip from the room, but knew they were only just outside the door in case anything went wrong.

"*Obliviate!*" Hermione said, voice breaking. She quickly followed it with a barely-verbal, "*Finite incantatum,*" and watched as Skeeter tried to straighten her from her awkward perch on the desk.

"Are you okay?" Hermione asked in mock concern.

Skeeter huffed, fixing her absurd blonde curls with one red-taloned hand. "Of course. Where were we?" Her eyes were slightly glazed, her focus a touch off.

Hermione sighed. "I was just saying that I had hoped you would tell the truth for once."

"Well, Ms. Granger, it appears that you and I have a different conception of 'the truth,'" Skeeter sniped, making quotation marks in the air with her fingers.

"That's just it!" Hermione cried, but with none of the same passion of her previous conviction. "There is no 'truth,'" she said, mocking the finger movements with her own, exaggerated ones. "There is only *the truth*. And you refuse to tell it! One day someone will make you see," Hermione vowed, feeling empty.

"Is that a threat?" Skeeter said, smirking. She looked as though she'd like nothing better than for Hermione to confirm her suspicion.

"More like a promise," Hermione clarified, feeling like she was having two different conversations.

"I don't have time for this, you silly girl. If you want to make a statement, feel free. If not, you can leave now."

Hermione didn't bother saying anything further. She passed through the doors feeling like an entirely new, not necessarily improved, person. Lucius and Draco silently flanked her, and the trio quickly left, Apparating home and sitting silently in the parlour, each clearly wishing they could say something, but none daring to.

"She didn't even mention me at all," Draco said quietly, breaking the tension.

Hermione laughed. Some things never changed.

Hermione was only in slightly better spirits when Draco brought her the *Wizarding World News*, reading excerpts for her when her head was pounding too hard to really focus.

"Hermione Granger, who we remember as being a fiercely intelligent and loyal young woman, remained a silent sentinel, along with fellow Triad member Draco Malfoy, as the well-spoken and commanding Lucius Malfoy fielded questions at the press release. This was obviously a pre-arranged effort, possibly stemming from Lucius Malfoy's experience in dealing with the press, and Hermione's own previous negative experiences doing so."

Hermione managed a weak smile. At least not all the news was on Skeeter's level.

"He goes on to talk about the different things Father said, including how he and I have no intimate relationship, and how we stressed the consensual nature of the entire thing. He does give a few examples of famous triads in history, and he makes note of the power benefits, faster healing abilities, longer lifespan, et cetera. Everything Father already told us, but that we didn't tell the press. Obviously this Triptenhoof character does his homework, though I have to admit, I thought he'd be trouble at the

release."

"So did I," Hermione said, hugging a pillow to her stomach. "But I should have been more focused on the devil I already knew. Draco... how can I live with myself?"

Draco hugged her against his chest. "You did what you had to do, love. I'm sorry it happened this way, but from now on, I hope you'll let Father and me help you when you need it. You can't go off on your own like that. We're here to support you, no matter what." He kissed her cheek, making her smile.

"You sound just like me," she said, finally wrapping her arms around him. Lucius watched on, but she had the feeling that he was very disappointed in her, and that knowledge made her ill. "What I used to say to Harry when he'd go off half-cocked with no plan."

"Maybe now you can commiserate with him a little better, yeah?" Draco said, rocking her teasingly.

"I feel different," she whispered a moment later.

"It's in your head," Draco insisted. "You're still you; nothing's changed."

But Hermione had the overwhelming feeling that something, something *vital*, had changed.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

After the press conference, Hermione had expected her life to change immediately. A small part of her was glad she didn't have a job to go into, because that way she wouldn't have to deal with the ugliness the public was sure to heap upon her.

But either Lucius or Draco or both had taken special care that none of said ugliness reached her. Owls redirected to a spare room on the other side of the Manor, where treats waited for the creatures, and wards demolished Howlers before they even had a chance to unfurl.

She could, however, hear the Howlers explode every once in a while, even from across the massive house. It gave her some satisfaction.

Despite the enormity of the Manor, it was beginning to get on Hermione's nerves, having nothing to do but wander around. The library was amazing, of course, though the *Accio* spell she'd once lauded meant she didn't have to wander the stacks looking for the books she wanted. It also meant she didn't have to actually ~~be~~ be in the library at all, as Lucius had charmed her own desk to accept the same spell, so she had access to every single tome; she only had to name it.

She rarely used it once the novelty had worn off. She rather liked the smells and memories that came with the books being all together like that. It reminded her of Hogwarts.

She had the feeling that neither Malfoy really spent any significant amount of time in the library, because when they'd found her in there after Lucius had returned from work and Draco from visiting a friend, they'd acted as though they'd spent hours looking for her, it having never occurred to them that she'd actually want to enjoy the simple pleasures that such an extensive library offered.

Since Skeeter's article and Hermione's subsequent temporary loss of sanity, she spent almost all waking hours in the library. She felt safe here. Like nothing could hurt her.

Like she couldn't hurt anyone.

And when she got down to it, that was what was bothering her the most. Not only had she used her wandless magic against another human being, but she'd *invented* a spell to do just that. Her temper had gotten away from her, and she'd said the spell without having any idea what it would do. She hadn't even heard the words she'd spoken at the time, only remembering them after the fact, when her head was clearer.

Draco and Lucius had both tried to talk her out of her moroseness, and while she appreciated their efforts, she just felt distanced from them.

Draco used his wandless magic all the time, from little spells like *lumos* and *Accio*, to major incantations and charms. Wandlessly, his magic took a little more time and effort to obey him as readily as his wand-focused magic would have, but he was clearly mastering his technique.

Lucius, on the other hand, she had never seen use wandless magic. Actually, come to think of it, he'd attempted to just before Skeeter's article had hit their table. She couldn't remember if it had worked or not, or whether he'd even completed the spell. She wasn't sure why he wasn't taking the same advantage as Draco, but she figured it was because he'd depended upon his wand for so much longer than she and Draco that it was habit for him.

Either way, neither man had showed any inclination to invent a spell as she had, nor had either used their new power in anger.

Only she could claim to have used her magic for nefarious purposes, and that made her feel ill.

"Here you are!" Draco exclaimed, startling Hermione enough to *almost* drop her book.

"Here I am," she responded drolly. He should know by now to check the library first, before traipsing all over the house, looking for her. Now that she had no job and didn't feel up to facing the public, there was very little for her to do. She couldn't even clean or cook; the house-elves had made that known quite vociferously.

"How are you doing, love?" he asked, coming to sit directly beside her on the cosy loveseat.

She shrugged slowly. She didn't really know the answer to that, herself. "I'm fine. How's your day going?"

She knew Draco didn't feel the same sort of bored restlessness that she did, but he'd enjoyed his job very much and was suffering, even if he didn't show it the same way. He did have more to occupy his time. The Malfoys were heavy investors, and Lucius took time every day to show Draco exactly how to handle their money, so that he

could, one day, do it without the assistance of his father.

Hermione didn't like to think like that. That Lucius might die before she and Draco did. Magical folk did live a lot longer than Muggles, but the twenty year difference could mean that she and Draco would be without him that long. It was a horrible thought, but at the same time, it made her feel good to think that she would belong to something so special for so long. She would really have them for over a century, if they were all lucky.

Draco shrugged one shoulder. "Not bad. I've been doing some reading, correspondence, stuff like that. Then I got horribly bored and wondered where my lovely little friend was."

Hermione snorted. "And what she did say when you found her?"

"She said she was fine, but I didn't believe her. See, she's been feeling down, and though I understand why, I wish I could help. She's the type to let things bother her, to not speak to her loyal and loving partners, even when she *knows* they can help."

She laughed. "Okay, let's talk normally. That's getting a little creepy."

Draco smiled and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her into a tight embrace that she couldn't have escaped from had she wanted to. But when he spoke, his voice was serious. "We can help, you know. Father and I... we have experience with these things, as I'm sure you know."

"I do know," she admitted, curling into the hold. "I've never really done anything like that, you know? Something so... callous. Cruel*Needless*."

"But you didn't think it was needless at the time, did you? You did what you thought you had to do to protect yourself, to protect*all* of us. Your actions were instinctual; I don't think you can be faulted for that." Draco's voice was low and soothing, reminding her of Lucius. Draco had changed a lot, even in the short time they'd been together, and she felt like she could see him maturing before her eyes.

"But what does it say about me that my*instincts* are to do harm?"

"I really don't think your instincts wanted you to do harm. I think your temper combined with the volatility of the situation created a spell to best deal with what you were faced with. And really, the spell *didn't* cause any harm. I mean, yeah, it was a little dramatic, but it didn't*hurt* her, you know."

Hermione sighed heavily. "No, I didn't hurt her with the first spell. But then we cast*more*, and I Obliviated her, Draco! That's such a...*violation*. And I promised myself during the war that I wouldn't sink to that level."

From Draco's cringe, she knew he knew exactly to whose level she was referring, but she was too distressed to mince words. Of course she didn't want to be a Dark witch. She'd fought against the very behaviour she'd enacted. She was the worst kind of hypocrite. She'd had enhanced powers for only a few months, and she was already taking advantage of them, as if she were above the law! As if she were a more important person than Rita Skeeter.

That was exactly the attitude that had started the war in the first place. Hermione felt that acting as though her increased magical abilities gave her the right to do as she pleased made her the same as a Death Eater who thought his blood gave him immunity from the law and from *humanity*.

Draco seemed to pick up on her thought process, because he suddenly shook his head. "I don't think you have sunk to the level you're thinking. I really don't. And I'm not saying that as a morally ambiguous former Death Eater in training. I'm saying that as your lover, your boyfriend, your friend. You have a temper; we've all always known that." Draco grinned wickedly while placing a hand on his cheek and winking, and Hermione laughed despite herself.

He continued, "But you didn't*want* to hurt her. Okay, maybe you did*want* to, viscerally, but your conscience never would have allowed such an action if your temper hadn't gotten the better of you. And when it comes down to it, she's *fine*. The stupid bint deserved all she got and more, in my opinion. And to be frank, you're lucky my father didn't get there first, because we wouldn't be sitting around discussing tempers; we'd be owling lawyers and contemplating bail."

Draco was smiling, but it was obvious that there was truth in his words. Hermione remembered the time Draco had been attacked by that owl; she knew, now, that it had been their faulty magic to blame. Owls were highly sensitive to magic, and Draco must have been throwing off some strange vibrations. But he'd fallen back to his childhood attitude, remarking on how his father would punish whoever was to blame, including the Healer who hadn't been able to do her job, thanks to their crazy magic.

He was doing the same thing now. She wasn't sure if Draco actually believed Lucius would kill Rita Skeeter for Hermione's honour, but he certainly looked as though he did. To Draco, Lucius really could do no harm these days. It was really sweet and somehow, despite the heavy context, it endeared Draco to her, and Lucius, as well, because he'd obviously raised Draco to count on him and trust him in all things.

Despite past grievous errors, Lucius truly was a good father.

"Draco..." Hermione began tentatively, already knowing that any way she tried to handle this with aplomb would backfire.

"Yes, love?" he said, tangling his fingers easily in her hair.

"When you were... I mean, during the war. You must have had to do some things... some things you weren't proud of..."

Draco stiffened, but he didn't pull away. "I think you know that to be true."

She placed her hand on his chest and moved it in a way she hoped to be soothing. "Did you feel... differently? After?"

He seemed to be weighing his words, and Hermione gave him the time he obviously needed to sort out what he wanted to say.

"I know you think you've changed, Hermione, but I think you're overreacting. Your feelings are your own, and I won't disparage that, but it was just an Obliviation, and you *had* to do it!"

"But that's just it! *Just* an Obliviation? That's a spell that basically means people can do whatever the hell they want! It's so dangerous it should be an Unforgivable! And I didn't *have* to do it. I could have walked away and taken my lumps."

"For Merlin's sake, Hermione, how many ways can I say this? You're not a bad person! Had you 'taken your lumps,' as you say, you'd be in Azkaban! And, sorry if this makes me selfish, but Father and I would likely be entirely without magic until you were released!"

Hermione broke the embrace. She wasn't upset with Draco, not really. He just happened to be there at the moment. She certainly didn't want to go to prison, nor did she want to condemn her lovers to life without magic until her sentence was up.

It wasn't even the fact that Skeeter didn't deserve the punishment, because in Hermione's mind, it had fit the crime.

It was that she'd done something she'd promised herself she'd never do, no matter what. The war was over. The things she'd had to do then... it was different now. It was *wrong* to act as though she had the right to do as she pleased.

It wasn't *her*.

So, what had changed? Had her new magic shifted something within her, created something insidious, something indelible on her soul? *Changed* her?

Or had she had the capacity all along?

She had to suspect it was the latter. Enough circumstances in her youth, even before the war, made her think that the ability to do harm had been a part of her for a long time. She'd just kept it restrained under Gryffindor fairness.

"I don't want to do anything like that again," she whispered, wishing Draco had a way to promise that he would make sure she wouldn't.

A knock on the door broke through her self-pity, but only until she saw Lucius. She'd been avoiding him, which was embarrassing and silly in itself, but the look he'd given her after everything had happened with Skeeter made her feel like she'd disappointed him nearly as much as she'd done herself.

"Mind if I come in?" Lucius asked quietly. If Hermione hadn't known it was impossible, she'd have said he looked awkward.

"Of course," she said softly, moving to make room on the small settee. Draco saw her predicament and unceremoniously hauled her into his lap. Lucius came to sit beside them, and Draco transferred her onto his father's thighs.

Hermione flailed a little at the abrupt move, but seated herself quickly, awkwardly settling her hands in her lap.

She wasn't sure what it was, but she wanted Lucius to be proud of her. Or at least not disappointed in her. He and his son had both managed a very intense turnabout, and that demanded more kudos than she normally recognized. But now, having done what she had, she wondered if they were as affected by their years...especially Lucius...of being on the Dark side of the war as she thought they must be.

If she felt lost and dirty after having cast one simple Obliviation, how must Lucius feel after years of that spell and much, much worse? Draco had avoided answering her when she'd asked if he felt different, but avoidance was as good as admittance, in this case.

"I heard what you and Draco were talking about," Lucius admitted, wrapping his arms around her.

She dropped her head against his chest. They both made her feel safe, like she could confess anything and not be judged.

Not be found wanting.

"I don't want to do it again," she repeated, meeting his eyes for the first time. His gaze was impassive, but she could, as always, see emotion in his eyes, in the lines of his face, in the stillness of his features. She wondered when she'd gotten to know him well enough to accomplish such a feat, as surely it had taken him a lifetime to school his features thus.

"Then you shan't," he said simply, nodding to Draco, who repeated the gesture.

She looked at both, and they seemed in perfect accord. Was it really so simple? she wondered. Just don't do it again?

"Will you... stop me?"

"If that's what you want, then, yes. We will stop you from using your power in such a way that you will regret," Lucius vowed.

"If we're there to be able to stop you," Draco quietly amended.

She nodded solemnly. She knew they wouldn't always be there to make sure she made the right decisions, so she had to trust herself as well. She just wouldn't let it get away from her again. She would be in control. And knowing they were there, sharing their strength... it was enough.

She leaned over to kiss Draco on the lips, thanking him without words. His hand cupped her cheek, and it felt like forgiveness.

When the kiss broke, she bit her lip and looked at Lucius. He didn't look upset or disappointed at all. In fact, his eyes were a little darker than before. She wondered what he thought when he saw her kiss his son.

She didn't have time to think any further, because suddenly, he was kissing her. Long, slow kisses that explored rather than dominated, the way he usually did.

"Don't think anymore," he told her firmly, his mouth on her neck, marking her.

"I can't turn it off," she said, smiling. She unbuttoned his shirt, starting with the cuffs and continuing until his chest was bared. His pale, muscular form drew her in, and she leaned to trail kisses along his collarbone and pectorals. Draco was watching silently, his lower lip indented with teeth marks.

"Only for a few moments," Lucius promised, and Hermione tried to do as he asked. She cleared her thoughts away and focused only on the way he made her feel, his surprisingly rough hands drawing up her shirt, his soft lips anointing her skin. Draco's deep breathing on the seat beside them, so close his thigh was pressed against Lucius'.

Draco whispered a spell, and Hermione startled, a sudden cool breeze telling her that she was naked. A wave of magic crashed over her skin, and she gasped. It was like electricity. She looked to Draco with wide eyes, but he gave no indication that he felt anything.

"I felt it, too," Lucius whispered against her skin. "Like lightning."

She nodded dumbly, but couldn't think to say anything more because Lucius' lips took in her peaked nipple, teeth bringing just the hint of pain. She thought she should probably feel more embarrassed, naked in the library, being caressed and kissed as Draco watched with hooded eyes, but she only felt pure want.

When Lucius' sure fingers parted her folds to tease her clit, Hermione dropped her head back and moaned. He could bring her off in minutes like this, something no other man had ever been able to do. Except his son. Who was now unbuttoning his trouser placket and taking out his heavy cock. Hermione watched as he stroked himself slowly, his eyes meeting hers. She flushed and turned to Lucius, who had been watching both of them.

Chuckling softly, Lucius moved her hands to his own trousers, and she hurriedly unfastened them. When he was in her hand, she immediately copied Draco's languid movements, teasing the head and spreading precome down the shaft. Lucius cut off a moan, and Hermione shook her head.

"You shouldn't hold back your noises. I like them," she said, nibbling on his lower lip. He laughed breathlessly and took her lips again. His kiss was a fury, and she knew she'd been foolish to think he would be upset with her over what she'd done.

It hadn't been the right thing to do, but they still wanted her. And Draco, at least, loved her.

Draco's hand was stroking a little faster now as he watched Hermione move to straddle Lucius and settle onto his cock.

And true to her request, Lucius didn't hold back. A vibrating groan escaped his mouth, so deep that she imagined she could feel it inside her, at her core. Where he was.

She stilled on his cock, amazed as always that he could feel so good inside her. She wished for a moment that she was in a different position and could take Draco into her mouth. That way she could really be whole.

But Draco was still a part of this, despite them not being connected. "Move," he directed softly, staring intently at her.

She obediently followed his direction, the cadence of his voice affecting her the same way Lucius' had. She wrapped her arms around Lucius' neck and began to steadily withdraw and impale herself on his lovely, throbbing cock. "Gods," she moaned as his hands encompassed her behind, and he began fucking her on his cock. She couldn't control the movements like she had been, so she lost herself, instead.

All there was was the steady pounding beneath her, Lucius pulling her onto his upward thrusts, his mouth moving over every inch of skin that was bared to him. She pressed herself against his chest, opening his parted shirt further to feel his heated skin against her breasts. They both moaned at the intimate contact, and she saw, from the corner of her eye, Draco's hand begin to move faster.

"Harder," Draco said, clearly speaking to his father this time. Lucius immediately acquiesced, fucking Hermione nearly wildly, bouncing her on his cock so vigorously that her body turned to putty. She was only pleasure, hers and his and Draco's. She absorbed it, she controlled it, she *owned* it.

She whispered Lucius' name, his fingers on her clit bringing her to the inevitable end, but Draco's next words stopped that.

"Don't let her come, yet," Draco said, his voice thick and low. Hermione whimpered as Lucius' hand withdrew. She pleaded without words for him to touch her again, but he only continued fucking her, holding her on the precipice.

"Come, Father!" Draco said, and Lucius shouted, thrusting more deeply into her than before, gasping as he held her still on his throbbing cock. Hermione ground herself against into his lap, wanting so badly to come, but feeling as though touching herself was not quite permitted.

Panting, Draco pulled her off Lucius' lap and turned her over so that she was kneeling on the loveseat with her body over Lucius' lap and her arms braced on the arm of the seat. Draco immediately slipped into her from behind, and all three cried out at the quickness of the movement. Despite having come, Lucius' hands were all over her body, enticing her, bringing her back to where she'd been before and more.

His fingers danced on her clit as Draco took no mercy on her body. His movements were almost frenzied as he fucked her, whispering dirty things that made her blush and Lucius chuckle.

"Yesss..." Draco hissed as her body began to flutter and tighten around his punishing, rewarding cock. A sharp pinch and stroke of her clit and she was screaming out, coming thanks to the ministrations of both her lovers.

Only a moment later, Draco grunted and strained inside her, filling her just as surely as Lucius had.

After he pulled out, Lucius held Hermione for a moment as she regained herself. She could feel their combined come slip from her body, dripping down the side of her thigh. It felt dirty, but somehow right.

"We'll never let anything happen to you," Lucius said lightly, but still serious.

It was a promise, Hermione knew. And Malfoys took promises *very* seriously.

Hermione was the first to the dining room table the next morning. They'd managed to make it her bedroom after their exertions in the library, though Hermione had the feeling she hadn't helped much in that regard.

She'd left Lucius and Draco lying side by side in her bed and hoped they wouldn't be uncomfortable with that. They certainly didn't demonstrate any sort of discomfort with a more than filial proximity, and to be totally honest, when she'd gotten dressed, looking over the bed, the sight of the two of them in her bed was something more than sexual. It was sensual. It was *special*. They loved one another. They belonged together, just as surely as she belonged with them and them with her. It was beautiful.

But even that memory couldn't stand up to the horror that confronted her when she opened the morning edition of the *Daily Prophet*:

LUCIUS MALFOY PUBLICALLY DENIGRATES LOVER HERMIONE GRANGER: "The Mudblood dares to seduce my son? She'll never work again!" claims Malfoy patriarch.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Draco woke up to the sound of something shattering. Blearily, he opened one eye and looked around. His father was lying a few feet from him, on his back. He shifted a little, but didn't awaken.

Hermione wasn't with them, but a quick *Tempus* showed it was about the time she normally had breakfast. Even getting fired hadn't changed her routine very much.

It was strange, looking at Lucius when the man didn't know it. It was rather like seeing the future. Over the years, Draco's appearance had become more and more like his father's, though he did doubt he'd ever achieve the same breadth that made Lucius so imposing. But he'd been glad of the day he'd surpassed Lucius' height. The thought shouldn't make him feel so gleeful, but it did.

Draco was grateful for the fact that there was no jealousy or competitiveness between him and his father regarding Hermione, but that didn't mean there wasn't any at all. Draco did enjoy a little one-upmanship now and again.

Forcing himself to roll out of bed in a way so sloth-like his father would surely disapprove, Draco went to investigate the noise he'd heard. House-elves didn't tend to drop anything, and Hermione wasn't exactly the clumsy sort.

"Draco, be a good son and go to my room to fetch me some clothes," Lucius said quietly, throwing an arm over his eyes. Draco chuckled. The world saw Lucius Malfoy as

such an intimidating and frightening figure; what would they say if they knew what a horrible morning person he was?

Draco cruelly Disapparated without muffling the crack and gathered clothing for his father. Once back, grinning at the glare his sire bestowed upon him, Draco quickly dressed. They walked down to the dining room together.

Hermione was on her hands and knees, cleaning what looked to be tea with a kitchen rag.

Lucius frowned and pulled his wand to spell away the mess, but Draco beat him to it was a wandless *Scourgify*.

"What happened?" Lucius asked, stepping in to help Hermione to her feet. She was wringing her hands together and not meeting either of their inquisitive gazes.

"Oh, nothing, I just spilt my tea," she said slowly.

"Why didn't you use magic?" Draco asked. He had the feeling something was going on, but his curiosity overrode the questions he probably should be asking instead.

"Oh, I tried, but... but it didn't really work."

"What do you mean?" Lucius asked, Banishing the broken teacup. It was too far gone for a *Reparo*, but Draco couldn't help but wonder how his mother would feel about Lucius' casual dismissal of the priceless china.

Hermione shrugged slowly, but it was obviously affected. "It just moved the tea around. Nothing really happened."

And then Draco's eyes fell upon the morning edition of the *Daily Prophet*. He couldn't read the headline from where he was standing, but he saw the moving photograph of his father. They only really used one of two stock photos of him: his Azkaban mug shot and a photo from a Ministry ball during Draco's school days. This photo was the latter, but he had the feeling the content of the article would be better suited to the former.

Hermione met his eyes, and he couldn't tell from her expression what she was trying to convey. She looked scared, hurt, and desperate all at once, but of what, and about what, he couldn't ascertain.

Draco moved to pick up the paper, and he could actually hear Hermione swallow.

His father moved to his side and read over his shoulder, cursing as soon as he saw the headline.

Draco had known Lucius must have said some crazy things to get him and Hermione fired, but what the article was quoting... it was pretty horrible. No wonder Hermione looked so lost.

"I didn't mean it," Lucius whispered, unable to continue reading.

Hermione only nodded, and Draco read on.

The quotes were long-winded and varied. Lucius had an extensive vocabulary and had obviously made the best of it. Slurs on Hermione's heritage, her sexual history, even her intentions with Draco (*Amortentia* was mentioned at least twice) were scattered over the page.

Rita Skeeter took great pleasure in comparing them to the positive things Lucius had said at the press release.

When Draco finally let the paper fall to the ground, his hands were shaking.

The three of them stood silent and motionless. Lucius was looking away, a hard, impassive look on his face. Draco knew his father must be ashamed and horrified at the things he'd said, but at the same time, Draco wasn't convinced that every single word he'd spoken had needed to be said. Especially not... *whore*. That wasn't a word Draco could bear being attributed to Hermione. He couldn't even imagine how she was feeling.

"But did you say them?" Hermione asked quietly.

A flare of hope surged in Draco's chest; maybe this was just more embellishment and conjecture of Skeeter's part.

But his hopes were cruelly dashed.

"I said them. I had... I had good intentions. But seeing the words like this, all together and so... ugly. It wasn't what I meant. I wanted it to seem real, and it appears I did too thorough a job. I'll understand if..."

"No," Hermione said firmly. "No. We aren't doing this. You did what you thought you had to do, and now we'll deal with it together, just like we always will." Hermione threw her hand toward the paper and shouted, "*Incendio!*"

But the corners barely curled in flame before extinguishing with streaks of sooty smoke.

Draco did it for her, and the three watched in catharsis as the daily burst into satisfying flames.

"Another interview might be needed," Draco said, ridding the floor of the mess.

Hermione nodded slowly.

Lucius left the room.

Harry Potter was three minutes under the predicted time of his arrival at the Manor. Draco immediately opened the Floo to him and tried not to cringe at the rage he could veritably feel pouring off the man.

"Where is she?" he demanded, green eyes practically glowing.

Draco silently led Harry to the sitting room where Hermione was curled quietly. After Lucius had left, she hadn't wanted to talk much, though she did say she wanted to see Harry and Ron to make sure they knew it had been a ruse.

But the way she looked so forlorn made Draco think it was likely she didn't even believe as much herself.

Harry immediately ran to Hermione's side and took her in his arms. Draco tamped down the jealousy at seeing her fall so easily into his embrace. She hadn't wanted to take comfort from Draco, and he hadn't been able to admit he needed it nearly as much.

It hurt to think his father could be so very cruel. Even if he hadn't meant it.

"Come on, Hermione," Harry was saying. "I'm taking you back to the Burrow. Ron's there, and Ginny, and Mrs. and Mr. Weasley. They want to see you, make sure you're okay."

"No, Harry," Hermione said. "I'm okay, really. Lucius said those things on purpose..."

"Of course he did! Malfoy doesn't say things like that on accident!"

Draco started a little to hear Harry say *Malfoy* with such obvious disgust. He knew the man wasn't speaking about him, but it reminded him of times he'd thought they'd gotten past.

"That's not what I mean. Lucius had to say those things so the Ministry would fire us instead of forcing us to quit. Draco and I were caught snogging on surveillance. And if they'd forced our resignations..."

"Oh. You'd never be able to find another decent job," Harry finished quietly. "But why did he have to say those things, Hermione? Mudblood ~~Whore~~? It... it looks like he hates you! And this right after you three came out..."

Draco stepped closer, but allowed the friends their space. "My father did what he thought best in the timeframe in which he had to think. Hermione already knew what he'd done. This isn't exactly a surprise, though it is a bit of a nasty shock."

"He's right. Lucius told us straight away what he'd said. And I know you don't agree with the way he went about it, and neither do I. In fact, I don't think Draco does either." She didn't look to him for confirmation, but she didn't need it. "But we're still a triad, nothing has really changed. We just need to weather the storm. Together."

Harry was rubbing Hermione's arm. Draco tried not to hate him for it.

"Where is Lucius now? I'd feel better hearing him recant his own words," Harry said softly. Hermione looked entreatingly at Draco. He knew she wanted him to fetch his father and make him face what he'd done. And Draco hated the cowardly way Lucius had left, but he wanted to think that it had been done for reasons other than the fact that Lucius just didn't want to face them.

"He needs to deal with some things. But he is genuinely sorry," Hermione said, and Draco felt a surge of love for her. She meant her words, he could tell. He wished Lucius could hear her put her trust in him so implicitly.

"I still think you should come to the Burrow. I don't think me telling them that everything's fine will be enough, and I'm sure you don't want them here."

Hermione sighed. "What are they saying? Did you and Ron tell them about our conversation?"

Harry laughed. "Oh, I told them. Ginny thinks it's brilliant, though she had a few choice words once the novelty wore off. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley... well, you know how they can be. Or rather, how *she* can be. Mr. Weasley seems really concerned for you. You know, he and Lucius have a very... colourful history. But Mrs. Weasley... well, she seems a little... well, she's furious. And remember how she acted after Rita Skeeter wrote those things about you and Viktor Krum and me? How you broke my heart and all that? It's sort of like that. She just doesn't know what to think. I don't think she wants to believe *either* article. And I know she'd feel better if you came over and explained it yourself."

Hermione was obviously considering her words. As much as Draco wanted her here with him while he was figuring things out, it was obvious that she needed to talk with her friends, smooth things over, and hopefully work out her fears about the things Lucius had said. He hoped she would talk to him as well, but he understood if she felt her friends were better suited to deal with this sort of thing. They'd been through a lot, obviously.

Closing the distance between them, Hermione wrapped her arms around Draco's neck, pressing her body against his for a hug. He folded her in his arms, embracing her snugly. She gave amazing hugs, really threw her entire being into them. Being part of a triad was extraordinary for any number of reasons, but having Hermione to himself in moments like this made him feel pretty damn good.

"I'm going to go," she said quietly. "They need to understand."

"I know," he said, reassuring her. "I'll talk to Father and make sure everything's okay for when you come back."

"I shouldn't be more than a few hours, but it's likely that Molly will insist on my staying for dinner. In that case, don't wait up, okay? And tell Lucius that I'm not angry."

Draco nodded. He didn't let her go.

She continued, "And I'm not, not really. I wish things had gone differently, but the main thing is that we stick together. We'll figure this out, Draco. And the more he guiltis himself and pushes us away, the worse things are going to be. We're a triad. We have to work this out. Please tell him that."

"Promise," he said, tilting her head up for a kiss. It felt different than their usual kisses and they both knew it. Draco could almost feel Hermione's anxiety, and he was certain she could feel his disappointment in Lucius.

Still, his lips moved slowly and sweetly, and he made sure that her knees were trembling a little when he broke the kiss. A glance up showed that Harry was determinedly looking out the window.

He nodded at her, and she followed Harry through the Floo. He didn't envy her the coming confrontation.

Not until a few hours later, anyway.

"We have to talk about this," Draco informed his father, as though he didn't already know. He'd found Lucius in the library. He'd felt quite stupid wandering from room to room looking for his own parent, and he thought Hermione might be on to something with that map idea she'd be pondering.

But of course Lucius was in the library. It was Hermione's favourite spot, after all.

"Feel free to speak," Lucius drawled. Or it would have been a drawl if he didn't seem so... affected.

"You said what you had to say! I don't know why you're letting it get to you like this."

"Oh, no? Why would it possibly get to me that I've insulted my lover in nearly every way possible, hmm? Or that I deliberately told my superiors lies to get you both out of punishment? Or that the entire wizarding world now has reason to believe that I'm either verbally abusive to Hermione, or that I was lying about being in a triad with her? The implications of this are so far reaching... I'm sure you just haven't come to same conclusions, Draco, but when you do, you won't fault my reticence."

Well. That certainly explained things a little better.

"Hermione isn't upset with you," he said quietly. Lucius didn't school his features quickly enough for Draco to miss the fleeting hope there.

"She also must not have grasped the realities of the situation."

Draco laughed. "Don't let her hear you question her intelligence like that!"

"Her intelligence was the one thing I did not insult."

Sighing, Draco went to sit beside his father on the loveseat. It was the same seat they'd sat on the day before, making love. Draco's cock twitched a little at the memory... ordering Hermione... ordering Lucius... Draco shivered.

"If you keep this up, you'll give her reason to really become upset. And right now, she's only upset because you are."

"I heard the Floo," Lucius said, changing the subject so abruptly that Draco actually shook his head to follow.

"Harry was here. And then he took Hermione to the Weasleys' house to explain things."

"And Potter... he probably thinks we're abusing her in the worst ways."

"Actually, Father, he doesn't. See, he believes Hermione when she tells him something. You could learn from that."

But alas, snark was not the way to make Lucius see what a prat he was being.

"It's very likely that I will lose my job over this, you realise."

Draco wondered if that was the real reason behind his obvious distress, but he wanted to believe his father wasn't more concerned about his position than he was about their relationship.

"And what if you do? Then three of us will be unemployed together. It'll be great fun. We can go visit the little lake every day. I can hardly think of anything better."

But Lucius didn't appreciate the goading. "I know you know how hard I worked to get our name back to what it once was. All for naught, as my own attempts to make things better for both of you ended up making them worse for all of us."

Draco squeezed his father's shoulder, trying not to think about how strange it was to be in the position of comforting him rather than the other way around. "Everything's going to work out, you'll see. Hermione isn't upset, she doesn't hate you, and there's no reason for this distance. Fuck the public. Fuck the Ministry."

Lucius chuckled lowly and placed his hand over Draco's, fingers tightening in what Draco hoped was gratitude.

"Well, well," came a cool, familiar, and entirely unwelcome voice. "Isn't this cosy?"

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Beside Lucius on the loveseat, Draco let out a groan. Lucius knew that he had stiffened, as any man would, at the undesirable sight of his ex-wife.

"Narcissa," Lucius said civilly, wondering why he felt as though he'd been caught out at something. He and Draco were sitting rather closely, but his former wife certainly knew that they shared a friendship these days.

Actually, Narcissa almost certainly knew that they shared more than friendship: namely, that they shared Hermione Granger. And that was doubtless the reason for Narcissa's visit. Lucius could only be glad that Hermione was at the Weasleys, most likely dealing with a confrontation every bit as awkward as this one promised to be.

"Lucius," Narcissa responded. "Draco." There was coldness in her voice even for her son, and Lucius knew this was going to be very ugly, indeed.

Father and son both rose to greet her, Lucius setting a distant kiss on the air beside her cheek, and Draco embracing her lightly and accepting the kiss she bestowed upon him. All three stood awkwardly, seemingly uncertain of the protocol. Narcissa had only very rarely visited since their divorce, and Lucius almost always made it a point to not be there when she was.

"Well, shall we adjourn to the sitting room? As quaint as it is to sit in the library, I feel the proprieties must be maintained in some things, don't you, Lucius?"

After the emphasis on *some things*, Lucius had no doubt that she planned to make her feelings known on the supposed impropriety of having Hermione Granger in their lives.

Lucius led the way. He heard Narcissa ask Draco about his work, responding appropriately when he told her that he'd been let go. Most likely, Narcissa already knew about that as well.

"Please, have a seat, Narcissa," Lucius cordially invited, even though she had already been about to make herself at home. She froze halfway through sitting, as though realising she'd not been technically invited, and that this was no longer her home. If nothing else, she could be counted on to observe the niceties, even if they wouldn't appear as such once her barbed tongue began its work.

"So, Mother, what brings you to Wiltshire?"

Narcissa arranged her robes royally around her, only deigning to respond once she was adequately situated. "Well, though you may find it difficult to believe, delivery of the *Daily Prophet* does extend to Italy, even if the translation charm is a little inaccurate at times. This inaccuracy is the reason I thought it was time for a visit. You see... and it's so silly, really, but they've been reporting that both you, Draco, and your father, have been cavorting with a Mudblood."

Draco opened his mouth to object to the epithet, though Narcissa took the objection to be denial of the cavorting.

"No, no, Draco. I did not believe it, of course. *Especially* after the follow-up article regarding what your father allegedly said in front of the Board of Directors. Though I don't necessarily approve of the... vocal way your father decided to voice his opinion, I am much more familiar with that attitude than the one the *Prophet* originally quoted."

Lucius sighed. Postponing the inevitable, he called out for a house-elf.

"Yes, Master Lucius?" Gibby immediately inquired.

"Please bring tea for us, and perhaps some scones."

"Yes, Master Lucius. Oh!" the house-elf cried, having spotted Narcissa. "Gibby is so happy to have Mistress home! But that isn't to say Gibby isn't... doesn't like new Mistress!"

Narcissa's eyes widened, and Lucius thought perhaps tea hadn't been the best idea.

The poor house-elf didn't seem to know what to do with herself, uncertain if she'd said a good or bad thing. Despite the education of the Malfoy indentured elves, they sometimes slipped into less formal language in times of excitement and stress, and Gibby was currently muttering under her breath about *new* Mistress trying to cook in Gibby's kitchen.

"That's enough, Gibby," Draco said, lips twitching. "We'll have that tea, now."

Gibby popped away immediately. Lucius looked at his ex-wife. She obviously had a lot to say, but her good breeding would have her keeping her tongue until the elf had returned with tea and departed again.

After tea was poured and Gibby had seen that Narcissa's favourite jam had been placed in full view, the house-elf left, and Lucius waited for what he'd hoped to avoid, perhaps indefinitely.

"New Mistress?" she spat.

"Now, Mother," Draco began, but Lucius could tell he wasn't displeased to see his mother so discomfited.

"Don't you *Mother* me, Draco! I demand to know exactly what is going on here!"

Lucius remembered Narcissa's cool fury all too well: the fire in her eyes like a branding iron, only freezing cold instead of scorching hot. There had been a time, a long-ago time, when she'd been beautiful, but she hadn't changed, and Lucius had.

"The first *Prophet* article was true, Mother. Father and I are both in a relationship with Hermione Granger."

Narcissa sucked in air through her teeth, but there was no other outward reaction. "Why?" she asked in a low, insistent tone.

"Ms. Granger is a lovely and brilliant witch, Narcissa. Draco and I are lucky to have her in our lives. However, I cannot see how any of this is your business. You've made it very clear that you want nothing to do with the Malfoy name except the stipend provided through it."

"Oh, no, Lucius? You cannot see how this is my business? That is very interesting, seeing as Draco is my son as well, and you've obviously... corrupted him!"

Not for many years, Lucius thought. Any corruption he'd done had been in Draco's introduction to pure-blood politics. After the fall of the Dark Lord, there had been no further *corruption*.

"No, I made this decision of my own free will. Really, have you just come to cause trouble, or would it be possible to have a nice, friendly visit?" The ironic tone in Draco's voice told Lucius that he believed no such thing, but he always did relish in goading his mother.

"I most certainly have not come to *make trouble*, and I resent that you would say such a thing, Draco. I know these past few years have put some distance between us, but I love you very much, you must understand that."

Draco nodded slowly. Lucius knew Narcissa was telling the truth. She did love her son, and she always had. She had done her very best throughout their marriage to protect Draco, from himself, from others, and even from Lucius' mistakes...but that wasn't to say she hadn't had her own ideas.

"I do know that, and I appreciate it. But *love* Hermione. She's the best thing that's ever happened to me, and I won't give her up for anything. And Father and I are happy with her. It may not be conventional, but it works for us."

Narcissa's face had grown tight when Draco had spoken of love, but when he'd stopped speaking; her eyes became suspicious and calculating.

"A triad, then?" she asked, seemingly casual. Lucius inwardly groaned, immediately knowing where she would take this. Draco, not having the same innate understanding of Narcissa that he did, nodded eagerly.

"Yes, a triad. And it's wonderful! Watch this." Draco placed his wand on the table and whispered the Disillusionment spell. Immediately, he faded into the sofa pattern, only a very subtle shimmer visible to give away his location.

Draco's wandless magic was impressive and only getting better. Lucius couldn't help but feel proud, even though he knew what was about to happen.

"Draco, this *is* marvellous! The things you could do... why, you're probably more powerful than Harry Potter now, and they say that he's the most powerful wizard in the world!"

Her eyes were swirling with avarice, and Lucius felt a moment's disgust that his own eyes should ever had betrayed the same greed, which they surely must have.

"I don't think so," Draco said, frowning. "Harry's more than capable of wandless magic himself, and even if he weren't, his inherent magical ability is like nothing I've ever seen. I couldn't hope to achieve that level of power. That's not what a triad is about, anyway."

"Of course not," she murmured distractedly. "Longer lifespan, though, yes?"

Lucius interjected. "Narcissa, you are much too transparent. I know what you are leading toward, and I recommend, for the sake of our son's respect, that you cease this line of questioning. Draco is not in the triad for power, nor am I. Hermione Granger is not either, for that matter. You'd do well to remember that if we're to continue this conversation."

Narcissa looked only a little chagrined. "Very well, if you insist. I must ask, though. How did Ms. Granger react to being told that Draco must father an heir with someone else? I can't imagine that having gone over very well," she said, chuckling without true humour.

Draco's eyes widened, and he immediately turned toward Lucius. Lucius waved a hand dismissively. "Hermione was told no such thing. Draco will not be fathering a pure-blood heir unless he finds the triad dissatisfactory and no longer wants to be a part of it. If such a thing never occurs, and I do hope it shan't, Draco's children will be by Hermione."

A nearly inaudible sigh of relief came from his son, and Lucius patted his hand comfortingly. Lucius remembered all too well what it was like to have the pressures of a hundred generations on his narrow-feeling shoulders. There had been a time when he'd taken the responsibility with pride, and in a way, he still did. Having Draco was the most important thing he'd ever done, though it had taken him much too long to realise it. He wouldn't place that sort of pressure on Draco, especially now that Lucius knew Draco loved Hermione.

Lucius suddenly noticed that Narcissa was staring at him. "Draco has a *duty* to..."

"No," Lucius denied easily. "Draco has a duty to himself. He will be happy in this life, as it is the only one he will ever have. You and I both came to understand how important love is to a marriage. Draco will have that with Hermione."

He watched his ex-wife narrow her eyes at him. There was nothing she could do legally or politically, but she could make their lives together very uncomfortable.

Lucius wouldn't deny having loved her at one point. She'd been beautiful and so like him in ways that had seemed so important at the time. But their love hadn't been resilient, and resentment and bitterness had forced them to distance themselves from one another long before the idea of divorce even came to either of their minds.

"Mother," Draco said in a quiet voice. Narcissa's face softened as she turned to look at him. "We will give you grandchildren. Beautiful, brilliant grandchildren. I hope you can look past your prejudices to be a part of their lives. I won't have them learning the same ideals I was overwhelmed with from birth. But I do want you to know them."

Narcissa suddenly laughed. "Grandchildren? How can you be sure they will be my *grandchildren*? How can you be sure they won't be your half-siblings? Dear Merlin, you'll never be able to tell, you realise this? Does the idea of family mean *nothing* to either of you? How can you destroy *both* of our lines so needlessly? And how could that *Mudblood*..."

But faster than Lucius could even follow, Draco had wandlessly thrown up a Silencing Spell around his mother. She continued to tirade soundlessly for a moment before realising what had happened. Her lips tightened, and she threw decades of practised hatred through her glare.

Draco only crossed his arms pointedly and looked toward the Floo.

As Narcissa stormed toward it and impatiently waited for Draco to lift the spell so she could speak the address of her villa in Italy, Lucius knew he'd never been so proud of his son.

Especially as he added, "Owl us when you're ready, Mother."

Lucius immediately changed the wards to reject her, blocking her Floo access as well. Something he should have done a long time ago, apparently.

"Hermione, love, you have to understand that we're only trying to help," Mrs. Weasley said for what felt like the eleventh time.

No matter that Hermione insisted the situation wasn't something with which she needed help.

"But Mum, she's saying that the second article was taken out of context. She's explained that! Jeez, wish I had two men to call my own," Ginny finished in a faux-petulant tone.

"Ginny!" Ron groaned, dropping his head into his folded arms on the tabletop. Seemed he'd spent a lot of the conversation in that position.

Just as Harry had spent most of the conversation staunchly by her, explaining things when it became apparent that no one really intended to listen to her, despite her being the reason for this little coup.

Ron was surprisingly supportive as well, not letting his mother make insinuations about Hermione's character, however well-intentioned Mrs. Weasley claimed them to be. He just didn't much like to hear about the specifics of Hermione's choices.

Arthur Weasley wasn't home at the moment, which was probably why Hermione, Ginny, Ron, and Harry were all having trouble holding their own against the Weasley matriarch.

"But the things that Lucius Malfoy *said*... that alone is proof that he hasn't changed!"

"I disagree," Hermione said gently. "I knew beforehand what he said and why he said it. I know it seems hard to believe, but he did it for me, for us."

"He called you a...!"

"I *know* what he said, Mrs. Weasley. And you can be sure I'm not happy about it. But I'm not unhappy *with him* about it, either. I *understand*. And I respect the fact that you can't."

"It's not about understanding," Mrs. Weasley said heatedly. "It's about respect. A man should never say those things about a woman he's involved with! I just don't think... I don't think he's good enough!"

And Hermione knew that was what it all came down to; and there was nothing she could say to change Mrs. Weasley's mind. Perhaps if it had been only Draco, she wouldn't have been so adamant about him having ulterior motives. As it was, the idea of Lucius and Draco together was too much for her to deal with.

"Thank you for saying that, but I think they are good for me, and I hope to be so for them."

Mrs. Weasley's face was a rather interesting shade of puce, but she didn't respond.

If Hermione could only hold out until Mr. Weasley returned, she knew he'd be able to explain things to his wife in a way that would help the situation.

Unfortunately, Hermione's hopes on that account were dashed.

"Now, I'm not normally one to speak against another wizard, especially one who has obviously made attempts to pay restitution the way Malfoy has," Mr. Weasley began when he arrived home from work to see his wife in a dither and Hermione frustrated enough to pull her hair out. "But a few donations and a paradigm shift does not make a man reformed. And even if it did, Hermione, it doesn't forgive his past. For Merlin's sake, the man ordered you to be tortured! He almost killed Ginny!"

Ginny looked really uncomfortable at having been involved in that way, and Hermione knew that despite her friend's comments about Hermione's relationship, she was actually not entirely approving of the situation. But Hermione was grateful that her friendship with Ginny went beyond the young woman's misgivings. And Hermione knew that if the Weasleys could give the Malfoys a chance (another chance, she mentally amended), they would be pleased with the changes.

At this point, however, Hermione was beginning to think that there was nothing she could say to impress upon Mr. and Mrs. Weasley that she was happy and in a consensual relationship.

"Look," she said wearily, sparing a smile for Harry when he squeezed her hand. "I know you may not like it. I understand why. But we're living in a new world order, in case anyone hasn't noticed! We're going around touting acceptance and denouncing bigotry, but we aren't giving a chance to those who deserve it. Draco and Lucius have made *horrible* mistakes over the years, and they don't deny that. Nor do they claim that everything they did was under duress. Some of it was done because they... Lucius, at least... believed it was absolutely the right thing to do. We can sit here and talk about brainwashing and indoctrination, but the fact of the matter is, I *know* they've changed. I know it in my heart, and I know it in my head, and you've *all* trusted your *lives* to what I know! Please trust me that I can handle myself, and that I know what I'm doing. And if you can't, I hope you come around. If not, *my door*... at Malfoy Manor... is always open."

Hermione took a deep breath and looked to everyone at the table. Harry looked proud of her, and she was thankful for his seemingly unconditional support. His and Ron's

opinions were the ones that mattered most, as her best friends. Harry was obviously not exactly approving of her new life, but he accepted that it was her choice, and he wanted her to be happy...he'd said as much when she'd first arrived at the Burrow.

Ron looked as though he was considering, and she wondered what was going through his head. He couldn't really bear to hear Hermione speak of her relationship in any more than a very general fashion, but she could deal with that.

Ginny was smiling, looking proud of her friend. Hermione wished that dating Lucius didn't feel a little bit like a betrayal, because of what Ginny had gone through in her first year, but Ginny had assured Hermione that amends had been made, which Hermione wondered about but didn't ask.

Mrs. Weasley looked disturbed and horrified, and Hermione thought it was not because she felt embarrassed about she'd said, but that Hermione obviously had no intention of heeding her complaints. Mr. Weasley just look tired.

"I do hope you know what you're getting into with them, Hermione," Mr. Weasley said wearily. He rubbed his forehead. "And, of course, our door is always open to you, as well."

"But Arthur, she obviously has no id..."

"Molly," he said in a low, soothing voice. Mrs. Weasley pinched her lips shut but held her tongue. "This is Hermione's decision. She'd an adult. She's not under any compulsion spells or curses. This is what she wants, and she's happy. We may not like it..." At this, Mrs. Weasley harrumphed, but then looked immediately chagrined. "...But we must accept it."

Everyone at the table was still as Mrs. Weasley appeared to be fighting a battle with herself.

"Well, I do hope you know what you're doing, dear," said Mrs. Weasley in a defeated tone that still managed to hold some censure. "But as my husband said, we will, of course, be here when you come to your se..."

"Mum!" Ron shouted, exasperated.

"Sorry," she said, smiling a little bitterly. *If you come to your senses.*

Ginny groaned, Ron's head fell back into his arms, Harry smiled grimly, and Mr. Weasley just looked bleak.

Hermione wanted to go home.

"She was right about one thing," Draco said quietly, moving to sit beside Lucius on the sofa. Lucius was glad for that fact; he'd been worried Draco would take his mother's words seriously and perhaps even experience a change of heart. But Draco was obviously made of stronger stuff than that, and Lucius shouldn't have doubted him.

"I'm sure I don't agree, but go on," Lucius said dryly. The worst thing about Narcissa's visit had been the glimpse into the past it had provided. He didn't like thinking of how he'd been before the Dark Lord had been defeated, but with her around, it was too difficult to avoid. That had played a part, albeit small, in their divorce. Lucius had needed someone to change and grow with him, and she'd been altogether too eager to remain the same.

"If were to have children, we won't know who the father is," Draco said solemnly.

Lucius thought about that. "Does that matter?"

His son looked shocked. "I think so! I mean, doesn't it?"

He shrugged elegantly. "Only in the most basic sense. Any child I have with Hermione will not be heir to the Manor and the Malfoy fortune. Your first son will be. What if the first son born is mine?"

Draco frowned. "I hadn't even thought of that. Is there a way to tell?"

"I'm sure there is. But that won't solve the problem. If the firstborn son is mine, we will have to explain to him why he is not the heir, despite all appearances to the contrary."

"Maybe we shouldn't ever find out," Draco mused, biting his lower lip.

"It's certainly an option. We could remain ignorant and leave the inheritance to the firstborn son, regardless of his paternity. It may be contested in future, however, if one of his brothers decide that his claim to the title is not legitimate."

"So what do we do?"

Lucius honestly didn't know. "Hope for girls?" he suggested.

"That just creates an entirely new set of problems. Namely, that I have no idea how to raise a daughter." Draco chuckled, but Lucius sensed that this was a real concern covered up with bravado.

"You won't be alone," he said softly.

Draco nodded. "But even with girls, someone will have to be the heir, and we'll have the same issue."

"True," Lucius agreed. "We could leave it all to the children, equally. The Manor's entailed, so it's not as though they could sell it. The fortune could be divided thus. It will significantly reduce the coffers, but if the children have the sense of family which I hope to impart on them, it won't matter."

Draco sighed and leaned back in his seat. "It doesn't matter right now, anyway. We'll deal with that when we come to it. I'm sure Hermione has some ideas, too."

Lucius smiled. Of that, one could always be sure.

An owl tapping on the sitting room window drew his attention away from the puzzle at hand. Only certain owls were able to circumvent the redirection to the spare room across the manor, where all the nasty letters and howlers were being sent. This was Celeste's owl.

Draco wandlessly opened the window, and the small creature flew in, gracefully dropping the note on the seat between them and flying away without waiting for a response.

Lucius cracked the seal. He hadn't heard from the other triad in some time, and he frowned at his negligence in informing them of what had been happening. They might have had some advice, even though they'd never gone properly public with their relationship.

Lucius,

I'm sure you are being inundated with mail of all types, desirable and unsavoury both. Please excuse the time that has elapsed since my last missive. I find myself at odds

recently.

I congratulate you on coming out as a triad. That must have taken great courage. I regret that I had not the same courage. Perhaps if I had, I would not be in the situation in which I find myself now. But perhaps I would.

Thello and Michael have left me, Lucius. I cannot explain it. From everything I was told, two members of a triad cannot sustain a relationship together without their magic being significantly decreased or even completely absent. They remain unaffected.

Alas, somehow, the fates have conspired and I am alone. It is so quiet here. I don't think I noticed how having them near gave me such comfort. I even miss Thello, and you understand that we were together out of convenience...and for Michael's sake...only.

I am sorry for delivering my problems to you thusly, but as I mentioned, I feel at a loss. I do wish the best for your triad, and I hope the second article was as false as it felt to me when I read it. I wouldn't wish my circumstances on anyone, and especially not you and yours.

Be a dear and visit your old friend soon.

Best,

Celeste

Draco had been reading over his shoulder, and for once, Lucius didn't mind.

This could change things.

But Lucius shook that thought away. This would change nothing. Draco and Hermione were happy with him, and he, them. Everything would be fine. And Celeste would find someone better suited to her needs, and Michael and Thello would be very happy together.

Celeste was clearly melancholy, and Lucius made a mental note to visit her the next day, if he could.

"Wow," Draco said slowly, taking the letter and putting it on the table.

The Floo suddenly sounded, and Hermione stumbled through. She smiled upon seeing them, and despite his regret over Celeste's note, he couldn't help but return it.

A quick spell had the soot banished, and Hermione quickly strode toward them. Draco moved over only slightly on the sofa and pulled Hermione down between them. She laughed and kissed Draco in greeting.

As always, his son tried to make more of the kiss, but Hermione pushed him away in favour of greeting Lucius in kind. Her lips were soft and searching, and he thought it likely that she sensed his mood.

She raised her eyebrows in question to him, and he sighed. He had much to tell her, but not much he actually wanted to say.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

"We're so glad you could come," Lucius said in what Hermione had come to think of as his diplomatic voice.

Celeste nodded and led the way to the sitting room where the Malfoys and Hermione usually entertained guests. Apparently the dissolution of her triad had eradicated Celeste's usually impeccable manners.

She sat heavily on the brocade sofa. Hermione went to sit on the sofa across from the obviously distraught woman, but Lucius very skilfully redirected her, forcing her to sit beside Celeste or look like a total bitch trying to sit where she'd intended.

Tossing a half-hearted glare at Lucius, Hermione took a seat. Celeste didn't seem comforted by her presence, but then, the two women had never gotten along very well. It had taken four men as intermediaries just to get them to engage in conversation.

And now two said intermediaries were notably and painfully absent.

Hermione wasn't exactly upset to hear that the triad had split up. She'd never thought Celeste had been right for either men, and in the short time she'd known Thello and Michael, it was obvious that they were crazy about each other.

According to Thello, though, Michael had also loved Celeste...the two had been married for years, after all. That was the real shock.

Well, that and the fact that Thello and Michael were somehow able to maintain a relationship with one another without losing their magic. From everything Hermione had been told, everything she'd researched herself, triads were supposed to be permanent arrangements, and if they did dissolve, no two members of the former triad were supposed to be able to maintain a relationship without suffering the same faulty magic as Hermione had in the beginning.

Apparently her research had been incorrect.

And very little irked Hermione more than misinformation. She'd already drafted a letter to the author of a recent journal article on the permanence of triads and the immense drawbacks to breaking up, wanting to see what he'd say about this development.

At one time, Hermione might have felt a little relief at the idea that she wouldn't be forced to maintain a relationship with two men if she only wanted one. But the truth was,

Hermione couldn't even begin to imagine life without both Lucius and Draco. So different and yet so alike, they fulfilled different needs, sometimes overlapping, sometimes not. It was a perfect arrangement, in Hermione's opinion, and Celeste's situation had made Hermione shiver with dread at the idea that she might, one day, find herself in the same position.

Draco and Lucius had convinced her otherwise. It wasn't as though the two would leave her for one another, after all. Which was just another nuance that made her triad so unique.

"What happened, Celeste?" Draco asked softly, taking a seat beside Lucius on the sofa across the coffee table. The seat that was supposed to have been hers, between her men, where she belonged. She tried not to pout, knowing that she was being silly and selfish, but break-ups always made her feel vulnerable, and she just wanted to be between her men so she could feel safe and loved.

"When I came home from work four days ago, Michael and Thello were sitting in the living room. They said that we needed to talk. Michael explained that he and Thello... lo...love each other, and that he wasn't happy anymore. Not with the triad, and not... with me."

Celeste drew a shaky breath, and Hermione took her hand. Despite their differences, it pained Hermione to see her so obviously distraught. Celeste smiled wetly and squeezed her hand.

"Had Michael ever given you any reason to believe he wasn't content in your marriage?" Lucius asked.

"That's just it," Celeste said, shaking her head. "I think he was content. We could have been happy if he'd never met Thello. We would have lived a long and peaceful life together. But Thello offered him something different than simple contentment."

Hermione knew exactly what Thello offered. Passion and love. Real love, that all-encompassing, unconditional, perfectly flawed, and wonderful love. Content just wasn't enough.

"And they are together, now?"

Celeste nodded. "Michael gave me the house. They were already packed when I'd come home. I'm not sure where they've gone."

Celeste choked on a sob, and Hermione instinctually pulled the older woman in her arms. She cried brokenly for a long time. Hermione couldn't imagine losing such a big part of her life. Hermione didn't know what to do.

"Do you know anything about their magic? Is it still...?" Draco prompted, wincing a little as if realising after that his words were not exactly comforting.

"They used magic to move their things out. I watched. I wanted to berate them, to mock them for being so foolish as to compromise their magic, but it worked perfectly. There was no reason for me at all."

"Was Thello using wandless magic?" Hermione asked, remembering that he had been the only one who'd been capable of that.

Celeste looked thoughtful through her tears. "No... no, he wasn't. I saw his wand. I hadn't seen it in years. What do you think that means?"

Hermione was surprised to see that Celeste was looking at her as she asked that. "It means that even if they can maintain a relationship without losing their magic totally, they've lost the benefits they've gained from being in a triad."

"They will also likely no longer have the ability to heal more quickly. Nor will they live as long as they would have within the triad. And any children will not be as powerful as they would have been if the triad had been maintained."

Celeste's eyes widened. "I guess I can only be thankful that we didn't have children. I wouldn't want them to go through that."

Draco gave Lucius a reassuring smile, and Hermione realised that Draco was, in fact, going through that with the problems between Lucius and Narcissa. At least he was old enough to understand things were better this way, but still. For him to lose his mother only to have her position filled by Hermione, his lover, must be very confusing. Hermione wondered if Draco saw her as some sort of mother-figure. She wanted to laugh, but the idea made her ill.

"Would you like to stay for a few days, Celeste? I understand if you're uncomfortable going back to your house," Lucius offered.

Hermione inwardly cried. How horrible would it be to share a life with two people, to have every room in that house filled with memories, only to go back there alone, knowing the other two were happier together?

"Thank you, Lucius, you're very kind. But I've made arrangements to stay with my sister. She's a Squib, but I think it would do me good to be away from magic for a while, so that when I come back, I can adjust to mine being less potent."

After Celeste left, Lucius had to go into the Ministry. A meeting had been called regarding certain protocol legislature, but Lucius mentioned that he believed it would really be about his slurs toward Hermione followed almost immediately by their coming out as a triad.

"Good luck," she whispered against his chest. She would feel responsible if he lost his job, and she couldn't even imagine what the three of them would do without employment.

Kissing her softly and touching his hand gently to Draco's cheek, Lucius left through the Floo.

"I need a job," Hermione moaned, falling onto the sofa.

"You're telling me."

Hermione looked at him curiously. "What would you do if you could do anything in the world?"

Draco laughed. "Granger, I can do anything in the world."

"I meant, what's your dream? What could you see yourself doing for the rest of your life?"

He leaned back against the arm of the sofa, putting his feet in her lap. She automatically began to rub them. He had very nice feet.

"If you'd asked me a few years ago, I might have said I want to play professional Quidditch."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, but I don't think so now. Too much travelling." Draco moaned as she pressed her thumbs into his instep, his eyes falling closed. "This is going to sound so stupid."

"Please," she admonished, tickling him lightly. "Nothing you say sounds stupid. You can tell me."

Sighing, Draco cracked one eye open and looked at her. "All right, but don't say anything, okay? I'll say it and you keep your mouth shut."

Hermione pantomimed zipping her lips shut, but Draco only looked at her blankly. "I promise," she said, remembering her vow to teach them Muggle things.

"I want to help people."

Hermione immediately opened her mouth to tell him that that wasn't stupid at all, that it was quite noble, but he shot a surprisingly potent death glare at her, and she clamped her mouth shut.

"I don't know how. I don't think I could be a Healer..." He didn't elaborate on why, by after his reaction to the owl attack at their work, Hermione didn't think he had the stomach or the bedside manner for such a position. "...Or an Auror." That, Hermione doubted. Draco would make a good Auror. In fact, maybe Harry could...

But Draco's eyes were bright with something, and that made Hermione pause.

"You know, my mother might not have much to recommend her, but she was on so many committees and boards for different charities. She was constantly having fundraisers here at the Manor, and now that she's gone, I doubt we donate a third of what we used to. Father does make quite a few contributions, but those were mostly at my behest when I needed to..."

Hermione smiled very smugly. Draco was lucky she'd promised not to speak, or she'd be crowing right now. She'd *just* known that Lucius had padded Draco's donations at work so Draco could beat her! Hermione practically squirmed in her seat with glee.

"Anyway," Draco said hurriedly, eyeing her. "I might like to start a foundation like that. One that promotes several causes and not just one or two. Something that has a little bit of everything. And donations could be split according to what the donor wanted."

Hermione's jaw dropped open. Draco seemed to take pity on her, because he said, "All right, talk."

"Draco!" she immediately gushed, pouncing on him. "That's a wonderful idea! And it would be easy, too. We could choose twenty different charities, charities that don't get enough attention as it is, and people could donate to us instead of directly to the cause, and we'd send the money along. That way, the charities won't have to waste their time and money begging for donations, and people can easily donate to several charities at once. I mean, we won't make any money, but it's not as though we'd need it!"

Draco leaned up and kissed her. Hermione hummed happily, feeling better than she had in ages, now that she had an idea of what to do with herself. And it was all thanks to Draco.

"So you want to do this with me?" Draco asked huskily, pulling out of the kiss.

"Absolutely! And maybe even your father could, too. Gods, Draco, I almost hope they do sack him, I'd just love for the three of us to all work together!"

Hermione and Draco talked for over an hour about which different charities they'd each like to support. From the House-Elf Liberation group, to which Draco begrudgingly agreed, to the Werewolf Emancipation Project, to a rather new and struggling charity for Squib education, to one of Hermione's babies, an elementary school for witches and wizards. As it was, it fell to the parents to educate their children with tutors before they started school at eleven, but that meant children from families with money were in a better position right from the start. Families like the Weasleys relied on family members to help educate their children; they couldn't afford the type of tutors Draco had no doubt had.

When Lucius came back in through the Floo, Hermione immediately knew he hadn't been fired.

"Good news, Father?" Draco asked, getting up from the couch and stretching languidly. Unable to help herself, Hermione slid her fingers beneath the edge of his shirt, which had ridden up. Women all over the world were eating their hearts out over skin like this.

"That depends on your perspective, I suppose," Lucius drawled, dropping his briefcase beside the hearth. He stepped up to Draco and Hermione and was immediately taken into both their arms.

"Well?" Hermione prodded as Draco manoeuvred her between them.

Lucius leaned in for a slow, sweet kiss as Draco mouthed the back of her neck. "I will not be distracted!" she said, slapping Lucius lightly on the arm. She turned to glare at Draco, but his eyes were closed as he kissed her.

"It was a slap on the wrist. I merely explained that I hadn't wanted our relationship to be made public, and I did what I thought I had to in order to protect our privacy. I can't say how many actually believed my story, but none are in a position to question me."

Draco snorted. "Father has dirt on every single member of the Board, some several times over." Draco sounded almost proud of this fact, which made Hermione cringe a little, but she supposed it was better than having to deal with the Board's reprimands.

"So is everything okay, then?" she clarified, shivering as Draco pressed his body against her back. He'd made several attempts to initiate intimacy while Lucius had been at work, but she'd put him off, wanting to show both of them how she felt. She didn't want to end up like Celeste's triad, with one member feeling left out, and the best way to do that would be to make sure they did most things together.

"Everything is fine, though I suspect I will be watched with rather more scrutiny than usual." Lucius mimicked Draco's actions and fit himself against her body, running a hand over her hair and tilting her face for a deeper kiss.

"Nothing more than you're used to from times past," Draco said seriously, and Lucius nodded.

Draco's hand snaked around to settle between her thighs, and Hermione groaned. "Take me upstairs," she whispered.

Lucius must have got to it first, for when they Disapparated, they ended up in his bedroom.

Hermione had never been in here with Draco before. Both men tended to prefer her bedroom, both when there was only two, or the times when all three were together. Less often, she would go to their rooms.

She'd wondered if there would ever come a time when they would regularly sleep in the same bed together. It seemed odd to be in a relationship without actually sleeping with the person (or persons, in her case). Sometimes one slept over, sometimes both, sometimes neither. It wasn't an arrangement she was very fond of, and she made a note to take to them about it when there weren't more... pressing matters at hand.

Draco said a wandless spell and suddenly Hermione was completely naked. "Draco!" she cried, trying to cover herself. There was, of course, no point being shy, but the move had been so abrupt she hadn't had time to adjust.

"Get on the bed," Draco ordered.

Hermione's eyes widened. She looked at him a long moment, but he didn't back down, not even to smile. She opened her mouth to speak, but closed it. Lucius was watching carefully, but offered no reassurance.

Crossing the floor to the bed and crawling on, she could feel their eyes on her. The sensation was so intense it was almost as though they were touching her.

Draco turned to Lucius, and they spoke a moment in low voices. Then Draco nodded, and they both moved toward the bed.

"Everything okay?" she asked in a small voice, not used to the entirely predatory way they were both watching her.

"Everything's fine, pet," Lucius reassured. He knelt by Hermione's feet and drew one leg up, pressing kisses along her shin. His lips felt both hot and soothing, and Hermione sighed, relaxing into the pillows.

Draco came up beside her and pulled her into his arms. "You are beautiful," he told her, his voice very serious. Hermione would almost be worried if she didn't trust them so much.

He kissed his way down her chest as Lucius moved his way up. Draco settled at her breasts, drawing one nipple into his mouth and rolling it with his teeth. Hermione shivered at the borderline pain, her hands running through the silky lengths of his hair.

Lucius finally arrived between her thighs. His mouth moved softly, teasingly against her body, not quite giving her the pressure she needed. Draco leaned over her to give attention to her other nipple, and his tugging and tormenting made her even more desperate for Lucius to give her more.

"Please," she whispered, uncaring who took pity as long as someone did.

"Please, what?" Lucius murmured, lifting his mouth for only seconds to speak before plunging back down. His fingers were trailing up and down her quim, never entering her.

"Please, Lucius, put your fingers in me... Draco, make him," she begged, writhing. With two men in bed with her, there really should be more hands on her.

"Hear that, Father? She wants me to make you do something," Draco quipped, nipping Hermione's lower lip before devouring her mouth. Hermione eagerly responded.

"So much to learn," Lucius drawled, fingers moving even lighter. Hermione cried out in protest.

Lucius' tongue finally increased its pressure, expertly circling her clit and giving her enough to grind against as she worked her hips. She would have held his face between her legs, but Draco was holding them over her head as he ravished her mouth.

With a quick move, Lucius was beside her, turning her so she faced Draco. Her kiss with Draco didn't miss a beat. Draco seemed intent on keeping her attention focused solely on him, but that didn't mean Hermione didn't notice when Lucius left to get his wand. He returned to the bed, but Hermione didn't hear him cast anything, so she let Draco steal her attention until Lucius demanded some.

Lucius began placing soft kisses along her shoulder and neck, just enough to stimulate her, but not enough to drive her mad. Draco's kisses were still demanding all that she had to give.

Draco's hand let go of hers to move to her arse, and Hermione arched against him as he gripped it firmly.

But a second later, she jerked reactively when she felt a wet coolness between her arse cheeks.

"Lucius?" she said questioningly before Draco stole her mouth again.

"Relax, all right, pet? It won't hurt, but it might feel odd," Lucius said into her ear, and she was reassured by his conviction.

The finger moving on her back hole was strange and foreign, but not unpleasant. She forced herself to relax into their arms, trusting them to take care of her. The finger slipped inside, and Hermione tensed before moaning softly. It did feel odd...that was the best way of describing it.

Draco whispered his handy undressing spell twice more, and Hermione felt instantly relieved at all the naked flesh against her. Feeling their rough clothing abrading her skin had been stimulating and rather naughty, but having them both naked and lovingly moving against her made her feel much more comfortable.

A second finger slid in with the first, and Hermione squirmed a little at the stretch. Draco's hand was squeezing her arse, holding her open for Lucius' ministrations. Of course they had planned this, damn Malfoys! But Hermione couldn't be angry. If she'd known they were going to do this today, she wouldn't have stressed herself out unnecessarily. She'd known for ages that she would take them both into her body, but now she felt truly ready.

She said as much, rolling her hips, but Lucius only chuckled and continued to spread his fingers inside her, adding a third. Upon this addition, Hermione did feel a twinge of pain, but it was easily overlooked with Draco's urgent kisses and Lucius' soothing ones.

"I need to fuck her," Draco said in a low voice, addressing Lucius. Hermione's hand had been working Draco's cock, and it was obvious he wanted her as much as she did them.

"She's ready," Lucius agreed, turning to lie on his back. Hermione looked at him questioningly. She'd thought he was going to take her arse.

"Draco wanted me to stretch you," Lucius explained. "He hadn't done it before."

Hermione's lip curled a little at the implication that Lucius had, but she knew she had no right to think she'd been the only woman for him. She was grateful for the thoughtfulness, and for the fact that it would be Draco's slightly more slender cock filling her from behind.

She climbed on top of Lucius and immediately sank onto his straining length. Lucius muffled a shout at the sudden move, and Hermione sighed happily as she seated herself. It was lovely to eliminate that horrible empty feeling she'd had, and Lucius' long, thick cock did that perfectly.

"Lean forward," Draco said, moving into position behind her, straddling his father's thighs. Hermione did as he asked, rubbing her breasts over Lucius' chest and rejoicing in the moan he gave. Draco was rubbing his hands all over her back and sides, as if to make sure she was okay. She was.

"Draco, I'm fine. I want this," she said, reaching behind her to stroke his cock. He gasped and thrust into her hand, but Lucius pulled her hand away, nodding to Draco.

She heard him take a deep breath as he lined his cock up to her hole.

"Bear down if it hurts," Lucius whispered, stroking her face softly. She nodded.

She whimpered as the head of his cock slipped past her tight ring, but he kept moving, and the pain immediately ceased. It felt infinitely better when he was moving. She did as Lucius had recommended, and the pain disappeared, replaced by a more bearable discomfort.

Draco stopped when he was fully within, panting lightly against her back. She waited for him to move...she was so horny she thought she might spontaneously orgasm...but he seemed to be waiting for a cue. Hermione moved a little, clenching around both their cocks, stunned at the absolute fullness she was experiencing.

She saw Lucius nod to Draco, and the latter began to move. He didn't pull too far from her body, but his thrusts pushed her forward onto Lucius, fucking her on two cocks.

"She's so... you're so fucking tight," Draco groaned, his familiar verbosity during sex coming to the fore again.

Lucius could only groan in response. Hermione knew none of them would be able to last very long like this.

"More, Draco," she said, panting against Lucius' chest, watching the golden hairs there shift with every breath. "Harder, more."

And then Draco was gripping her hips and pounding into her, his movements careful and measured but no less passionate. Her arsehole was clenching every time he moved, which made her pussy convulse as well, and as a result, all three were moaning in chorus each time her body rewarded them.

Hermione kissed Lucius, and he wasn't gentle with her. Biting her lips and thrusting his tongue into her mouth, Hermione experienced Lucius losing control for the first time. One hand was clenching on her thigh, nails digging in rhythmically, and the other was fisted in her hair, forcing her to hold the kiss that she had no intention of breaking.

Draco's pounding of her arse became faster and more urgent, and she knew he was ready to come. She clamped down around him as tightly as she could, the move making her cry out against Lucius' lips as Draco's cock tore into her.

"Fuck!" Draco shouted, his hand on top of Lucius' on her thigh. Hermione could feel her channel slick with the warmth of his come, and she whimpered.

Lucius was thrusting into her from below, still fucking her mouth with his tongue. Draco slipped from her body but stayed where he was, wrapping an arm around her body to play with her clit. Hermione cried out into Lucius' mouth as she came, and the hand in her hair tightened, the extra sensation prolonging her orgasm.

Lucius used the grip on her hair to tear her mouth from his, and he roared his climax. Hermione watched, entranced. She had never seen him look so fierce. If she hadn't just come, she would have at that moment.

Draco flopped onto the bed beside her, a wide, silly grin on his face as he turned to face them.

"You're an animal," he said to Lucius, smiling.

Lucius didn't seem to be in any sort of position to answer. He was looking at Hermione intently. She couldn't bear not to kiss him, so she did. She tasted blood in the kiss and pulled back, looking at his mouth for the source.

He raised a hand and brushed her lower lip with his thumb, and Hermione felt a sting that she hadn't before. "I apologise," he whispered softly, but Hermione shook her head.

"You were amazing," she said. "You were amazing, too, Draco," she added, turning to him.

Draco grinned. "I know."

Hermione slid off Lucius' body, settling between the two men. "I think I'd very much like to do that again," she said.

She didn't like the uncertain look in Lucius' eyes. She knew he prided himself on his control, but that wasn't something he had to maintain around her.

"Count on it," Draco drawled, slapping her thigh lightly. Hermione smiled. She kissed Lucius again, and then again when he didn't respond as much as she wanted. He finally smiled softly and kissed her back.

"Hermione, you want kids, right?"

Hermione felt the blood drain from her face. "What did you do?" she accused breathlessly.

Draco burst out laughing, and even Lucius snorted. "I didn't *do* anything! I was just asking. I know you do."

She eyed him sceptically for a moment. "I do want kids, yes."

"We do, too," Draco said, cuddling up to her side.

"Well, that's good," Hermione responded slowly. She was sure they'd already had this talk.

"But we were talking the other day, about heirs and everything..."

"Mm, yes, I've been thinking about that as well. The first child will have to be Draco's in order to keep the peace and make sure everything is inherited properly."

Draco looked relieved that she'd given thought to what appeared to be a dilemma. She didn't see the problem.

Lucius was remaining mute, but she knew it wasn't because he wanted to have the first child, but simply that he was absorbing the conversation. She'd learned to read him very well.

"Unfortunately," she continued, "even if we wanted to be fair and have you, Lucius, be the father to the second child, that will only be possible if the first child is a boy. Stupid pure-blood traditions," she finished bitterly.

Draco rolled his eyes. "And you don't have a problem with this?"

"Of course not. I want to have children. I want to have them together. I hope we won't raise them as 'Lucius' kids' and 'Draco's kids' but rather *our* children, though. I don't much care who fathers them, to be honest."

"I don't want to raise them as *mine* and *his*, either," Draco said thoughtfully.

"Nor do I," Lucius added. "I think we should tell them if they ask, though."

Hermione nodded. "That would only be fair."

Draco looked as if he wanted to disagree, but then he nodded as well, looking pensive.

"How do we do that, then?"

"Do what?" Hermione asked, confused.

"Er, make sure my son is born first."

Hermione looked incredulously at Draco. He stared back blankly. She looked to Lucius, but he looked as bemused as Draco.

"How do you think I haven't gotten pregnant so far?" she asked slowly.

"Potion?" Draco suggested.

"Right. There's also a charm, which I used to prefer, but you have to use it every time you have sex, and now that I have sex somewhat... spontaneously, it's better to be on the potion. Once a month, and then we don't have to worry."

Apparently she hadn't made things clearer. "So when the time comes, I'll go off the potion, and when I have sex with Lucius, I'll use the charm."

Draco's eyes widened, and Lucius looked rather put out that he hadn't thought of the admittedly simple solution.

"You're brilliant," Draco said with more awe than was necessary for what she'd said. But she took the accolades anyway, sincerely offered as they were.

"I know," she said smugly, echoing Draco's words from when she'd complimented his performance.

Lucius pulled her into his arms, and Draco draped himself over her. She fell asleep feeling absolutely safe and only slightly sticky.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

"I invited Thello and Michael over this afternoon," Draco announced at breakfast. Even though he and Hermione didn't have to be up at such an ungodly hour, they had taken to doing so, to keep Lucius company before he left for work. As they wouldn't see him for most of the day, they wanted to spend as much time together as possible.

It also helped Draco from staying up too late, as was his natural inclination. This way, he could go to bed with his lover and his father. It would be easier once he had a job, but they were working on that.

"Oh?" Lucius said, pouring for tea for Hermione and sweetening it to her preference.

"What a great idea!" Hermione exclaimed, gratefully sipping her tea. "I've been wondering how they've taken the break-up, and I feel like we haven't seen them in ages. Plus, I wanted to talk to Michael about his werewolf friend; remember, the one who can't afford the Wolfsbane and uses a silver cell to keep himself under control?"

"What do you need to talk about? It's unfortunate, but short of paying for a total stranger's potion, I'm not sure how you intend to help." Lucius peered over the top of his economic newsletter, eyeing Hermione, who squirmed a little.

"Actually, I was thinking that we might do just that," she said, straightening in her chair. Draco knew that gesture. He leaned back in his chair to watch.

"You want to pay for his Wolfsbane?" Lucius asked, looking shocked at the idea. For a philanthropist, Lucius sometimes had a hard time understanding the smaller picture.

"More than that," she said, placing her hands flat on the table. Fighting position. Draco smirked.

"I was thinking we could let him spend the full moon in the dungeons. They're stone and soundproof. He couldn't hurt himself and he certainly couldn't escape."

"No," Lucius said flatly, shaking his paper and folding it tightly.

"No?" Hermione repeated, eyes wide.

Draco began to think this might not be funny at all, but could actually become a large issue. "Hermione," he started, losing a little steam when she whipped her head to look at him. "I don't know if that's the best idea. He is a complete stranger. And a *werewolf*. In our home? It's a bit much, you must understand."

"Draco, I know you've known werewolves in your life. And while Fenrir Greyback was a monster and pretty much insane, Dark creature or no, Remus Lupin *wasn't*. He was a brilliant and *kind* man, completely devoted to our protection and education! And the difference between the two wasn't just the Wolfsbane, either. Remus sometimes wasn't able to get it, and once, he forgot. But werewolves aren't bad, they are human and they vary just like we do! It's our responsibility, especially if we're going to start this charity, to help those who need it. We won't always be helping from the sidelines; sometimes we'll need to personally get involved."

"Well, I am not involved with this charity," Lucius said stiffly. "And I don't approve. This is still *my* home..."

"Oh," Hermione said softly. Draco immediately dropped his head into his hands Lucius looked confused, but he didn't retract his statement. "So I'm a guest, then? Don't you think you should have told me beforehand...what was all that talk about *our home*?"

"Hermione," Lucius began, but Hermione raised a hand to stop him.

"It's fine. I'll pay for his Wolfsbane myself until we get the charity started. And he'll just have to hope he doesn't permanently scar or disfigure himself with his cage, won't he? Silly me, thinking another person's humanity was any of my business."

She stood quickly, sending her chair rattling back a few feet. Lucius immediately rose as well, and Draco inwardly congratulated him. In his life, Draco could never remember Lucius going after Narcissa when she'd walked away from a fight, but Hermione needed reassurance, not space.

"Pet, please, I think you misunderstood me." Hermione scoffed, but Lucius continued. "I'll admit the idea of a werewolf under my roof is disconcerting. But please don't mistake my reluctance for bigotry or tyranny. I'm only thinking of the safety of my son and my lover."

Hermione sighed. "I just..."

"Want to help," Lucius finished, leaning over and cupping her cheek softly with his hand. Draco wanted to go to them, but he knew this was a private moment. He knew that with him, Hermione was more comfortable fighting things out, but with his father, she was more careful and took things more personally. Their history was in the past, yes, but it did make reappearances. "I will pay for this man's Wolfsbane until the charity is up and running. I'm happy to do so. But I will need time to think about having a werewolf beneath us as we sleep."

Nodding, Hermione wrapped her arms around Lucius' neck and kissed his cheek softly. "With the potion, he is perfectly harmless. I promise this. Especially if Thello brews it. I trust him."

"As do I," Lucius agreed. "But not with your life. Or Draco's."

"Just think about it, that's all I ask."

"I promise," Lucius said.

"Father, you should probably get going, it's getting late and we wouldn't want to welcome you into the ranks of the unemployed just yet."

Hermione hummed, pressing her body against Lucius', a devilish glint in her eye. "I'd welcome you," she purred, making Lucius groan and Draco smile. He never would have thought Hermione Granger, proper little swot, would make his father (or him, for that matter) incoherent.

But Lucius, looking very reluctant, disentangled himself from Hermione's grip. Draco stood and let his father transfer Hermione flawlessly into his arms, which held fast as Lucius gave them both the standard farewell: a thorough kiss for Hermione, and a light touch to Draco's cheek with his fingertips.

Once he was gone, Draco turned to Hermione. "Now what?"

That devilish glint turned on him, and Draco felt a slow smile forming across his features. "Oh, I see. Well, come on, then," he said, taking her hand and leading her efficiently to his bedroom.

Draco had to run rather ignobly to the front door when he heard knocking. He'd managed to sleep through the wards telling him that Michael and Thello had arrived, but the heavy knocking jolted him out of his post-coital stupor. After shaking Hermione awake, he'd bolted to the front door, too groggy to Apparate, slowing once it was in sight, as if his guests could see his uncouth action.

Luckily his robes weren't too wrinkled from having been tossed onto the floor. He took a second to straighten himself before swinging the door open.

"Michael, Thello, thank you so much for coming," he said graciously, laughing to cover the fact that he was out of breath.

"Thanks for having us," Michael said warmly, pulling Thello inside by their linked hands. Thello nodded to Draco.

"Is it just you today?" Michael asked as they followed Draco into the sitting room.

"My father's working, but Hermione should be down any minute. Tea?"

"Here I am!" Hermione announced, her cheeks a little flushed. She gave both Thello and Michael hugs, even though the former didn't quite respond.

Draco poured them all tea after requesting a simple lunchtime fare from a house-elf. "So, how are you both? We haven't spoken to either of you in weeks," Draco said, sitting back on the settee with Hermione.

"Fine, fine," Michael said. "Celeste mentioned last week that she'd been by to see you."

"Yes," said Hermione, fiddling with her tea saucer. "I didn't realise you'd still be on speaking terms. We got the impression..."

"That we'd broken her heart and left her for dead?" Thello finished wryly. "Not quite. She does so love to be dramatic."

Draco saw Michael squeeze Thello's hand, who in turn rolled his eyes. "She was a bit broken up, but she's always been a very tough lady. She's a survivor."

"So you keep in touch, then?" Draco asked. He found the entire situation to be confusing; he couldn't imagine losing Hermione, but to never speak to her again would be worse.

"Michael does. Celeste and I have nothing more to say to one another."

Draco easily switched the subject to work, even though he and Hermione didn't have much to say on the topic.

"The apothecary's doing very well," Michael said, partaking of a sandwich. "There's been a significant increase in demand for Wolfsbane since that article by Triptenhoof came out."

"Oh? What article?" Hermione asked.

"He did an interview with a number of werewolves who've had regular experience with the potion, including that werewolf I was telling you about before. My friend?" Draco and Hermione both nodded. "Well, they talked about how much of a difference the potion made, and suddenly we have almost four times the demand. The only thing is, Thello is my main potioneer, and Wolfsbane has a two-week creation time and only a one-week shelf life. It's nearly impossible to maintain the supply."

"So you've had to turn some werewolves down, then?" Draco asked.

"We've had no choice," Thello interrupted, his voice almost hard. "Michael's been trying to place orders for it from other potioneers and apothecaries, but they're all experiencing the same problem. He's taking it very personally."

"Oh, Michael, it isn't your fault," Hermione said, leaning forward. "Things will even out once you get a rhythm going."

Michael shrugged in a falsely casual way. "I know. It's just... they don't want to suffer and they have to."

"When's the next full moon?" Draco said abruptly.

"Just over two weeks," Thello said immediately, likely having timed it for his potions.

"I have a NEWT in Potions, and so does Hermione. We could help, couldn't we?"

Hermione's eyes widened. "Of course! We'd be happy to!"

But Michael was shaking his head. "Thank you both so much. But even if I had ten more hands, I don't have the extra revenue to afford the ingredients on such short notice."

Draco waved his hand imperially. "We'll pay for the surplus ingredients, it's not a problem. Let us put a couple flyers for our new charity in your store window, and we're even."

"Please, it would mean the world to us just to be able to help," Hermione added, biting her lip.

Michael still looked uncertain, and Thello rolled his eyes. "The werewolves don't want your pride, Michael, they want your product. Take the help and pay them back the next month. We'll make a fortune being the only shop taking on so many new werewolves, and we can pay them back."

"All right," Michael said, smiling. "Thank you both so much. You don't know what it means to us."

Hermione smiled softly. "Yes, we do."

"Well," Draco said, standing. "Now that that's settled, who wants to play some Z-Box?"

Everyone looked blank for a moment. Then Hermione laughed. "It's an X-Box, but I don't have any games for it yet." Draco had bought her the thing on Harry's insistence; how could he have known one couldn't play the same game on two consoles? It was a travesty, that. "We can play PlayStation, though," she suggested brightly.

Michael and Thello both looked dubious, so Draco said, "Trust me, you've never seen anything like it. You can golf or play hockey or shoot zombies or... just trust me."

Hermione led them all to her bedroom, and Draco thought that maybe it would be a good idea to set up something similar in a less private part of the house. Then again, Michael and Thello were together, and Draco wasn't *really* threatened. Still, he was glad that the sitting area was far away from the bed.

Thello and Michael watched with wide eyes as Hermione used both her wand and a specially spelled remote to open the unit and reveal the television. A simple replication spell supplied enough controllers for everyone.

"What are these?" Thello asked, shaking the controller.

"You control your player with them. Don't worry, we'll show you," Hermione said, inserting the disc for golf. It was Draco's favourite, even if he wasn't so good at it.

Two hours later, Michael and Thello were playing a game that involved solving puzzles to get to the next level, and Draco and Hermione were watching and laughing as they bickered and bet and snarked. They were a great team when they played together, but both were very competitive, more so than Hermione, so she'd begged off when they were still playing golf, claiming she couldn't handle the pressure. Draco, who was used to it from playing Quidditch, hadn't noticed how intense the games were getting, but he easily quit when Hermione announced her intentions to watch. Now watching the other two, he could see how it would seem excessive to an outsider.

"They're beautiful together, aren't they?" Hermione whispered. Thello and Michael were sitting on the floor in front of the screen. They'd have headaches soon, for sure. They were both still waving the controllers around and leaning back and forth, the way new players (and Hermione) did. Draco laughed as Michael leaned too far into Thello and knocked them both off course. Thello glared, but Michael took the recovery time to kiss him, and Draco watched Thello blush.

"I just don't know how it happened," Draco said. He was genuinely confused. Thello had even said that his magic was so bad before the triad; he'd thought he'd have to resign to life as a Squib. There was absolutely no indication of that now.

"It doesn't really matter," Hermione said, crawling into Draco's lap and wrapping her arms around his neck. He hugged her close, the reality of the other triad's break-up still fresh in his mind. "They're happy, and soon Celeste will find someone better suited and she'll be happy, too. And we don't have to worry about that."

"Well, maybe you don't," Draco said quietly, then immediately regretted the words.

"And you do? What do you mean?"

"Nothing," he said, kissing her on the tip of her nose. But Hermione wouldn't be deterred.

"Draco, please. Didn't we say we'd be honest with each other?"

Draco sighed, and it ruffled Hermione's hair, tickling both their faces. Draco wrinkled his nose at the itch and moved her hair away. "It's just that you don't have to worry about me leaving you for my father, but..."

"But you think I might," she finished. She looked so disappointed that Draco winced.

"I don't think you would," he hedged, not quite meet her eyes.

"But you're still afraid of that, aren't you? Oh, Draco. I want you both equally. And maybe this isn't the best way of saying this, but we're all better together. With you, I have fun, we laugh, we make love, it's amazing. With Lucius, we talk, we debate, we make love, it's wonderful. But when we're all together, everything seems so perfect, like nothing can take us apart. I don't want you feeling that you don't give me everything he does. I only feel really whole when we're all together."

They were both distracted by Thello grabbing Michael's controller and pushing the smaller man to the ground. Draco laughed as Thello lunged at Michael and started kissing him and demanding that Michael admit Thello was the better player.

Michael wouldn't relent, and a full-scale wrestling match ensued. Hermione watched a little too intently as the men tried to pin one another, so Draco distracted her with kisses of his own. He was reassured by her words. He wasn't even sure why he'd said what he had; he knew Hermione cared very deeply for him and for his father, and she'd never given any indication that the triad wasn't what she wanted.

"What in Merlin's name is going on here?" came Lucius' surprised voice. Hermione pulled back from the kiss, and Michael jolted off Thello as though caught by his parents. Thello gracefully rose to his feet and greeted Lucius cordially, who responded in kind, if a little dazedly.

Michael followed with a subdued, "Evening, Lucius."

"We were showing the guys how to play," Draco announced.

"Do you often... play... in front of guests, Draco?" Lucius' voice held heavy censure, and Hermione hesitated a little before greeting him with a hug and a slow kiss that seemed to temper his anger.

"Video games," Hermione said, gesturing toward the television and the games and controllers strewn everywhere.

Lucius walked over and toed one of the controllers with his highly polished boot, and Draco recalled having done the exact same thing.

"We should probably be going," Michael announced, his cheeks furiously red. Thello just looked satisfied.

"You won't be staying for dinner?" Hermione asked, obviously disappointed. Draco realised she didn't see her friends very often, except for Harry. He hoped that she knew, despite his father's rude comment that morning, that the Manor was hers to use as needed.

"We actually have a lot of work to do. We're trying to find a house; the place we're in now is barely liveable," Michael said.

"Well, I'm really glad you both came," Hermione said, hugging them both in turn. Michael returned it enthusiastically, and even Thello patted her on the back lightly before drawing away. Draco said his good-byes, with promises to help with the potion as soon as the next day, and the two men let themselves out.

"How was work?" Hermione asked pleasantly, turning off all the electronics. Draco was fascinated by the blinking lights and almost missed his father's answer.

"Fine," he sighed. "As part of my probation, or whatever they want to call it, they have me going over every single request for budget increases and proposals. It's very tedious." He laughed a little, pulling Hermione into his arms. "Though I did see at least four from Hermione, here, and one from you, Draco. You'll be happy to note that I approved every single one. Even if you aren't there, you're still making a difference."

Hermione smiled brightly, holding her hand out to Draco. He stepped into the embrace, and both he and his father held her snugly. "You only did it to piss them off," she accused playfully.

"Ends justify the means," Lucius said, shrugging easily. "So what is all this?" His sweeping gesture encompassed the electronics console. Draco shrugged; Hermione could field this one, he still barely understood.

"It's just a video game. You press buttons and control players that show up on the telly screen. It's just a bit of fun."

"Hmm. And does it always involved intimate relations on the floor?"

"No, I think that was a special circumstance," Hermione said, laughing. "I suppose there is room for sexual tension within a video game. Draco and I mostly watched, anyway."

"Yes, and what were you watching, exactly?" Lucius smiled a little, and Draco knew he was only teasing. He went to sit over on the bed. His back was a little stiff from sitting on the floor, even though the sofa had helped a little.

Hermione saw him, and her eyes lit up a moment. Draco almost groaned. She was insatiable! She encouraged his father to sit on the bed as well, and they eyed one another suspiciously as she neglected to join them.

"Just lay back," she instructed, grabbing the remote control from the coffee table. She came and sat on the end of the bed, watching.

Strange music began to fill the room. He heard music like it on the wireless sometimes, but it had a harder edge than he usually liked. Lucius looked perturbed. The music's resounding bass filled the room, and a moment later, Hermione pressed another button, and the bed was positively vibrating! Draco shouted in surprise and almost leapt up. Hermione was laughing as she watched them.

"What is that?" Draco asked, laying back again, rather enjoying the vibrations on his sore back.

"It's a subwoofer. Brilliant, isn't it?"

"Is there any way we can enjoy the sensation without *thenoise*?" Lucius asked snootily.

Hermione looked thoughtful. She pressed a button and both the music and the movement stopped. Draco pouted.

"I don't think so. I'll ask Harry next time he's here."

"He'll know right away you're asking for... sexual reasons!" Draco protested.

Hermione snickered. "Draco, he knows I have sex."

"Oh, he does?" Lucius interjected, pulling Hermione down to settle between them.

"Well, I have to talk about it with someone!" she said, snuggling up to Lucius and pulling Draco closer behind her. He went willingly, pressing the length of his body firmly against her back.

"You talk about it with us," Lucius said.

"Father, she's just teasing you," Draco said soothingly, pinching Hermione's bottom to stop the impending discussion and potential argument. He knew Hermione wasn't teasing, and that she shared just about everything with Potter, but Lucius was of a time and status where such things were simply not talked about.

Lucius harrumphed, but he dropped it.

A few moments later, when Hermione brought up the werewolf issue against just as Draco had been about to fall asleep, he wished he hadn't ended the previous discussion.

"I just think that it's our responsibility as citizens of the world to help those who need it!"

"Financially, yes, I agree. We have the money, and I said I'd be happy to pay for the damned Wolfsbane. I'm *not* comfortable having such a creature in our home."

"So is this how it's going to be from now on? Oh, sure, we're equals, this is my home, too, but you have veto power with even a compromise?"

"Hermione, paying for the potion *is* the compromise!"

"More like a bribe," she muttered.

Lucius sighed. "It cannot be wrong that I want to protect those I...my family."

"It's not," Hermione said quietly. They were still touching, and Draco knew that was a good sign. Hermione would pull away when truly angry, and Lucius would become stiff and formal. "It's just that I feel so *useless*. I trust the potions; I trust your wards. I wish you would trust my judgement."

"I do, but we don't know this person..."

"We can stand over him and watch him take the Wolfsbane if it'll make you feel better!"

"Hermione..."

"Oh, *fine*," Hermione snapped. She stood up and climbed over Draco to leave the bed. Draco closed his eyes, feeling defeated. Stage one: Hermione's retreat.

"If you cannot be civil and hold a decent conversation, I'm afraid there's nothing left to say." Stage two: Lucius' formality.

"What do you think, Draco?" Stage three: try to get Draco off the fence.

"I can see both sides, and honestly, I don't care. I don't know this person; it's no skin off my back if he has to sit in a silver cell come the full moon." Even as Draco said it, he inwardly winced. Maybe he did care, a little. "But I do think the wards *alone* are strong enough to hold a rampaging werewolf, even without the walls and the Wolfsbane." Draco shrugged.

Lucius was standing now, his posture rigid and tense. Draco rose as well.

Hermione was staring at Lucius, but he wasn't giving any indication of backing down. Draco may as well have not spoken at all.

"Well, this is still my room, isn't it? What I say, goes, in here, right?"

"Of course," Lucius said in mock-cordiality.

Hermione smile, and it wasn't pretty. "Then he will stay here when he transforms."

Draco exhaled sharply, and Lucius raised his lip in a disfiguring sneer. "As you wish." He left the room.

"Fuck!" Hermione shouted, turning away. Draco walked up behind her and enclosed her in his arms. "Am I being completely unreasonable?" she asked, voice tight.

"I don't know. I think we're all too close to the issue. I'll talk to him."

"No, it's okay. I don't want him to agree because he thinks I'll leave otherwise, and I'm not actually going to let the wolf stay here. We'll have to figure something else out. We said we would be unanimous on any major decisions. I just need some time alone."

Draco kissed the side of her neck and left the room. Lucius was standing in the hallway, leaning against the wall. His face fell a little when he saw it was Draco.

"Come on," Draco said quietly, leading his father by the shoulder.

"Do you ever wonder... if, with a heart so big, we'll ever get pushed out?" Lucius said softly.

Draco looked at him sharply. "Father, her heart's so big so she can fit everything else in around us," he said, trying to reassure Lucius. Draco wasn't worried that Hermione would love anything or anyone else more. He knew she loved them; she just wasn't ready to say it. And Merlin knew Lucius wasn't, either, so he shouldn't hold that against her.

Lucius was nodding as they traversed the stairs. It was getting late, and Draco was starving. He called a house-elf and asked that dinner be ready in half an hour, looking to his father to make sure that was all right. Lucius nodded at the elf, who popped away.

"What is this really about?" Draco asked as they took a seat at the dining room table. Normally Lucius wouldn't *abidewaiting* for dinner, but they both knew he needed to talk.

"I can't stand the thought of her hurt, Draco. Or you. It just... makes me ill to even think what might happen."

"Why don't we just go somewhere else for the night, then? I know Hermione hasn't travelled much, I'm sure she'd love to get away for an evening, especially if she knew the werewolf was safe here."

"And leave it in the Manor?"

Draco clicked his tongue. "Don't let Hermione hear you calling him 'it.'"

Lucius nodded. "Do you think Hermione would be amenable to that?"

"Well, I don't think it was important to her that she actually *be* here, just that the werewolf had somewhere to go."

"Will you tell her?"

"No, Father. You will. Over dinner. You deserve to see how happy she's going to be. How happy *you'll* make her."

Lucius was far too Slytherin to fall for such a ploy under normal circumstances, but he was vulnerable right now, as evidenced by the grateful smile on his face.

It wasn't long before dinner was served, but Hermione wasn't down. Draco stopped one of the serving-elves. "Have you told Mistress Hermione that dinner is ready?"

The elf nodded. "I did, and she said to say 'no, thank-you.'"

Draco frowned. "Please tell her to come down immediately. She is needed for dinner and her absence will not be tolerated."

The house-elf's eyes widened, but she disappeared. He suspected Hermione's actual words had been a little less diplomatic than the elf reported.

A second later, Hermione Apparated beside them and sat in her chair, eyes on a stationary point in the distance. Draco wanted to roll his eyes. Undoubtedly it was the order that had gotten her hackles up, but she'd left him no choice; she was acting childishly.

"Hermione, my father has something he wants to tell you," Draco said in a soothing voice, feeling as though he was introducing two wild animals.

She looked at Lucius disinterestedly, raising an eyebrow. Oh, but she was cool.

Lucius' lip started to rise in response, but then he shook his head. "I will allow the wolf to stay here if, and only if, we go away for the night."

Hermione's eyes widened. The change in her features was so fast that Draco had to laugh. She did *pissed-off* very well, but she did *happy* much better.

"Oh, Lucius!" she cried, leaping from his chair to straddle him on his. "Thank you so much. I'm sorry we fought, but I'm glad we did, because this is the best thing, believe me!" She kissed him soundly on the lips. "I promise you won't regret this." She kissed him again and again.

"You shouldn't use threats to get your way, Granger," Draco said, only half teasing. "It puts us all in an awkward position."

Hermione dropped her head onto Lucius shoulder. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said he could stay in my room. I just got so angry... I wasn't really going to let him," she said quietly to Lucius, who pushed the hair out of her face.

"So where would you like to go?" he asked, and with the change of topic, everything was forgiven.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

"Pass me the obsidian pestle, Draco," Hermione said quietly.

She reached out blindly, her eyes on the softly smoking potion, fingers curling around the pestle as she counted stirs under her breath.

"Okay," she said, smiling. "This batch is done. I'm about to grind the lacewing flies for the next round. Draco, can you bottle these?"

Leaving Draco to the finicky job of pouring the potion into specially created silver vials, Hermione set to work on the next step. They'd been at this all week. Today was the first day the werewolves would be coming in to get their potions. Michael was taking care of customers. There was a form for the werewolves to fill out, which would help in the future when Draco and Hermione began their charity, as well as for the statistics needed to implement changes in Ministry laws. The werewolves would down the potion, leaving the vial behind (in order to decrease the cost to the consumer), and come back the next day for the second batch.

Nearly four dozen werewolves had come in to place orders, most of them paying in advance. It was so busy in the shop that Hermione was dividing her time between brewing and helping Michael.

"Thello, can I give you a hand with anything?" she asked as she poured the finely powdered flies into the potion base, watching critically as it lightly steamed before turning a dark red, the perfect colour for this stage.

"I've this batch taken care of," he said, concentrating on the final stirs just as Hermione had been a moment ago. "Then I'm taking a fucking break."

Draco laughed and Hermione nodded. After this batch and Thello's, they'd be finished. It had taken a week of near-constant brewing, but they'd be able to go home tonight and actually get some rest.

After Thello left to visit Michael, Draco finished stoppering the vials and came to assist Hermione. Between the two of them, the potion's ingredients were quickly diced, ground, and infused. They could only wait while the potion did its job, adding the correct elements at the exact time.

Snape would have been proud of them, Hermione thought.

"Have you decided where you want to go on our little vacation?" Draco asked softly, plucking a stray hair out of the aconite and frowning at it.

"Someplace warm, I think," she said softly, turning to wrap her arms around Draco's neck. "Have you any private islands I should know about?"

Draco chuckled softly and pushed her hair behind her ear. "We do have an Unplottable beach house on an island in the Caribbean. We don't go often because we Malfoys tend to burn, but I think we might convince my father." He kissed her nose and Hermione wrinkled it, which only made him kiss it again.

"There are spells to prevent sunburn, you know. Potions, too."

"The potions are so greasy," Draco complained. "The spells might be okay."

Draco started to sway them slightly, and Hermione laughed. He was a good dancer, so she let him lead her in an impromptu waltz around the potions lab.

"Are you nervous about meeting the werewolf?" Hermione asked. Lucius had insisted that he come by a week before so he could become familiar with the dungeon...though Hermione knew it was more so Lucius could meet him and make sure he was acceptable. Though that was probably a good idea, Michael had already told her about him, and if Michael trusted him, Hermione did, too.

Lucius and Draco weren't so easily convinced, but Hermione certainly wasn't going to argue. She was still trying to recover from their last fight. She and Lucius had really pressed each other's buttons, and now that the fight was behind them, she could see his side more clearly.

She couldn't fault him for making his son and her a priority over a stranger. She would do the same. But she'd wanted so badly to help, and combined with his comments about *his house*, she'd just lost sight of the bigger picture. Which wasn't to say she regretted the fact that a werewolf had a place to stay during his transformation.

But hearing the bell over the door of the shop constantly ringing to signal new customers made her realise that helping one wolf just wasn't going to cut it.

They needed more room.

She was looking in the papers now for a location that might suit their needs. Something secure, preferably a basement, in a rural location. Separate rooms with bars or locking doors would be a bonus. She wasn't having any luck finding something suitable, but she was getting ideas for maybe building something.

The only problem was funding. She was sure the Malfoys would pay for it if she asked them, but she wanted to take care of this on her own esteem.

She'd think about it while they were on vacation, she told herself.

It was another five hours before the potion was at the stage where Thello could handle it by himself. The weary pair said their goodbyes to Michael and Thello and Apparated to the Manor.

To Hermione's surprise, Michael's werewolf friend, whose name was Jackson Symes, was already there, sitting in the parlour with Lucius.

"I didn't know you'd be here so soon!" Hermione said, extending her hand. "I'm Hermione Granger."

Jackson stood and took her hand, giving a slight bow at the same time. "I know who you are," he said warmly. He shook Draco's hand next, smiling broadly. "And you must be Draco Malfoy. Malfoy blood runs true, does it not?"

Lucius chuckled and shifted on the sofa so Hermione could sit next to him and Draco on the other side of her. Lucius kissed Hermione lightly on the cheek and greeted Draco with a touch to his shoulder.

"We were just talking about the rules," Lucius said in a soft voice.

"Ah," Hermione said, looking between Lucius and Jackson, who was still smiling. He had shoulder-length brown hair and pale brown eyes. His skin was olive-toned and rich. He was lightly scarred, just as Remus had been. In fact, his aura was similar to Remus': gentle, unassuming, but with an inner core of strength.

"Lucius was just telling me that I'm to arrive at seven in the evening on the night of the full moon. As you won't be here, the wards will allow me to Apparate directly to the dungeon, which Lucius has already shown me. The wards will close at half seven, so I'm not to be late." Jackson winked at Hermione, proving her suspicion that the rules had been relayed more than once. "The wards will not lift again until after sunset the next day, and Lucius will be here to see me off."

Lucius nodded his approval, as did Draco. Hermione thought the plan was sound.

"All you'll be all right by yourself?" she asked softly.

Jackson smiled. "You've a good heart, Miss Granger. I assure you, I'll be just fine. The... accommodations are more than I'm used to, and the peace of mind will be, I'm sure, unprecedented."

"Good," Lucius said. "Do you have any other questions or concerns?"

"None at all," Jackson said lightly, running his hands over his knees.

Hermione noticed that while his robes had once been the height of fashion and likely quite expensive, they'd obviously been through many repairs and years of use. It seemed Jackson had as much trouble finding work as Remus had.

Anger flared inside her at the prejudice of the wizarding world.

Jackson seemed to notice her impotent frustration, for he gently said, "They say change begins at home, Miss Granger. You've done that. You can't know how much I appreciate this. It will take time to affect change on a larger scale. But you've my support in whatever you do."

"Thank you, Mr. Symes," she said softly, gripping both Lucius' and Draco's hands.

"Please, call me Jackson," he said. His smile wasn't carefree, but it wasn't burdened, either. He'd accepted his lot.

But Hermione planned on changing that lot.

"And call me Hermione." She rose to shake his hand again, and she and Lucius walked him out as Draco headed upstairs, claiming to have spilt questionable materials on his robes. Hermione knew he just wanted a shower after a long day of dealing with smoking Wolfsbane.

"Thank you again, Lucius, Hermione."

They nodded, and he crossed the lawns, Disapparating a moment later.

Lucius closed the door and immediately had Hermione pressed up against it, his mouth hard on hers, his knee between her thighs.

She gasped when he broke the kiss, her body flooded with warmth and desire. She brought his mouth back down immediately, letting him plunder her in a way she desperately needed after not having spent much time with him over the past week.

"I've missed you," she whispered against his lips.

He hummed as a response and moved his mouth to her throat, kissing and nipping her skin.

"Draco says you have a beach house," she said, wondering how big the bed was.

"Is that where you want to go on the full moon?" he asked, pulling away slightly.

"It sounds lovely... would that be all right with you?"

Lucius nodded slowly, frowning a little. Hermione touched the line between his eyebrows, working away the tenseness in his expression.

"Tell me," she said softly, kissing his chin.

"The beach house... we... that is, Narcissa and I spent our honeymoon there."

"Oh," Hermione said. Draco probably hadn't known that.

"But that was a long time ago," Lucius said, holding her tightly against him. "We can make new memories."

"Are you sure?" she asked sceptically. There was no need to stay there when anywhere in the world would do just as well.

"I only want you." He kissed her again, but Hermione's mind was elsewhere. She hoped the bed was huge, since there would likely be four of them in it; Narcissa's presence had never been so keenly felt.

The next week was spent working on the charity. Hermione and Draco had many ideas, all of which melded together to make what they hoped would be a welcomed company.

On the day before Hermione, Lucius, and Draco left for the beach house, Hermione brought home the paperwork to register the charity.

They called it simply *Outreach*. Writing the mission statement took some time, but Hermione worked on it tirelessly. They had the support of several charities, not to mention numerous big names in the wizarding world. When she went to drop off the forms, Harry personally endorsed the project, making it a shoo-in for approval.

She was a little concerned that the Ministry would see fit to deny them, though they'd have no grounds to do so. The Ministry obviously wasn't best pleased with Hermione and Draco...they'd ended up docking four hours of Hermione's final paycheque, claiming that was the accumulation of time she'd spent 'fraternizing.' Draco was only docked half as much...they didn't count the time he'd spent with his father as being time wasted, which Hermione thought was horse shite, but she wasn't about to complain, not when Outreach was on the line.

If they were denied, Michael and Thello had agreed to file again in their names and then sign the company over to them, which the Ministry could do nothing about.

In celebration of filing the paperwork, Hermione, Lucius, and Draco took dinner in bed and didn't leave Hermione's bedroom until late the next morning, which was spent packing and running around. The full moon fell on the Friday, so they were planning on staying all weekend.

Hermione still had reservations about staying in a place that was sure to have strong memories for Lucius, but he'd assured her that his time with Narcissa was well in the past. And Hermione *knew* that...intellectually...but emotionally, it was still a little uncomfortable.

Draco wasn't picking up on that tension, and she was grateful for that. She didn't want him to always be in the position of mediator between her and Lucius. They had to learn to solve their own problems without forcing Draco to choose a side.

She'd learned a lot from her fight with Lucius over Jackson staying in the Manor. She'd learned about herself...how stubborn and frankly irrational she could be at times. She'd learned about Lucius...how he got his back up and became distant when he thought she was challenging him unduly. And she'd learned the most about Draco...he had natural peacekeeping abilities, which was especially shocking as he'd spent so much of his youth being the antagonist. But still, it wasn't fair to any of them to continue with these roles. They'd each have to balance their roles carefully so as to not make any of them feel pushed into an uncomfortable position.

It was a long process, learning to live with and yes, love two such different men. There hadn't been a very long acceptance period before she'd moved out of her flat and into the Manor, so everything they did was learned as they went.

But she couldn't think of two more perfect people to learn along with her.

"Holy shit." Hermione gulped.

This was *not* a beach house. A beach house was a quaint little cottage-like structure, one floor, on or near the water.

This was a beach *mansion*.

"Hermione!" Draco chided, smirking. "Such language."

"You cannot be serious about this," she said, awed. The house was a more modern structure than she would have thought the Malfoys would like. It was three storeys with a flat roof (and she was sure she could see the greenery of a garden up there), and there were more windows than walls, and what wasn't window was painted a startling white.

It was magnificent.

"Our humble hideaway," Lucius said, taking away her overnight bag. Lucius and Draco had brought at least five times her luggage between them, but as Draco had said, it was three whole days.

And if Hermione had cause for exclamation at the outside, the inside struck her speechless. It was white walls, black marble floors and stairs, and pewter accents...completely ostentatious for a beach house, though for a *normal* house it was more her style than Malfoy Manor.

"Come along." Hermione saw Lucius disappear around a corner on the main floor, and she hastened to follow him.

She found him in a bedroom by the back of the house. It was as big as her room at the Manor, and just as cosy. Done in soft ivory and ice blue, it was cool and comfortable. There was a door leading to a patio, from which the ocean was only a few metres away.

"Can I go outside?" she asked, breathless. Lucius had begun to unpack, but Hermione suddenly spotted Draco through the patio door, bolting for the ocean. She grabbed Lucius' hand. "Oh, please, that can wait! Come for a swim!"

Lucius smiled at her and kissed her softly. "Go. I've got to make sure the elves have stocked the kitchen."

Hermione pouted, but only until she heard Draco's carefree cry. She turned just in time to see him plunge beneath the surface.

She was so glad he'd talked her into wearing her swimsuit beneath her clothing. She tore off her shorts and tee shirt and ran through the back door and down to the water. She turned to give Lucius a beseeching look, but he wasn't in the room any longer.

"How's the water?" she called, squishing her toes in the sand.

"How do you think?" Draco splashed about, but the water didn't reach her. "Perfect."

Slowly walking in, amazed that the water was almost body temperature, Hermione made her way to Draco, who swam up to her.

"Does Lucius not like the ocean?" She looked back at the huge glittering house, hoping to catch a glimpse of her lover.

"He does," Draco said. He wrapped his arms around her and lifted her up, holding her beneath her arse cheeks so her face was level with his.

Steadying herself with her hands on his shoulders, Hermione sighed. "Your parents honeymooned here."

Draco kissed her. "I know." He nipped her neck, and she automatically tilted her head to one side to expose herself to his ministrations.

"I'm not sure he's entirely comfortable with me here." She wrapped her legs around his waist and let him take them deeper, so the water was to their chests.

"It's not that. Listen, a lot of places have a history for Father. Including this place. But I've always loved it here, and I have only good memories. For some reason, they never fought here. Before we left and the minute we got home, the gloves were off. But here... everything was perfect. I've always wanted that for my own family. He needs to learn to adapt. You're a part of our lives, and this house is a part of our past and our future."

"I do love it here, Draco. I've never seen anything like it." She paused, brushing the water-darkened hair out of his face, slicking it back like he used to in school. She grimaced and mussed it up. Better. "I just want him to be happy. I think he's having second thoughts about the triad."

Draco looked shocked, pulling back to study her face. "You're wrong," he said insistently.

She shrugged. Her arms were wrapped tightly around Draco, her legs the same. The water lapped around them, Draco swaying softly with the waves. "I hope so."

Looking back at the house, Hermione saw Lucius on the bedroom patio, watching them. She raised a hand high in greeting, making Draco turn to see his father as well.

Lucius gave a half-wave before turning and re-entering the house.

Draco met Hermione's eyes and frowned.

After trying for almost an hour after dinner to pull Lucius into the conversation, Hermione and Draco both gave up. They finished dessert in silence, and Lucius immediately excused himself afterward.

"Is it because I'm here?" Hermione asked Draco, running her finger through the chocolate sauce on her plate and licking it.

Draco's eyes followed her movement, but then he shook himself. "What do you mean?"

"At the beach house. Do you think he thinks I'm trying to replace Narcissa?"

"Er... as my mother?" Draco cringed.

"No!" Hermione hissed, slapping his thigh. "As his... true love." She swallowed. "Or whatever."

Draco scooted his chair closer and brought their heads together. "You already have, Hermione. *Know* that he loves you. Just like I know that you love us." He raised his hand to stop her when she opened her mouth. "It's all right, I don't mind that you don't say it yet. I'll want to hear it one day, but it doesn't have to be right now. You should be sure. But know that I *am* sure. He loves you."

Shifting so she sat in Draco's lap, Hermione wrapped her arms around him and pressed their foreheads together. "I love you, Draco Malfoy. Mad as it is...as we are...I love you."

Draco kissed her softly, his lips a whisper over hers. "See?" he said softly. "Told you."

Laughing, Hermione went to smack him again but he grabbed wrist and held it against his chest. "When will you tell him?"

"I want to," she said honestly. "I just don't want to... oh, I don't know."

"Put your heart on the line?" Draco supplied, letting go of her arm and cupping her cheek softly.

She nodded and looked away. It seemed stupid to not tell him when she *knew* how she felt. But he seemed distant at times, and she couldn't bear for him to pull away even more.

"Hurts to say it and not hear it back, hmm?"

"Oh, Draco," she whispered.

But then he smiled. "No matter. You've said it. Now I'll need to hear it at least once a day, probably more."

"What about Lucius?"

"Tell him, too, of course."

"Not here," she said firmly. Narcissa might still be alive and kicking, but her ghost was evident in the beach house. When Hermione said it, she wanted it to be *her* terms, not as an echo of words said before she'd even been born.

"I wonder how Jackson is doing?" Hermione stood from Draco's lap and stretched. She wanted to find Lucius and pester him into spending time with them.

They both looked through one of the huge windows to the overeager moon, full and cruel with its implications.

"I'm sure he's fine," Draco said. "He's safe and sound in the dungeon, curled up in the blankets you put down there, perfectly content."

"Hope so." Hermione grabbed Draco's hand. "Let's find your father."

Lucius was in what appeared to be a study. Hermione shook her head. Even on vacation, the man worked himself like mad.

"Lucius," she said softly, not wanting to startle him, as he looked so involved in whatever he was working on.

He lifted his head slowly, smiling when he saw the two of them, hand in hand in the doorway.

"Come in." He put down his quill and sat back. Hermione walked around the desk to kiss him, and he sat her on the desk, right over his paperwork. He pulled her down for a kiss, and Hermione wondered how she ever could have thought something was wrong.

Breaking the kiss, he leaned back in his chair, rolling his shoulders and wincing.

"You work too hard," Draco said sternly, moving behind Lucius' chair to rub his shoulders. Lucius groaned a little and dropped his head forward. Draco grinned at Hermione over him, and she squirmed at the almost sexual sounds Lucius was making.

She was pretty sure that shouldn't be as hot as it was.

"How was your swim?" Lucius asked softly, running his hands up Hermione's thighs. She was still wearing her bathing suit with only a sarong to cover herself, having planned to head out to the ocean again after dinner.

"It was lovely," she said, parting her legs a little as his thumbs moved closer and closer to where she wanted them. "Could have been better."

Lucius leaned forward and planted a kiss on her inner thigh. "How so?"

Hermione let herself fall back on her elbows, watching Draco's hands move nimbly but firmly over his father's shoulders, back, and neck. "You could have been there."

Lifting her arse when Lucius tugged on her bikini bottoms, Hermione bit her lip in anticipation. She'd never forget the first time she and Lucius had been really intimate. In his study at the Manor, his hands working her body, then her beneath the desk pleasuring him... Draco's untimely entrance.

"But you had fun without me, no?" Lucius' voice was almost a purr, but when she met Draco's eyes, they were concerned.

She carded her fingers through Lucius' silver-blond hair and tilted his face so he was looking at her. "I always want you there, though." A look that on any other face might have been called vulnerable passed over his features, but was gone in an instant. He grinned predatorily and parted her thighs further, moving her feet to rest on the arms of his chair.

As Lucius' tongue delved into her folds, Draco groaned. "You look perfect like that, spread out like a feast."

She felt him untie her sarong, and then her bikini top. She felt wanton and wicked, completely nude atop Lucius' desk with both men watching her, wanting her. Draco's hands ran up and down her body, avoiding her breasts even as she arched her back for contact. Her fingers tightened in Lucius' hair as his mouth wickedly teased her clit.

Draco pushed her onto her back, pulling her slightly away from Lucius so her head hung over the other edge of the desk. She heard Lucius pulled his chair closer before he continued his devilish actions between her thighs.

She watched, upside-down, as Draco unbuttoned his trousers. Her mouth filled with saliva when he pulled out his long, hard cock. Her lips parted automatically, desperately wanting to taste him.

As his cock filled her mouth, Lucius' fingers filled her pussy. She moaned around her mouthful, which made Draco cry out softly, which made Lucius chuckle against her... a full circle of intimate sensations, and Hermione could only dig her nails into the desk as she tried to concentrate.

Draco's hands supported her head as he thrust into her mouth, his cock moving deeper and deeper, pressing against the back of her throat. Lucius' fingers were pumping...there must have been three by now...and his tongue was exploring her body so intensely she wanted to cry.

When Draco's cock pressed again at the back of her throat, Hermione tried her best to relax her muscles. She'd tried this, with moderate success, but never in this position. She raised her hand to touch his hip, signalling that she was ready. She felt Lucius' movements slow a little as Draco pressed forward.

At first she always panicked, her gag reflex trying to expel him. But Draco pulled away to let her breathe and came back a moment later, pressing. She willed her throat to relax, her muscles to calm.

Draco groaned loudly as he moved into her throat. It felt raw and sensitive, but she was almost heady with power. She could feel Lucius' panting breaths against her thigh, and she rolled her hips to show him how much she needed him.

"Aren't we... lucky, Father?" Draco said, hissing as he pulled out and filled her again. "Isn't she fucking... perfect?"

Lucius' hands clenched on her thighs, and he rested his cheek against her hip. "Perfect," he whispered. Then his fingers were inside her again, his tongue pressing and flicking her clit with singular intent. Between Draco's absolute ownership of her mouth and Lucius' skilled tongue, it wasn't long before she was crying out, her body trembling. Draco pulled out of her mouth as she inhaled deeply, lightheaded from the scant breaths she'd been taking and the position of her head.

"Shit, Granger," Draco said, his hand flying over his cock as her body came down from its high. She watched him intently, obediently opening her mouth when she saw he was ready to come.

"Ah, fuck!" he cried, coming over her mouth and chin. Hermione swallowed quickly, her throat feeling very sore.

Draco helped her into a sitting position, and she licked her lips slowly to catch Draco's come.

Lucius' eyes were almost black with lust as he watched her. She drew a finger along a streak that crossed her jaw and sucked it into her mouth, her eyes on him. She could see he was desperate...his cock was clearly outlined through his trousers.

She gracefully sank to the floor before him, pushing his chest so he was leaning back in his seat. She opened his trouser placard and pulled out his throbbing prick, hot and heavy in her firm grip. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Draco sit on the desk, and she could feel the erotic weight of his gaze on her. On them.

"Remember?" she whispered, flicking her tongue out to tease the head of his cock, collecting the wetness at the tip. "Last time Draco watched from the doorway. Isn't it nicer, now that he doesn't have to hide?"

Hermione closed her mouth over his cock and took as much as she could. She didn't want to tease him, and he didn't want her to.

"Much better," Lucius agreed, his voice annoyingly nonchalant.

But her fingers on his balls and her hand beneath his shirt, playing with his nipples, drew much more satisfying sounds from him.

Lifting off his cock, Hermione turned to Draco. His eyes flitted to her chin and she knew then that she hadn't cleaned up all of his come. She smiled wickedly. "Isn't it better, Draco?"

Draco shifted a little, but grinned widely at her. "Much, much better, Granger."

And Draco watched them both as Hermione showed Lucius the new trick his son had taught her, swallowing him whole and adding his come to the mess on her chin.

Narcissa's ghost was nowhere to be found.

The three shared the bed in the room that opened to the beach. Draco curled against her back while Lucius provided a very comfortable pillow.

He was gone at six in the morning to check on Jackson, and when he came back, Hermione and Draco were making love, slowly and sweetly. She immediately invited Lucius, but he said he had a few owls to attend to. Disappointed but oh so close, Hermione and Draco finished together.

It was strange, making love to only one and not the other. It felt like there was something missing... she kept waiting for more hands, a responding chuckle, a lick against her shoulder blade. It felt lonely.

Draco agreed.

When they'd made it out of bed, Lucius was working at the kitchen table, which was unlike him. He usually kept his work and home life separate, preferring the office for Ministry work.

"How's Jackson?" she inquired immediately, pouring herself and Draco a cup of tea and refreshing Lucius'.

"He's fine." Lucius frowned and crossed something out on his parchment. "He arrived on time, took the final dose of Wolfsbane, transformed normally, slept, and left as soon as I raised the wards."

"Good." Hermione was relieved. She'd been concerned for him, though she hadn't said anything, not wanting them to think she needed to return to the Manor. Which she probably would have done.

"You had a good many owls waiting," Lucius continued, gesturing to a lacquered container the size of a shoebox at the end of the table.

"Me?" Hermione eyed the box.

"You and Draco."

Hermione's eyes widened as Draco reached for the box. He dumped it on the table and immediately opened the largest one.

"It's from Potter. Our charity was approved. There's paperwork here, some changes..." Draco read it quickly. "Nothing major." He passed it to Hermione.

She laughed in delight. They'd accepted the proposal. She and Draco were officially the co-founders of Outreach, a non-profit organisation designed to help those in need.

"Congratulations," Lucius said warmly. Hermione ran to hug him, and then fairly jumped into Draco's arms.

"We did it!" she cried, kissing him soundly. She laughed as he spun her around.

"We did it. I'm so proud of you," he said. He kissed her softly, and it immediately turned heated. "You're amazing. You'll change the world."

Hermione sighed softly against his lips. "I like *our* world the way it is."

"What's the rest of this, then?" he asked, putting her on her feet.

Hermione reached for one of the envelopes, opening it quickly. A wizarding cheque fell out, paid to the order of Outreach. Twenty galleons. A note from a young wizard who claimed he felt much more comfortable donating to an outside source than giving his money to the Ministry.

"My god," she said, her hand shaking. She eyed the letters strewn across the table. There were at least forty more owls. Some were clunky with Galleons, some were light with cheques, some were just well wishes, a few were offers to volunteer.

"Harry must have put the word out," she said, shaking her head. But Draco was looking at his father.

Hermione's mouth dropped as she spun to look at Lucius. "You did?"

Lucius raised an eyebrow but didn't look up from his work. A slow smirk lifted his lips and Hermione screamed. "Lucius!" She ran at him, uncaring that his inky fingers stained her skin. "Thank you so much." She kissed him hard and fast.

He pulled away, breathless and laughing softly. "It was nothing."

She grabbed his face with her hands and kissed him again. "Not to me. Not to us."

Tell him, a voice inside her whispered eagerly, and Hermione opened her mouth to say it, to tell him she loved him, but she just... kissed him instead.

Draco sighed.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

No one had ever accused Lucius Malfoy of being selfless.

His entire life had consisted of trying to further himself, his career, and his family. For a very long time, he'd succeeded. Before he'd been sent to retrieve the prophecy from Potter at the Department of Mysteries so many years ago, his life had been precisely as he'd wanted it.

He'd had a beautiful wife who was devoted to him and who believed in the same causes he had. They'd been wonderful together, at first. The envy of all their friends.

Lucius' position as the Dark Lord's right hand man was the envy of all Death Eaters. His input was valued, his efforts rewarded graciously.

It had all come to a head quite suddenly. A mere year after the best day of his life...the birth of his son...the Dark Lord had disappeared, vanquished, somehow, by an infant.

He'd be lying if he said that, despite all the glory that came with his position as a Death Eater, he wasn't relieved. Being a father had changed everything. There was nothing but Draco. Nothing.

So he hadn't really put his best efforts into discovering what had happened to his Lord, nor had he attempted to bring him back. It had taken the paltry talents of Pettigrew to do that, and there wasn't a day that passed that Lucius didn't regret not killing the little varmint years before.

It had been relatively easy to recover from the disgrace of being the Dark Lord's servant the first time. The second time hadn't been quite so simple. People seemed to have longer memories now, and less capacity for forgiveness.

But for some reason, clemency had come in the most unexpected form.

And while not a man prone to self-flagellation, Lucius couldn't help but feel he didn't quite deserve the life he found himself in.

When he'd first made the connection about the triad, he'd been eager for the power. Power had always drawn him in; the same could be said for any Death Eater, really. So faced with the possibility of wandless magic and an increased lifespan, Lucius would have been a fool to deny he desired it.

The thing that surprised Lucius the most, however, wasn't his feelings for Hermione Granger, though those were shocking in their own way. Hermione was beautiful, intelligent, an amazing and eager lover, and she would make a wonderful mother one day. But more than that, Lucius was surprised by his growing and changing relationship with his son.

He and Draco had always been close. Despite the mistakes Abraxas Malfoy had made, Lucius had raised his own son in a similar manner, teaching him that as the father and head of the household, his decisions were infallible. But Draco hadn't been pulled in the same way Lucius had. He had more strength, better morals. And yet despite that, Draco had forgiven him. He'd ruined his son's life, nearly gotten him killed, and yet Draco had easily absolved him. Though the guilt was still there, it wasn't because of anything his son said or did.

It was the horrible feeling of failure that only a parent can have when they know they didn't do the right thing by their child. And it wasn't something that would ever go away.

Nor would he want it to. Because it kept him from making the same mistakes again. If there was anyone who needed him to be selfless just this once, it was his son.

After the triad's return from the beach house, things at the Manor fell into an easy routine. Draco and Hermione toiled together for at least eight hours of the day, working on Outreach.

Right now, they were swamped with the red tape surrounding the purchase of the Shrieking Shack. Hermione and Draco had bought it with the intention of tearing it down and building a werewolf compound, but the Ministry was fighting them because of the proximity of Hogwarts, even though Headmistress McGonagall herself had given the idea her blessing. With the werewolves on Wolfsbane, there was no reason to think it wouldn't be perfectly safe.

But Hermione and Draco were facing what Lucius had known for years: the Ministry of Magic was highly averse to change. Anything different or unusual frightened them, and the memory of the werewolves on the side of the Dark Lord was all too fresh in their minds.

It was an ongoing struggle, but his son and lover were working together beautifully, something he'd never have believed unless he'd seen it firsthand.

And he did.

They would sit at the dining room table, surrounded by mounds of paperwork, completely undaunted by the enormity of their task. Sometimes they worked in solitude, speaking only to convey ideas or impossibilities. Most of the time, however, they were raucously loud, arguing, laughing... sometimes even making small noises of pleasure.

The sensual sounds almost always came right after the arguments.

They would beg for him to bring his work into the dining room so they could sit together. Sometimes he did. But mostly he couldn't work for watching them.

They were beautiful together, two people seemingly at odds and yet so perfect when placed side by side. Maybe they had not always been so...during their school years, the animosity was not a front but honest and real. And while Lucius had seen Draco change and grow firsthand, he also knew that Hermione was a different person now, as well. She was calmer, more likely to pick her battles...House-Elf Liberation fund notwithstanding.

"Lucius," Hermione said now, coming into his office with a determined look on her face. "Won't you come work at the table with us?"

Lucius looked down at his papers as if to think, though his mind was already made up. "I'm sorry, I don't think I'll be able to get this done out there. You two can be quite... vocal, you realise."

Hermione laughed softly and came to perch on the edge of his desk. "That's better than being silent, isn't it?"

"Not when I'm working."

"What if we promise..."

"Hermione," Lucius interjected. "I appreciate the offer, but I must finish this. It's all well and good that you've your charity, but it runs on *your* schedule. The rest of the world has to conform to someone else's."

After Hermione left, eyes narrowed but distressingly shiny, Lucius wasn't surprised to be interrupted yet again, by his son this time.

He wearily put his quill down and rubbed his temples. "What is it, Draco?"

"You've been a real bastard lately, you know that?" Draco sat heavily in the chair before Lucius' desk and crossed his arms over his chest.

"What are you talking about?"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about!" Draco cried, throwing his hands up. "You're distant, short with us, disagreeable, and all around a right git!"

Aloud, Lucius denied these accusations, but inside, of course, he knew them to be true.

"What's really going on, Father?" Draco braced his forearms on the desk and leaned forward.

"I simply want to get my work done in peace. I don't see why that is becoming such a problem. I don't pester the two of you when your heads are together *working!*" Lucius took a deep breath. He almost *never* yelled at his son. "Draco, I apologise. Let me finish today's work and I shall join you in the dining room."

Draco stood, his eyes searching. Finally, he turned and left.

When Lucius eventually did leave his office, it was with a heavy heart that he walked toward the dining room. He knew, of course, that he was pulling away from Hermione and Draco.

Seeing Thello and Michael so happy together and *with* their magic made Lucius think that there might be another way. Hermione and Draco were perfect together, that was clear to anyone who cared to look. He was older, set in his ways... and the more intimate the triad became sexually, the more Lucius realised that he and Draco were becoming close in a way he'd promised his son wouldn't happen.

He stood in the doorway to the dining room, watching Hermione and Draco kiss. She was sitting on the table, her legs parted to fit him between them. Their bodies were pressed tightly together, her arms around his neck, his around her waist. Their kiss was slow and sensual, so intimate that Lucius immediately felt intrusive. He'd always felt welcome in the triad, sexually; he did have the most experience to offer, after all, and sex was something he did very well. But this tender and loving exploration was something he'd never shared with Hermione. There was no frantic meeting of mouths, no tawdry groping, no eager movements. It was poetry.

Draco pulled back from the kiss and looked into Hermione's eyes. They remained like that for a long minute, just looking, hands moving slowly, learning. Neither seemed anxious to move the intimacy to the next level. They were perfectly content with just touching one another.

Then Draco cupped Hermione's face softly and kissed her again. There was an entire world inside that kiss, and it wasn't Lucius'.

Abhorring the vulnerability he was feeling, Lucius turned to leave, but Draco's soft voice stopped him.

"I want to see you full with my child," he said, putting his hand over her flat stomach and smiling softly.

"I want that, too, Draco," she whispered, her voice carrying along the walls. "When?"

Draco kissed her again. "I'm ready," he said.

Lucius' wanted desperately to feel excited about this conversation. He wanted so badly to see Hermione pregnant, to have more children of his own, to see Draco as a father. But for the first time since they had formed the triad, he felt like it was *wrong*.

He shouldn't want the woman his son loved. He shouldn't be...*forcing* himself in this way on two such young people. He had practically bribed them with promises of power and happiness, thinking that he, too, would be happy. And he had been. Painfully so.

"I love you," Hermione whispered, her eyes soft and adoring.

"I love you, too." And the kiss began anew.

Lucius couldn't watch any more.

There wasn't much he wanted to bring, so Lucius was packed in short order.

Inside, he was screaming.

Outside, he was perfectly calm, the picture of coolness.

The letters were the hardest he'd ever written. He was not a man to give up any chance of happiness. He was not the type to walk away from something that gave him pleasure.

Except for *him*. For Draco. Draco, who deserved to know the unshared love of a woman, the absolute adoration of a child, the unrivalled joy of a family. For him, Lucius would give it all away.

He only hoped they wouldn't be so angry that they wouldn't let him see whatever grandchildren he might have in the future.

In the letters, he said what he'd been too weak to say in person. He didn't try to explain...they wouldn't understand. He barely did, himself.

All he knew was that they were beautiful together, beautiful without him. And it was time he did the right thing for Draco. Years and years...a lifetime, really...too late, but maybe it would be enough.

His Disapparition tore his heart anew.

"I love you, too," Draco said softly. The feeling of ennui that had haunted him all day suddenly ripped through him like a storm, and he felt his eyes prickle. He had no idea why he felt so lost and scared when half of him was ecstatic to have Hermione in his arms, so eager, beautiful, perfect.

Hermione laughed a little sadly. "I feel like I'm going to cry," she said, dropping her head onto his chest.

"Are you all right?" He kissed her cheek with the same reserved tenderness he'd felt toward her all day.

"I don't know." She clenched her eyes closed. "I feel so *empty*. What's *wrong* with me?"

Draco gathered her into his arms. "Whatever it is, it's wrong *withus*. I feel it, too."

"Draco," Hermione said, lifting her head quickly. "What if this is what's been bothering Lucius? What if... if it's a spell or something?"

"A spell to make people sad?" Draco said sceptically, shaking his head. "No, I know my father. He's dead scared and won't admit it. He'll come around, love."

"I don't want him to just *come around*. I want him to *want* this, want us! What's changed?"

Draco sighed. He had no idea why his father was pushing them away. He thought about all the things he might have done wrong, but he couldn't come up with anything concrete. And he didn't want to admit that Lucius just might be unhappy with the triad. The very thought shook him to the core.

When they'd begun the triad, it had been with the knowledge that the triad would never split up, and if it did, no relationship within could be maintained. Now that they knew that wasn't true, Draco couldn't help but feel a little scared. Lucius might not be a hero, he might not be a martyr, but he'd do *anything* for his son.

Draco loved Hermione and his father. Surely Lucius wouldn't force him to choose?

"I don't know what to say. I know he wants to be with us! That's why this makes no sense. Anyway, he said he'd come to see us when he was finished."

Hermione slid off the table. "I don't want to wait. We have to talk, get this all out in the open. And... and I have to tell him."

"That you love him?" Draco guessed, taking her hand and leading the way to his father's office.

"I just couldn't say it there, where he honeymooned with your mother. It seemed wrong... but I'm ready now."

Draco laughed. "Who would've thought I'd be the first to say it?"

"Not me," she said quietly, smiling at him. He squeezed her hand. Nothing made him happier than knowing he'd taken the chance and told her how he felt.

"He's not here," Hermione said, glaring at the empty room.

Draco reached out to feel the wards, but he couldn't sense Lucius. "His bedroom, maybe? He might have gone to... get some... files or something..." As Draco spoke, he knew he was wrong. "Come here!" he said, grabbing Hermione and Apparating them both outside Lucius' bedroom.

He opened the door quickly, but Lucius wasn't there.

"He's gone," Hermione whispered, her hand painfully tight on his.

"No, he's just..."

"Draco, he's *gone*." Hermione was breathing heavily. "He's *gone*. He left us."

"Hermione, don't," Draco pleaded, falling to his knees as he stared at the empty bedroom.

"You can feel it, can't you? He's not here. He's not close. He doesn't want us anymore."

"No, no, no," Draco denied, shaking his head back and forth.

Hermione's pained scream ripped a sob from his own throat.

"*Lucius!*"

It was almost an hour later when Hermione's cries slowed down enough for Draco to think she'd be able to talk. Though she'd cried enough for both of them, he'd added his own tears to the stream.

His father had abandoned him.

He stood shakily and checked his father's closet. His luggage was all still there except for a conspicuously absent midsized piece.

Draco watched Hermione try to gather herself together, but whenever she seemed close, her face would crumble and she'd fall apart again. Her sorrow tore at his soul, but he didn't know what to do. He wasn't ready to be alone like this.

He loved Hermione more than he'd ever thought possible, but he'd always loved her knowing that Lucius did, too. Without Lucius, something so massive was missing that he felt off balance, stumbling sideways because the weight on his other side was absent.

How could he love Hermione enough for him and his father, both? How could he ever be enough when she was used to two?

The answer was simple. He'd never be enough. He would never even try.

They had to find his father.

Draco's eyes fell on Lucius' writing desk. There were two envelopes there. As he crossed the floor to grab them up, he told himself the answer was here... Lucius had an emergency meeting, he would be back that evening, the next day, in a week.

But that didn't explain the heart-wrenching agony he felt at that moment.

He sat down beside Hermione on the floor, showing her. "He left letters, Hermione," he whispered, handing her the one with her initials.

She took it with shaking fingers, but she didn't open it. She pressed it to her cheek and looked at Draco with almost accusing eyes.

Breathing deeply, he opened his letter.

Sadness made way for fury.

Draco,

I have never done anything so selfish and selfless at the same time. Leaving you is the hardest thing I've ever done, and I'm certain by the time you read this, I'll be sick with regret.

But I think it is the right thing. You and Hermione deserve to have a real relationship without your old man over your shoulder at every moment. Every young person deserves to know what it is like to be the only person for someone else.

Please know that I am so proud of you. You are an amazing young man, something for which I can take no credit.

Be good to her for both of us.

I will owl again. Please don't look for me.

Love,

Lucius

Draco's teeth were clenched so tightly he wouldn't be surprised if they cracked. He hoped they did. Anything would be better than the searing numbness.

Only Hermione's sniffles brought him back from the brink. He felt angry enough to obliterate the Manor without even raising his wand.

Hermione wordlessly handed him her note and took his. He almost didn't want to give it to her, but she tugged softly and his fingers opened. Insensate, Draco read her letter.

More of the same.

Fucking *bastard*.

Now, he decided to be self-sacrificing? Now, he decided to do the right thing? Now, when Draco was finally happy?

"I'm going to fucking kill him," Draco snarled, throwing both the letters away.

"No," Hermione said, standing. She held out her hand for him. "We're going to *find* him."

He took her hand.

It did not take Lucius long to figure out his magic wasn't working.

After his Apparition had taken him to a freezing cold wasteland instead of a sunny Spanish town, he'd been suspicious.

When his warming charm had lit his robes on fire, he'd sensed a pattern.

But after a waterproofing spell turned his boots into water, there was no longer any need for uncertainty. He'd broken the triad...he'd lost his magic.

Lucius walked as briskly as possible, his feet stinging from the snow and aching with cold. After a while they became completely numb, and he knew that wasn't a very good sign.

It was a good thing that he wasn't all that far from a town. He hastily purchased boots from a general store, ignoring the strange look he got from the clerk as he put them on right away.

"What is this place?" Lucius demanded after his feet were safely ensconced in his rapidly warming footwear.

"Ilsa," the man responded loudly as though Lucius was quite slow.

"Ilsa, what?"

The man laughed jovially. "Ilsa, *Canada*, friend."

"Canada," Lucius spat disbelievingly. His magic was clearly punishing him.

"Was it you who Apparated into the Jeffersons' field?" the man asked, leaning over the counter.

Lucius froze in his huff. "You're a wizard?"

"Course," he said, standing proudly, apparently not caring that his enormous gut was being bisected by the counter. "This here's an exclusive wizarding town. The only one in Canada, eh?"

Well, that was lucky.

"I'll need lodgings," Lucius said imperially. He wasn't going to risk Apparating again and ending up in the middle of the Atlantic. "With a Floo."

"A Floo?" the man said, tilting his head to one side. Really, Canadians were so simple. The cold must addle their brains. "Oh, you mean that fireplace travel you Brits do. I've heard about that. We don't do that...never jumped on that bandwagon."

"How do you get from place to place?" Lucius asked incredulously.

"We walk. Or drive. In the summer, we ride bicycles."

"No dogsleds?" Lucius said, rolling his eyes and remembering something he'd heard about Canada when he'd been a child.

"Not 'round here, but further up north, yeah."

"So you drive... automobiles?"

The man laughed, his belly shaking, and Lucius narrowed his eyes. He'd just been dealt a great shock, losing his magic, not to mention he'd left his family. He didn't have time or energy for this madness.

"Yes, we do. If you'll give me a few minutes, I can close up and take you to the hotel. They're sure to have vacancies, though you'll get what you pay for in that place."

"This... town... does not have a more amenable location?"

"One hotel, friend. Just one."

"Very well, then," Lucius said, a headache digging into his eyes.

The burly man locked his cash register and walked to the door of his shop, opening it. Lucius swept through, taken aback by the cold, even though he'd just spent half an hour walking through it.

Parked in front was a red lorry, looking ancient and abused. "This is a Muggle vehicle," Lucius hissed, recognising it from the rare times he'd been in Muggle London.

"Well, they don't make wizarding vehicles, do they?" the man asked congenially, unlocking and opening Lucius' door. "It's not far, and I'm a decent driver. Promise."

Lucius got in, his boots moving food wrappers and refuse to the side. If Draco could see him now...

Lucius sucked in a sharp breath and gritted his teeth. The man entered on the other side and held out his hand.

"Name's Kent," he said.

"Lucius Malfoy," he responded, taking the man's meaty hand.

Kent nodded slowly as if he recognised the name, but he didn't say anything, only turned the key and chuckling as the lorry roared to life.

Lucius gripped the seat tightly, thankful that the vehicle didn't seem capable of any excessive speed.

Only a minute passed before they pulled in front of a very unimpressive hotel. Lucius must have made a moue of disgust, for Kent chuckled.

"Not much, but we do all right."

"Thank you for the lift, Kent," Lucius said graciously, struggling with the door handle. Kent leaned across him to open it for him, and Lucius gracefully slid from the cab.

"If you need anything, just send an owl. The hotel'll have some for guest use."

Lucius nodded and walked toward the hotel. It wasn't exactly ramshackle, but it certainly wasn't the type of place he'd ever imagined himself voluntarily staying.

Once he was settled in his room, Lucius sat on the edge of his bed. Though his decision had been brewing for weeks, he hadn't truly believed he'd go through with it until he'd heard those words exchanged between Hermione and Draco.

Perhaps the saddest part of all was that Lucius did love Hermione. Unequivocally, undoubtedly, unstopably. But she didn't feel the same way about him. He didn't want to pathetically cling to the hope that one day she'd return his feelings. He didn't want to be the Celeste coming between two true lovers.

He had absolutely no idea how he was going to get out of Ilsa. Without the Floo network, and with his Apparition being uncontrollable, the only other option would be to purchase a broom, and Lucius hadn't travelled that way since his school days, and certainly never so far. Without any means of Muggle identification, he'd never be able to get back to Britain non-magically.

He was completely stuck and it was all his fault. He could only hope that Hermione and Draco still had their magic. Even if it wasn't the same, even if they didn't have the wandless ability, he was sure they would be happier without it if it meant they were together.

As Lucius pulled back the covers, wishing he could risk a Scourgify, and got into bed, he told himself he had done the right thing.

Only he didn't quite believe it.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

Hermione liked to think she was a woman in control of her emotions. She didn't let anger or frustration get the better of her, and she really didn't like being petty or whiny.

So when she broke down for the third time since Lucius had left them, she was starting to think that maybe she didn't know herself as well as she'd thought.

Draco, of course, was perfectly lovely in his sort of clueless way, fumbling through comforting her and pretending that he wasn't in just as desperate need of comfort himself. But there was no use in keeping up pretences, and they both quickly realised that without Lucius to stabilise them, there was no way to keep on course. They were veering wildly without the balancing agent that was their third.

"I hate him," she whispered, face slick with tears and various other lubricants that Draco was a real champion to not balk at. "I love him, but I hate him so much right now."

"I'm not best pleased with him, myself," Draco said softly, running his hand through her slightly greasy hair. Once they'd realised their magic was suffering, they hadn't known what to do. Owls had been sent (by Hermione; Draco's memory of vengeful fowl was all too clear), inquiries made, but no one had seen Lucius.

Hermione hadn't even cared that the *Daily Prophet* had posted a missing person report on their front page. Lucius would be disappointed with their choice of photograph (the Azkaban one), but then again... he might never see it.

And that thought was enough to shatter Hermione's shoddily mended heart all over again.

"We'll find him. You said so yourself," Draco reminded her, kissing her temple and then her wet eyelashes.

"And I believed myself. But it's been three days and we can barely even leave the Manor, our magic is so bad. What do we do?"

But Draco had no brilliant ideas, no back-up plan. "Let's go have a bath," he suggested, running his hand self-consciously over his own hair.

Luckily there was one bathroom...attached to Draco's old nursery...that could be used without magic. After all, a child either couldn't control or wasn't permitted to use magic until they began their schooling, so the room was equipped with basic plumbing.

Undressing herself without fanfare, Hermione tested the water with one toe before stepping into the large soaker tub. Draco followed, and while her eyes travelled the length of his pale and slender body, there was no thrill between her thighs for him, no stirring or desperate need to have him.

It almost felt like cheating to want him.

He manoeuvred himself behind her and encouraged her to lean back against him. She did so gratefully; she wondered how any person ever got through a break-up on their own. Without Draco, she would surely have floundered.

Though neither was speaking of the elephant in the room, it was obviously second-most in their thoughts, right after how to find Lucius: what would happen if they ~~wouldn't~~ find him?

Would they choose each other over their magic? Could they live as Muggles just to be together?

It wasn't something Hermione wanted to answer, and it certainly wasn't a question she was going to ask Draco. The only thing she wanted to think about was finding Lucius.

"We'll have to drive," she said suddenly, turning in Draco's arms to face him. "We'll drive to find him!"

"As in, a car? Are you kidding me? Do you even know how to drive?"

Hermione shrugged, water slopping over the edge of the porcelain. "It can't be that hard, billions of people do it."

"And even if you did miraculously learn," Draco continued as if she hadn't answered, "how would we even know where to start? You want to drive all over the country looking for him? I know my father. If he doesn't want to be found, he won't be."

"But," Hermione said, getting excited, "I know your father as well. We know him better than anyone. So we know something right out of the gate: he's not in England. I mean, not only would that be the smart thing to do, especially with the *Daily Prophet* acting like he'll be on death's door if someone doesn't report a sighting of him, don't you *feel* it? When he was here, in his room or in the study or even at the Ministry, it was like I could sense him. It was always there in the back of my mind: Lucius and Draco. Now there's mainly only you, but he's there as well, just out of reach. I doubt he's even in Europe."

Draco closed his eyes and seemed to concentrate. "I can't feel him," he whispered, frowning.

"Can you feel me? It's like a tickle, like remembering something you promised you wouldn't forget."

At length, Draco finally said, "No, I can't. I don't know. I don't think I ever could."

"Oh," Hermione said, worrying her lip with her teeth. "Well, that's all right. We'll just use me. We'll find him, I just know it now. And when we do..." She narrowed her eyes. "I'm going to hurt him."

Draco chuckled softly, holding her tightly against him, the cooling water lapping at their bodies. "You mean you're going to grab him and hug him and make sure he never does anything so stupid again."

Hermione's eyes welled. "Yeah, that, too."

Lucius dusted the sticky, wet snow off his behind. Brooms were plebeian, anyway. He handed the offensive artefact back to Kent.

"I appreciate the offer, but it appears that even brooms are too risky when one's magic is unstable." A year ago, Lucius would ~~have~~ admitted...not even to his own child, let alone to a perfect stranger...that his magic wasn't in full form. Weakness was not to be borne, and discussing one's weakness... well, that was for Muggles.

But Lucius was learning that Canadians weren't as backwards as he'd thought...though the cheese and gravy on chips was completely uncalled for...and they were generally very kind.

Take Kent, for example. The man had offered...and followed through on his offer...to show Lucius around Ilsa, a tour that had taken all of ten minutes by lorry. But since then, he'd been acting as though Lucius were his best friend, and Lucius, despite his misgivings and private opinion that Canadian wizards were only a step away from Muggles, had allowed the familiarity because with the stormy snow and unforgiving cold, it was hard to remember what any sort of warmth felt like.

It was hardest at night when he swore he could smell Hermione on the cheap hotel pillow, or sense Draco in the shower, using up all the hot water.

He hoped they were happy, though he supposed they must be pretty upset with him. After that wore off, though, he did believe they'd be happy.

Though a part of him wished that they missed him terribly. It was selfish and cruel, but he didn't want them to get over him too quickly. Though he tried not to even admit that to himself.

"I don't know what you're running from, friend, but I can assure you, it's never better to leave when you can stay."

"What is that, some old Canadian proverb?" Lucius grumbled, hating the sensation of a wet arse.

Kent chuckled. "Not at all. It's some old Kent wisdom, actually. I get the feeling that you're running away, and I think it might be time you went home."

"In case you hadn't noticed, that is what I'm attempting to do." Lucius indicated the broom and crossed his arms over his chest.

"Ah, but you don't plan to go *home*," Kent said, nodding as if he were entirely right. "You're planning on leaving so you can run some more, preferably to a more hospitable climate, am I right?"

"You know nothing," Lucius snapped, turning on his heel and promptly slipping on some black ice on the pavement. He corrected himself immediately, but found it difficult to continue his haughty departure after the flub.

"I know who you are, Malfoy," Kent said suddenly, making Lucius halt in his tracks. Kent had only ever called him by his given name.

"Oh?" he asked in feigned politeness. He wondered if the butterbeer-bellied man would try to extort him.

"You're Lucius Malfoy," he said calmly, not looking away from Lucius' impassive gaze. "And you have two frantic people desperate to know where you've got off to."

"What are you talking about?" Lucius asked, narrowing his eyes. He'd said nothing about the life he'd left behind.

"I know you think we're all arse-backward here in the Great White North, but owls still come our way, and more than a few inhabitants of this town subscribe to the newspapers from your home. After all, we were caught with our pants down, so to speak, when it came to Voldemort, because we weren't kept abreast of the situation. We have to make sure nothing like that happens again. And it just so happened that a couple people get the *Daily Prophet* from London, and it just so followed that they knew exactly whose face looked out from its pages this very morning."

"My face? In the *Prophet*?" Lucius shook his head. "You must be mistaken."

"Follow me," Kent said brusquely, leading Lucius to his truck. He opened the door and grabbed up a newspaper, handing it to Lucius.

With cold fingertips, Lucius took the issue of the *Daily Prophet*. Sure enough, he saw his own face staring back him. Not his best picture, either. Why did those morons insist on using every horrible picture of him? It was beyond insulting.

He scanned the article and saw that neither Draco nor Hermione had actually consented to it. That meant they weren't really looking for him, just that Skeeter had gotten wind of his disappearance.

"And if that isn't enough to convince you," Kent said, reaching back into the truck. He handed Lucius another bundled paper.

Unfurling it, Lucius saw it was the *Wizarding World News*. A short article written by Franklin Triptenhoof revealed that Hermione and Draco were looking for him. They'd given a brief interview before leaving the country to find him. They implored him to return home, said they needed him... Even without Skeeter-style embellishment, Lucius could read between the lines enough to glean his son and lover were devastated. They also relayed their intention to, in Draco's words, 'Scour the Earth for that bastard and show him a thing or two about belonging.'

Though Draco had probably meant it as a threat, it sounded more like a promise.

"Now, I don't know much about what you wizards and witches get up to across the pond, but here in Canada, we call that sort of thing polyamory, and it's perfectly acceptable. I think...and I hope you don't mind me saying so, because I intend to anyway...you're being ridiculous. This young woman..." Kent jabbed a pointy finger at Hermione's pleading, pale face. "...She's the brightest witch of her age! She helped Harry Potter defeated Voldemort! You must be mad if you think you *deserve* her, let alone deserve to give her up! And that's not even to mention your son. I don't know much about him, but I do know you well enough to assume that you love him more than anything on this planet and all the rest. So *what*," Kent demanded, "are you *doing* here?"

Lucius traced his finger over the image of Hermione's tightly curled hair. Then he moved to stroke Draco's pointed chin.

"I don't know," he said honestly, frowning as the images of Draco and Hermione reached out as if to grab hold of his finger. "The right thing?" And it was no longer an answer, but a question.

"The right thing would be to get over yourself and your damn insecurities. And I'm sure you'd never thought you'd hear someone say that...a man like you with insecurities, indeed! But it's true. Let them love you, Lucius."

Lucius accepted the lift back to the hotel room. He stiffly thanked Kent for the loan of his broom and left him sitting in the lorry, shaking his head in dismay.

When Lucius was in the privacy of the dimly lit room, only then did he drop his head into his hands and wonder about how such a smart man had become so stupid.

"Well, I didn't expect to be able to drive all the way there," Hermione said as she and Draco boarded the plane.

Draco was taking very small steps. Hermione'd tried to keep him from watching the planes take off, but he'd caught sight of one through a huge window and promptly turned around.

As he'd walked away, Hermione noticed something strange. When Draco wasn't with her, she couldn't feel him or Lucius any longer. The closer she came to him as she chased after him, the stronger Lucius felt inside her mind. Strange, because before, it hadn't mattered if she were alone or with one or both of them. She'd always had that niggling sensation that they were nearby, though she hadn't even realised what it was until Lucius had left and one part was conspicuously absent.

"Draco, stop," she'd said, grabbing his arm. "I can't find him without you. I need you. Please."

Draco had looked out at the airplanes uncertainly, but he'd nodded and boarded with her.

Having met Harry before they'd left for the airport, they were both now owners of falsified passports. Then they'd sat in the airport lounge for hours while they'd decided where to go. When Hermione focused on that little feeling of Lucius in her head, she had flashes of images and sensations. He was cold. There was white. There were wands.

Lucius didn't speak Russian, so Draco had vetoed that. There were places in America that had snow this time of year, but none were wizarding communities, so the wands didn't fit.

When Hermione had said *Canada* aloud, it had just seemed right. Even though she very much doubted that Lucius would ever willingly go to what he assuredly believed was a wasteland, Hermione's own test-Apparition had failed miserably, and that had only been within the scope of the Manor, so it was safe to assume he *hadn't* meant to go there at all.

In any case, they had nothing to lose.

"They must use magic," Draco muttered, still talking about the planes as he settled himself into the luxurious first-class seat. He was nervously eyeing the other planes on the runway, jumping as a flight attendant announced that seatbelts were to be worn.

Hermione helped Draco with his, to the amusement of an older man across the aisle.

"Hush, Draco. I don't want to have to Oblivate anyone on this trip."

"Except me," he retorted. "When we land. I'll have nightmares if you don't."

"You'll wish for nightmares if I try to Oblivate you using my magic at this point." *Damn* Lucius for leaving them like this!

The flight wasn't overly long, but neither was used to sitting in one place. Draco fell asleep first, his hand curled tightly around Hermione's, his lips softly parted as his breath came in sweet puffs.

Hermione settled herself against him and closed her eyes, thinking about all the horrible and wonderful things she would do to Lucius when she got her hands on him.

"Can you just follow the directions as I say them?" Hermione asked the driver of the cab.

"Sure, sweetheart," the driver said, smiling into the rear-view mirror.

Draco glared at the man, but he didn't seem to notice, he simply called in the fare and told the person on the other end he didn't know when it would be over.

Hermione concentrated hard, but there was so much commotion around the airport pick-up area that she couldn't get a feel for Lucius.

"Just... go straight," she said, frowning.

It was another five minutes before she was able to focus enough to tell the cab driver to turn around and head farther north. He didn't make an objection, simply manoeuvred the cab around and began to drive in silence.

"Are you sure you can do this?" Draco whispered. "With our magic being messed up, there's no reason to believe that what you're sensing is really him."

But Hermione shook her head. "I think this is something deeper than magic, Draco. This feels real right down to my soul. I... I can't describe it, but I trust it. I have to."

After two hours, Hermione stopped watching the cab fare inch higher and higher. It was enough to give a girl with her frugal upbringing a heart attack, though Draco told her not to worry. They had enough Muggle money to live at least a week, more if they were careful.

"All right, go left here," Hermione said quietly, not wanting to wake Draco.

The cab driver obediently followed her direction. The snow on the ground was getting thicker, the air crisper even through the heated cab. The roads were a little rough, and the terrain wasn't as hilly and tree-covered as it had been just beyond the airport.

"Follow this road as long as you can," she said. Lucius was straight ahead; how close, she didn't exactly know. But if they kept going on this road, they would find him. The tingle in her head was getting stronger the closer they came. She never would have believed such a thing was possible, but Hermione had to trust that whatever she was doing was working.

For nearly another hour they drove until the cab was bouncing vigorously on the frozen-dirt road. It would be dark in another hour, and this far north, driving could be dangerous. She shivered.

"Dead end, miss," the driver said apologetically, slowing the vehicle to a stop.

Hermione gaped. She could clearly see the road continue for at least another mile.

"Sir, there's plenty road left," she protested, shaking Draco awake.

"There's not another foot of road to drive on. The snow's at least two feet deep here."

"Hold on," she said, opening the side door. Getting out, she could only shake her head. The road didn't stop. It was clear of excess snow and was easily passable. The mile ahead looked no different than the mile before.

She stepped in front of the cab to demonstrate this, but she only made it a metre ahead before she realised why the cab driver was so insistent about the road ending.

Hermione hurriedly opened Draco's door and hauled him out. He sleepily protested, but woke up quickly thanks to the chilly night air.

"Merlin, Granger, what the hell are you doing? My bloody balls will fall off in this cold!"

"Draco, come here and tell me what you feel."

He walked toward her sceptically, but his eyes widened when he realised what she was talking about.

"Wards," he whispered. "Strong ones. This is a wizarding area."

"Oh, Draco, we've found him! He's so close, I can feel it. Can you pay the driver? It's going to cost a small fortune. We probably should have rented a car."

But Draco was already gone, giving the driver a tip higher than the total cost of the trip. The driver waved and turned around, leaving Draco and Hermione in the middle of the street in the freezing cold with the sun setting in the bleak horizon.

Things had never looked better.

"Let's go, Malfoy," Hermione said cheerily, grabbing his hand and their scant luggage.

Draco held her tightly against his side as they began to walk down the street, slipping occasionally on the icy road.

"I'm going to have to hit him," Hermione mused, her anger at Lucius somewhat abating in light of their nearness to him.

"You're rather violent, aren't you?" Draco asked, laughing. He pulled her in for a kiss, and for the first time since Lucius had left them, Hermione didn't feel wrong about it. She indulged in the kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck and holding him against her, stealing his warmth and sharing her own.

"I prefer to think of it as fierce," she retorted, biting his lower lip.

They walked for over an hour, the air cooling significantly once the sun had set. They spent most of the time deciding one what to do with or to Lucius once they found him, but they also reminisced about all the time they'd spent together, which made the plans for Lucius' punishment a little less interesting.

"I think I might hit him just because of this walk," Draco grouched, rubbing his hands over his arms and then Hermione's, trying to create heat.

"Oh, lights!" she cried, pointing into the distance. She went to break into a run, but Draco held her back.

"You don't need to be breathing heavily in this type of cold. Merlin only knows what that'll do to your lungs."

"Right," she said, wringing her hands and trying to pace herself. "Draco..." she whispered, tears forming in the corners of her eyes.

He seemed to understand what she was asking for and pulled her into a sideways hug as they hurried down the narrow street.

They eventually came upon a general store. It was the source of the lights, though all other lights in the town seemed to be off save for the streetlamps. It was an odd mixture of Muggle and wizarding worlds, with vehicles and electrical lamps juxtaposed against a tall turret that housed hundreds of owls and old-fashioned shops selling various wizarding items.

It was actually quite beautiful in its eccentricities.

"Let's see if they've something warm to eat or drink," Draco suggested, and Hermione eagerly agreed, desperate for some tea, though she was aware that Canadians were partial to coffee.

A bell over the door rang as they hurried in, bringing a heavyset wizard from the back room.

"Welcome to Ilsa, friends!" he cried, tapping his wand at a pot of coffee and gesturing for them to come in.

"Excuse me, sir?" Hermione said, gratefully taking the proffered cup of coffee and watching Draco do the same. He sniffed it, nose wrinkling, but he added copious amounts of sugar and milk before taking a cautious sip. He cleared his throat to cover his choking and put the coffee mug back on the counter.

Hermione was a little less obvious in her rejection of the drink, but she enjoyed the warmth in her hands even if she couldn't quite bear it in her belly.

"Have you seen an older wizard, looks remarkably like me?" Draco said, standing up straight to cover his fear that Lucius wasn't here after all.

The storeowner nodded slowly. "Lucius Malfoy. So you're Hermione and Draco, then. I thought I recognised your faces, but it's been a long day. I think old Lucius'll be happy to see you, though he might not act like it at first. Give him time, friends, he's almost made his decision, and I think your being here will push him over the edge. In a good way, of course."

Draco frowned. "You seem to know a lot about my father. Where is he?"

"Hold your horses, young man." The storeowner tried to sound stern, but his wide smile gave him away. Hermione liked him immediately. "You're an awful lot like him, you know. I know about him because he's had no one to talk to, and I happen to be a great listener, even if it does seem as though I talk an awful lot. He talked and I listened. And he's here, in Ilsa. I'll take you to him."

"Oh, thank Merlin," Hermione cried, grabbing Draco, who gripped her tightly and pressed his lips against her hair.

"I'm sorry I doubted you," he whispered.

"We found him. I knew we would, and we did. Everything's going to be okay. I won't even hit him, I swear. I swear." She was babbling and she knew it, but Draco didn't seem to mind. He was nodding and blinking rapidly.

The storeowner cleared his throat and smiled widely at him. "Glad to see I gave him the right advice. You're good kids. Let's get moving."

Hermione followed quickly and had to practically shove Draco into the truck, jumping in after him and shutting the door quickly.

Kent, who'd introduced himself after locking up his store, drove quickly and confidently along the slick roads until they reached a somewhat rundown hotel.

"There is no way my father is staying here," Draco said, sneering.

Kent laughed good-naturedly. "Think whatever you will, he's definitely there unless he's co-opted someone's house."

Draco laughed. "That sounds more like it, actually."

"Out you get," Kent said, ushering them out.

"Thank you so much," Hermione whispered, shaking Kent's hand solemnly.

"You're a good sort, Hermione. You take good care of that man. He might seem like he doesn't have a heart, but he does; he just doesn't know how to take care of it. Or use it. But I think he'll be more open to the idea now. Just... go easy on him."

"Not bloody likely," Draco drawled, shaking Kent's hand as well and then taking Hermione's.

"Room thirteen!" Kent called from the truck.

Draco looked at Hermione, who smiled tightly. She was excited and nervous and still quite angry.

But mostly she missed Lucius and needed to feel him in her arms.

Draco lifted his hand and knocked under the gilt number thirteen. The sound echoed around the dark and empty street, and Hermione held her breath.

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

It would take Lucius quite some time (years, even, though he would never admit to being so slow on the uptake) to realise the importance of the feeling he'd had moments before the knock on his door changed his life forever.

In the furor that followed, he'd never really contemplated the sensation that had rolled over him, making him feel safe and secure and whole.

He felt *loved*. And he felt like he was home.

Which, of course, made absolutely no sense whatsoever because he was currently holed up in the saddest of sad motel rooms, pondering whether he trusted his faulty magic enough to just take a Portkey and be done with it...and if he ended up in the ocean, well, at least it wouldn't be *Canada* anymore.

Suddenly it seemed stupid to have ever thought that he'd be anything but perfectly all right.

And when the knock sounded and his stomach tightened because *it just couldn't be*, Lucius' sensation of completion was put aside in favour of telling Kent that, no, he did

not want to try a poutine and would he please stop asking, thanks ever so.

He swung the door open, and he was struck by how utterly *uncliché* it was to note that time had stopped.

Then Lucius' arms were full of Hermione Granger, and his eyes were full of his son, and he realised there would be no more running.

"You complete and utter *arsehole!*" Hermione cried, swatting at him angrily. Though how she could see him through her watery eyes, he'd never know.

"Hermione," he said in wonder. "Draco." He easily took her abuse because it didn't really seem *couth* not to.

Hermione stepped back a moment to make room for Draco, and Lucius was struck.

Literally.

"And you deserve worse," Draco snapped before yanking Lucius into his arms. Lucius allowed the mistreatment, though his cheek stung from his son's admonishment. How things had changed.

Lucius didn't even try to protest the charge, and he was even less likely to reproach his son when he noticed how the boy was shaking in his arms. A cool hand touched his flaming cheek, and Lucius realised beyond the basics what was happening.

"How did you find me?" he asked, his voice steady only from decades of practise.

"Hermione has a handy little homing device," Draco said with the same trained nonchalance with which Lucius had spoken.

"I could feel you," she whispered, folding herself into their hug. "How far you were, when you were nearer. I knew. And you'll never run away again, will you, Lucius? Not only because I can find you, but because it was a damned cowardly thing to do, and you've proven that you're a lot of things, but never that. You can leave the triad, if you want to. If you have to. I won't like it, but it's up to you. But you can't run away without explaining yourself. You... you can't do that again. All right?"

Draco hushed Hermione softly, pushing her hair back from her face and kissing her forehead. She was shaking her head, but she appeared calmer.

"I thought I was..." Lucius wanted to explain, but suddenly he couldn't understand his reasons, and he knew *if* he didn't understand, there was no way they could. "I thought it was the right thing," he finished lamely.

"Light the fire, will you, Father?" Draco asked, gesturing toward the well-used fireplace in the corner of the room and rubbing Hermione's arms briskly.

Lucius reluctantly left their embrace to stoke the dying embers, but Draco drew him back.

"We're together now," he reminded Lucius. "Use magic."

But when Lucius drew his wand, Draco stopped him again. "Wandlessly. Prove that you want this."

Hermione was watching him steadily, hope fighting with resignation in her eyes, and Lucius hated to see her look so sad.

But he was afraid.

Wandless magic had never really worked for him before. It came and went, but it was much more difficult and less effective than when he used his wand. It was part of the reason he'd been able to convince himself to leave. Draco's and Hermione's wandless magic worked perfectly with almost no effort...he obviously wasn't on the same level as they were.

But Draco was acting as though he just had to want the triad, to give himself over, fully. Had he ever done that? He'd accepted, even fought for and pursued, what they had together, but had he ever really abandoned himself to it?

Finding strength in Draco's familiar grey eyes, Lucius took a deep breath and held his hand out toward the hearth. He closed his eyes and thought of how much *he* loved Hermione and Draco. How much he *wanted* them, all together. And he whispered, "*Incendio.*"

And the heat was instantaneous.

The fire roared, and Lucius instinctively pushed Hermione and Draco back, though the flames quickly subsided, flickering softly in the confines of the fireplace.

Draco had a smug smile on his face, but Hermione still looked uncertain. Recalling her rather rambling speech, Lucius drew her closer to him.

"You're right, of course." He dropped his head, blinking. He hadn't expected this to be quite so hard...not that he'd really expected it at all. "I ran because I was scared. I thought you couldn't possibly love me as you do Draco. And I thought Draco deserved a chance to be the only man in his marriage."

All at once, the truth crashed on Lucius even harder than the previous epiphany about *wanting* them.

They wanted him.

"But you do," Lucius continued, dazed. "You love me." He looked at Hermione in awe before turning to his son. "And you want me in your marriage."

Hermione laughed wetly and slapped Lucius on the arm. "I do love you, you silly, infuriating, beautiful man." And while Lucius absorbed that, Hermione said to Draco, "And I love *you*, you pesky, spoilt, perfect man."

Draco grinned widely and winked at his father before kissing Hermione's nose. "And for some reason, I love you, you swotty..."

Lucius picked up the thread. "...Lovely..."

"...Irritating..."

"...Brilliant..."

"...Know-it-all..."

"...Stunning..."

"Draco!" Hermione interjected after watching the volleying back and forth. "I think you should add something nice. Your father is saying all the good things, and it sounds like you might not like me very much!" Though Hermione's eyes were red-rimmed and she seemed very tired, a playful smile curved her lips.

"You know how I feel," Draco whispered, suddenly serious. His tone spoke of a hundred nights of whispered promises under the sheets or under the stars. And Lucius didn't feel jealous because he knew it was his, too.

It was all his, too.

"So," Draco said, breaking Lucius' thoughts with his light tone. "Canada, Father?"

Still in disbelief that he was apparently forgiven, Lucius laughed. "Not my first choice, but I've come to... appreciate their quaint way of life."

"Actually," Hermione said, eyes bright with the desire to share knowledge, "Canada has one of the most ideologically advanced wizarding communities in the world. Homosexual witches and wizards have been able to get married here for centuries."

"Good for them," Lucius said. "I, for one, cannot wait to get out of here. And now that we know ~~w~~can..." He trailed off when he saw Draco staring at Hermione.

"Who else can get married here, Hermione?" he asked quietly, eyes intent.

Hermione looked thoughtful. "Just about anyone. Magical creatures, as long as they are of human intelligence...werewolves and centaurs and even goblins, if I remember correctly."

Draco was about to say something else, but Lucius caught his eye. He knew what his son was getting at, and he already knew the answer. Kent had said that polyamory was fairly popular in this community, and that marriage between three people was perfectly legal and recognised. The recognition wouldn't follow them back to Britain, of course, but it was a great deal better than nothing.

Over Hermione's head, Lucius mouthed *later* at his son, and Draco nodded once.

If there was to be a wedding, Lucius wanted to propose properly, not in some slum with pathetically low-count cotton sheets and plastic flowers in cheap vases on the bedside tables.

Not to mention the fact that he was going to be proposing alongside someone, and that would take special planning.

Finally warmed by the fire, Hermione and Draco became less animated as the evening wore on, and finally, Lucius had to send the pathetic pair to bed.

They curled around each other under the blankets, falling asleep in a matter of minutes, but not before telling Lucius they loved him and waiting expectantly for his words in return. And he said them. And he meant them.

And everything was right and easy as he watched them sleep for over an hour, knowing they were safe and happy and full of forgiveness that he didn't deserve but would greedily accept.

When he finally joined them, two pairs of tired arms wrapped him in a tangled embrace, and finally he understood that this was where he belonged.

Draco watched lazily...contentedly...as Hermione snogged his father.

He was more than willing to give the two the time together they obviously needed after such a confusing and utterly *use/less* separation. Hermione had been at risk of losing more, in Draco's eyes.

Lucius would *always* be his father, whether he ran away to Canada or just away from their bed. But Hermione had almost lost her lover, and that, he knew, had been very frightening.

That wasn't to say that Draco hadn't been both terrified and furious. He'd kept himself going on just the adrenalin of what he planned on doing to his father, and the fear that he'd never be able to find him.

Annoyingly enough, once Draco *had* found him, his anger had pretty much disappeared, with just enough left over for a very well-deserved punch.

Hermione moaned softly as Lucius devoured her lips, obviously starving. Draco may not ever understand what had driven Lucius away...he suspected even Lucius did not entirely understand...but he was willing to forget the entire thing if it meant getting his father and Hermione back to Wiltshire where they belonged...with him.

But if he'd interpreted his father's intentions correctly, they might be in Canada longer than either of them had anticipated.

As Draco watched Hermione roll her hips up against Lucius' form, he thought about what being married meant to him. Pure-bloods very rarely divorced, so his parents' own split had come as a shock. To Draco, marriage was an institution, but that didn't mean it took a certain *type* of person to join. In his opinion, which he liked to think was rather enlightened, marriage should be available to anyone who could do it justice.

Of course, before Hermione, his ideas hadn't been quite so... evolved. But no matter. As far as he was concerned, they were all already married. 'I love you's had been exchanged all around, they lived together, they planned on having children... the only difference would be a certificate that wouldn't even be truly valid in his home country.

But it mattered to him.

And he *wanted* it. He surprised himself, actually, with the intensity with which he wanted to be married to Hermione, and to his father, in a way. It didn't mean that he and his father were married to *each other*, really, just that they were all together.

Draco shook his head. Those details didn't really matter.

"Are you just going to watch all day, or do you plan on contributing?" Hermione asked with impressive alacrity as Lucius sucked her nipple into his mouth.

"You plan on going at this all day?" Draco asked, smiling.

Hermione turned her head to look at him, and there was such a grateful peace in her eyes that Draco was almost stunned by it...almost. He knew, however, that a similar expression was mirrored on his own face.

Lucius made a sudden move that Draco made a mental note to try later, and suddenly Hermione was straddling his father in the centre of the bed.

"In a *hotel* room?" Draco teased his father. "How *tawdry*."

Lucius *tsked*. "There can be nothing tawdry about making love to the most important woman in your life."

Hermione laughed. "And *that's* how you sweet talk a girl. Draco, I hope you're making notes."

Draco leaned over and bit Hermione's thigh. "And I hope you're not suggesting I need them," he said haughtily.

"Of course not," Hermione whispered soothingly, threading her fingers through Draco's hair. He leaned into the touch like a cat, enjoying the attention.

"But they wouldn't go amiss," Lucius added smartly, patting Draco's head patronizingly.

Draco snapped his teeth at his father's hand, and Hermione laughed. "My boys," she whispered, smiling and leaning back down to kiss Lucius.

Shimmying out of his pants, Draco hoped he wasn't being too forward. But he'd gotten used to a certain level of intimacy, and things had been quite strained even before Lucius had left. Now he wanted to reassert that they were *together*, and he could think of no better way...though somewhere in the back of his mind, he thought he heard Hermione's chiding voice saying he was confusing sex with intimacy, but his cock was hard from the noises Hermione had been making, and he didn't much care.

They'd sort the actual intimacy out later, he was sure.

"I think my son has the right idea," Lucius said lowly, and Hermione glanced over, grinning wickedly when she saw Draco, naked and hard for her.

She moved off Lucius to divest him of his pants, and quickly doffed the borrowed tee shirt she'd been wearing. She looked between the two of them, seeming at a loss, but Draco was quick to direct.

"Straddle him again, but facing his feet," Draco said, kneeling on either side of his father's legs and helping Hermione into position over Lucius' groin. "Don't seat yourself yet," he said softly, kissing her for the first time that morning.

"Father, prepare her." Draco slid his hands over the smooth and flushed skin of Hermione's back and gently parted her arsecheeks, distracting her with a hard, demanding kiss.

He knew the moment his father's fingers entered her back hole because she squeaked against Draco's mouth and almost tried to move away. But Draco held her firmly, whispering, "It's going to feel so good to be inside you. To feel you so tight around me, around us. And you'll feel so full, so perfectly and completely *whole*..."

Hermione moaned, and soon she was moving back into Lucius' fingers. Draco met his father's eyes and Lucius nodded.

Draco helped Hermione raise herself up enough that Lucius could position himself, and he smiled at the twin moans that escaped him when she...infinitely slowly...lowered herself onto his father's cock.

"Okay?" he asked, pushing her hair away from her face and lightly biting her collarbone. He could hear Lucius breathing deeply, and Hermione was obviously trying to match his inhalations.

"Okay," she said, smiling.

"Father, put your hands on her back to brace her. I'm going to lower her against your chest."

"I always knew you'd be a ruthless dictator," Lucius said, but any witty repartee was cut off when Draco slowly pushed Hermione back and she inevitably tightened around Lucius' cock.

Draco watched a moment as Lucius ran his hands over Hermione's body, cupping her breasts and pulling her hair back so he could kiss her.

Moving closer, Draco guided Hermione's legs around his waist, feeling completely desperate to sink into her tight heat. It had been *much* too long.

When he finally entered her, all three seemed to fall apart at the same time. Unlike last time when a rhythm was established between them, Draco was completely in control. His father couldn't really move much in his position, nor could Hermione, especially with Lucius' arms around her.

Draco began to thrust, his hands clenching on Hermione's hips as he pounded into her. Her head lolled back and forth on Lucius' chest, her mouth parted and cheeks highly flushed.

Sparing a glance for his father before losing himself in the dance, Draco noted Lucius was very valiantly trying to maintain control of himself. But then Lucius grabbed both of Hermione's hands and pulled them over both their heads, stretching her body and making her back arch deliciously. His other hand slid between her folds, and she trembled as he manipulated her.

His climax took him by surprise...he'd been watching intently the look on Hermione's face or the pace of his father's hand, and while he'd kept moving, he hadn't thought to try to stave off his orgasm.

"Fuck!" he cried, sorry it was over already, but unable to regret the beautiful pulsing of his entire body.

He slowly slipped out of Hermione and rather ungracefully flopped onto his back, trying to catch his breath.

With another stealthy move, Lucius sat up, still inside Hermione, and manoeuvred her onto her fours while he knelt behind her, pounding into her, apparently grateful now that he could fully move.

Hermione cried out in pleasure, completely malleable to Lucius' movements. Draco, almost lazily, moved his hand beneath her to finger her clit, watching her face for signs of discomfort...Lucius was not being gentle. But Hermione seemed to love it, and only a moment later, she stiffened all over and moaned, dropping her upper body onto the mattress. Draco removed his hand, tasting her absently as his father finished inside her.

After he came, Lucius pulled out gently and shifted them so Hermione lay between them on the hotel room bed.

Draco thought that he'd never be able to sleep in another hotel knowing what depraved people like himself did in the beds *on* the covers, no less.

"I hope you don't consider that a reward for bad behaviour," Hermione said softly, shifting to face Lucius.

"Hermione..." Lucius' voice was soft and as apologetic as Draco had ever heard it. "Can you forgive an old man for his doubts and insecurities?"

"I can forgive you anything but running away," she whispered pleadingly.

Draco simply watched and listened as the two worked out the troubling differences that faced them. Lucius did seem repentant, and Draco very much doubted his father would ever choose such a route again, but it was difficult to forget when the pain of being abandoned was still so fresh.

He'd felt completely helpless without his magic, of course. That had been a staggering shock, and the defencelessness and vulnerability still made his teeth clench.

But more than that was the fear that Lucius had truly left forever. Draco was the first to admit that his feelings for his father were confused and unconventional, but there was nothing uncertain about the fact that Draco loved and needed him. And for Lucius to just leave all that behind, after all they'd suffered and shared together... he didn't know if he'd ever forget that pain.

He could forgive, though. Lucius was human, he'd proven so many times over the years with the grave mistakes he'd made. And he would...~~they~~ would...continue to fumble, confused, scared, uncertain, throughout their lives. That was just human nature. Nobody was perfect.

But Lucius had to promise they would be imperfect *together* from now on.

"Father," he whispered, his voice strained and cracking a little. He squeezed his eyes shut, surprised at the quick flood of emotion that assaulted him. Weight on the bed shifted quickly, and he laughed weakly when he felt Hermione press against his back, her slender frame embracing him as best she could.

Lucius gathered Draco into his arms, and Draco thought it should be strange with only a sheet separating them, but he was just so relieved to have his father back. He wrapped his arms around Lucius' neck and burrowed his face into his chest, checking his tears. Malfoys, after all, didn't cry. Hugging was okay, though, he was pretty sure.

"Shh, Draco, son, it's all right," Lucius said, his voice barely more than a vibration by Draco's ear.

Draco calmed quickly under the dual ministrations of Hermione and his father, and he wasn't surprised when his anger briefly resurfaced. "You left," he belatedly accused, suddenly feeling as though the right hook he'd sent his father's way hadn't been quite enough.

"I did," Lucius said simply. He pushed Draco's hair from his eyes and pinned it behind his ear. Draco shivered when his father pressed a kiss against his forehead. "I did because I was scared and foolish, and because I was wrong. But I *promise* you, Draco..." Lucius paused to take a deep breath, tilting Draco's chin up to face Lucius. Draco opened his eyes, brow furrowed as Lucius continued to speak fiercely. "I promise you I will never leave you again. Never."

"And if you get scared?" Draco prompted, his jaw clenching with the effort to regain control of his emotions.

"You'll be the first to know of it."

"Oi!" Hermione cried, making Draco laugh. He turned to give her a kiss, her wide smile making his heart skip a beat. Or two.

Draco hauled her into the middle of the bed, and she immediately curled around Lucius, taking Draco's hand and pulling his against her back. Sighing softly, Draco kissed her shoulder.

Everything would be all right... even if they *were* in Canada.

As intently as Draco had watched Lucius and Hermione explore one another earlier, Lucius watched his two lovers sleep.

His need to protect them was almost overwhelming, making him wonder...again...how he could have been frightened enough to hurt them. It shouldn't have been possible or permitted. Some greater power should have stepped in to cure the pain he'd cause them and himself.

But then, he thought, maybe it had. Hermione had found him in the barren wasteland of Northern Canada, with nothing more than a tickle inside her mind. That, surely, constituted a miracle.

Lucius patiently extracted one of Hermione's wild curls from Draco's open mouth. With his airway cleared, Draco snuffled and dragged Hermione against him. She struggled sleepily but easily gave into the merciless embrace.

Not long ago he would have been jealous by their unconscious companionship. He'd said all along that jealousy wasn't possible within a triad, but it wasn't that Lucius was jealous of Draco. He knew he could have Hermione whenever he needed her, and that she loved him as much as she did Draco.

But it hadn't been a question of what his heart wanted. His *head* had easily...too easily...convinced him that the right thing was to give them their time together. To let them be a *real* couple. And spurred on by the belief that they...like Michael and Thello...would not suffer from the magical backlash, Lucius had very nearly lost it all.

And yet, here it all was again, in his arms, in his bed, in his reach.

Lucius vowed to never try to be selfless again.

"You met Kent?" Lucius said in surprise as he closed the hotel door behind him. Hermione was still resting, and that was all to the good as Lucius wanted to talk to his son about what the burly Canadian had said.

"He seemed to have your number," Draco said teasingly.

The brisk morning air carved a path in his lungs, and Lucius sneered at the blinding white that surrounded them. The roads were covered in snow, gleaming and wet, and despite being ten o'clock, the town seemed deserted. A little snow was apparently enough to through the place into shutdown mode, which was fine with Lucius. The solitude would do them all good.

"So, you want to marry her, then?" Draco asked at length, the time crawling by with shivers just at the *sight* of the snow. The heating charm Lucius cast wandlessly did well to warm them, but that didn't help the fact that it simply looked as though it was cold enough to leave his balls behind.

"I do," Lucius said simply. His met the eyes...so like his own, but so different...of his son. "I know I needn't ask you, but I will. You wish to marry her as well?"

"Of course," Draco answered easily, shrugging with the relaxed certainty of youth. "I'd be mad not to want to."

"And you believe she'll be... amenable to our proposal?"

"Do I think she'll say yes?" Draco's eyes were gently teasing. "Of course."

"What am I saying yes to?" Hermione asked from behind them.

Lucius started unbecomingly. He hadn't heard the door open, so intent had he been on Draco's response.

"We were just saying how much you'd appreciate breakfast in bed," Draco covered smoothly, but Hermione's eyes were bright and laughing.

"I suppose now is the time to tell you I heard the whole thing," Hermione admitted, grinning.

Draco groaned and Lucius held his breath.

"You ruin everything," Draco chided, pulling her yielding form into his arms and kissing her soundly.

"Was it supposed to be a surprise?" she asked breathlessly once the kiss broke.

"I wanted to ask you properly," Lucius said softly, tracing her cheek with his knuckles. No woman should be so lovely, but since Hermione already was, it was very lucky that she had two men to love of her instead of one. One man would never be enough for his Hermione.

"You still can," she said cheekily, turning in Draco's arms to face him.

"I don't have a ring." He eyed the snow-covered ground with distaste. "And these are my only decent trousers...kneeling in them would not be prudent."

Hermione laughed. "Well, that was very romantic, Lucius. And the answer's yes, if you were wondering."

"Are you serious?" Draco demanded, his voice louder than necessary. He spun Hermione to face him, gripping her upper arms and almost shaking her.

She was laughing, trying to catch her breath as she nodded vigorously. "Of course I am. I love you both. It makes sense. *want* to. It's perfect. And we're in Canada... we might as well make use of it. It won't be legal in Britain, though," she added regretfully.

"You will be legally married to one of us," Lucius said quietly. This was something he'd given a lot of thought to, and he'd come to a very natural conclusion while they'd been sleeping. "The first man to sign the document will be your lawful husband in the eyes of the wizarding world."

"But I could never..." Hermione began, but she seemed to see something in Lucius' eyes. "Oh, Lucius, you don't have to do that. I'd rather not marry either of you than make you choose that."

But Lucius was smiling softly. He took Hermione into his arms. Draco watched with wide eyes. "I love you, Hermione Granger. In my heart, I am already your husband. Whether that transfers to paper or not doesn't matter to me. Not anymore. And it's the more practical choice. Draco's child is the next heir, and the heir has to be born in wedlock to be recognised." He raised his hand against Hermione's immediate protestations on the customs of pure-bloods. "That is just the way it is. He will be your husband legally, but we will both be married to you. No one can change that, not ever."

"Father," Draco said quietly, his eyes full of gratitude and concern. "Thank you."

Lucius touched Draco's cheek softly. "It's the right thing to do. And I know that to be true because there's nothing inside me screaming to the contrary *Like last time*, he added mentally. No, this was the answer, he was sure. And it wasn't a sacrifice, not really; it was just pragmatic.

"But we'll get married here?" Hermione asked, her excitement palpable. "We don't have to wait any longer, we can do it right away?"

"I'd rather not stay here any longer than absolutely necessary," Lucius deadpanned.

"But don't you want to invite your friends?" Draco asked softly.

Hermione bit her lip. "We'll throw a party when we get back," she said decisively. "A huge one, and all my friends will come, and all yours, and it will be horribly awkward and uncomfortable and just perfect. But the wedding... let that be ours. Just ours."

"Just ours," Draco repeated. "I like the sound of that."

"Ours," Lucius confirmed. He opened the door to the hotel room and gestured for Draco and Hermione to get back inside. The snow was depressing him, and he wanted to enjoy being affianced for the short duration it would last.

Chapter 35-Final

Chapter 35 of 35

Draco Malfoy wants Hermione. Lucius Malfoy wants her, too. What will happen when she doesn't want to decide and her magic chooses for her?

This story is beta-ed by kazfeist.

When Kent heard there was to be a triad wedding, it seemed like it was only a matter of minutes before the entire town knew. People were stopping the three on the streets and offering congratulations. Draco seemed very sceptical of the kind people, but Lucius had had a little more time to adjust and always responded kindly, if a little officiously.

Kent's wife, Marta, had apparently been aghast when she'd heard that Hermione, Draco, and Lucius planned to be married at the town hall in their normal robes. She immediately set to designing Hermione's gown and dress robes for the men, because she, of course, was a seamstress, among many other things. Hermione had asked Kent and Marta to be witnesses for the wedding, and Marta had cried and cried, even though she'd only met Hermione once before, to take her measurements. Even Kent got a little shiny-eyed, but he'd managed to keep it together.

"Are you sure this is how you want to do this?" Draco asked for the fifth time that day. The wedding was scheduled for five in the evening, and Kent was due to pick Hermione up and take her back to his house to get dressed in half an hour. Hermione had wanted to get dressed with her men, but Marta had kicked up a Molly-esque fuss, and they'd all decided it wasn't worth it.

"I'd marry you underwater if it meant we'd surface as husband and wife," Hermione said earnestly. She tugged on a silver-blond lock and grinned.

"Would you be wearing that sexy black swimsuit?" Draco asked quietly, eyes intent.

Hermione laughed. "We don't have time for your seductions, Draco!"

"Half an hour is more than enough time," Draco rejoined.

"Ah, to be a young man again, thinking thirty minutes is all it takes," Lucius said, entering the hotel room along with a burst of icy air. And Marta had suggested they have an outdoor wedding!

Draco pouted. "I could do a lot of good in thirty minutes."

"There, there," Hermione said teasingly, patting his hand.

"Draco, can I speak with you a moment?" Lucius asked in an official sort of voice.

Hermione frowned. She didn't like being kept in the dark, and for the past two days, Draco and Lucius had seemed to be planning something. She scowled at them, but they paid her no notice.

As they spoke in low tones to one another, Hermione put on her coat, scarf, and mittens. Kent's general store had been a Merlin-send, as they just hadn't been prepared for the sub-zero temperatures.

"Hermione, come with us a moment, won't you?" Lucius said, holding his hand out.

With raised eyebrows, Hermione took his hand. "What's going on?" she asked.

"Just... trust us."

There was, of course, no question that she did, so she let them lead her out of the room and behind the hotel. There was a footpath she hadn't noticed before, probably because of all the snow, but there were enough footprints to make the way a little easier.

"Want me to carry you?" Draco asked, nudging her with his shoulder and making her lurch off the path.

"I'll be okay if you cut that out!" she cried, taking huge steps to get back on the trail. She took a running leap at Draco, hoping to knock him backwards, but he barely budged, catching her in his arms and spinning her around so he only had to let go for her to fall into the cold stuff.

"Draco, please!" she said urgently. "Lucius, help!"

"I don't think so," Lucius said, smiling back at them. "Didn't we agree not to force each other to choose sides?"

"This hardly counts!" Hermione yelled as Draco feigned dropping her before his arms tightened. He lifted her back up and kissed her softly on the mouth. His lips were icy, and she gave a moment's effort to warm them up.

Then she noticed that Lucius' lips looked a little blue as well, so she extended her humanitarianism to warming him up as well.

"Come on, we don't have much time," Draco said, grabbing Hermione's hand and dragging her onward.

They trudged along for a few moments before finally stopping in a small clearing, surrounded by trees with limbs heavy with ice. The sun was already beginning to set, and the snow was glittering with the lazy strands of light.

"Here?" Draco asked quietly, and Lucius nodded.

"I'm not taking my clothes off, if that's what you two have in mind," Hermione warned, feeling a little unnerved.

"Hush, you," Draco said. He threw his hand up in a sweeping gesture, and Hermione gasped as they were suddenly ensconced in a dome of snow. The fluttering flakes came up from the ground to surround them, and with a similar gesture from Lucius, the snow was swirling around them. They were in a moving bubble of snow. It was beautiful.

And warm.

"How...?" Hermione began, but then all questions froze as Lucius dropped to one knee before her. She noticed only peripherally that Draco had moved behind her, and she unconsciously leaned against him as Lucius pulled out a small box.

"Hermione Granger," Lucius began.

"Are you serious?" she gasped. "I thought we weren't doing this. I thought I'd ruined the surprise!"

"Silly Granger," Draco said teasingly. "No one ruins a Malfoy surprise."

"May I continue?"

"Oh, yes, of course," Hermione said, giving him her attention. Her heart was racing...she didn't mind not having the big wedding, but she'd be lying if she didn't admit thinking about that perfect proposal.

"Hermione, you have given me so many gifts that I wouldn't even know where to begin. It seems strange to call you my own, but I finally see that you are mine, as I am yours. Would you do me the honour of being my wife?"

Hermione couldn't help it...she laughed. Lucius sat patiently as she laughed until her cheeks felt wet. There was something so bizarre and yet unaccountably perfect about marrying Lucius and Draco. If someone had told her a year ago... well, she would have laughed, then, too.

"Yes," she said seriously a moment later, though tears of both mirth and joy glittered on her cheeks like the snow that whirled around them. "Yes, of course."

Lucius stood and opened the ring box. Hermione was speechless as he placed the large rectangular diamond on her ring finger. It was ostentatious and completely over-the-top, but it was the most beautiful ring she'd ever seen.

She eyed it happily for a moment before throwing herself at Lucius, making him stumble back into the dome for a moment before Draco pulled them both back. She kissed Lucius hard on the mouth, insinuating her tongue into his mouth immediately. He kissed her back with fervour, biting her lower lip when she went to pull away.

"I love you, you know," she whispered, stretching her fingers to feel the ring there.

"And I, you."

Draco cleared his throat and Hermione turned, smiling. Her eyes widened when she saw he had another black box in his hand, and he was grinning broadly.

As she faced Draco, Lucius mimicked Draco's movement and pulled her back against his chest as Draco began to speak.

"Granger," he said, eyes twinkling. He took a deep breath and paused dramatically. "You're not so bad after all."

Hermione laughed breathlessly as he opened the box. His ring was identical to Lucius'. Confused, she let Draco take her left hand and slide the ring down her already crowded finger. The new ring slid beside the other, and side-by-side, they made the largest square-cut diamond ring she'd ever seen.

"Oh, it's perfect," she whispered. "Draco, thank you."

Tears were smearing her vision, and she reached out blindly for him. Kissing him softly, she thought about how far they'd all come, and how amazing it was to be a part of something so... perfect. Flawed, but perfect. Funny how contradictions like that didn't matter when you were in love.

When Draco pulled away from the kiss, his grey eyes were a little brighter than usual. He smiled at his father and said, "I think we surprised her."

Lucius said, "And shall continue to do so, one hopes."

Hermione laughed as her mitten got caught on her huge ring. "One always hopes," she whispered, watching the dome softly fall and the sun disappear through the mess of trees.

There was no aisle in the courthouse.

For some reason, that surprised Hermione. The few times she had pictured herself getting married, there had always been an aisle to walk down, slowly, possibly with her

father on her arm.

But she didn't really mind. How could she, when she was standing between Draco and Lucius, facing the minister and hearing the words that would begin the rest of her life.

It was a simple ceremony, of course. Though she wore the long white dress Marta had painstakingly created, there was no other hint that a wedding was happening. Marta and Kent sat in the front row, Marta crying openly, from what Hermione could hear.

Lucius squeezed her hand and Hermione jolted a little, surprised to have been woolgathering at such an important event.

"Do you, Hermione Granger, take Draco Malfoy to be your husband, through hardship and triumph, through strength and weakness, through life and death?"

"I do," she whispered, meeting Draco's eyes with a wide smile. Draco slowly slid a simple white gold wedding band over her finger, where it snugly settled against the band of the engagement ring, beneath the flawless diamond. She placed a thicker band over his slender ring finger, beaming all the while.

Both her men were looking very solemn and serious, and she wondered if pure-blood ceremonies were not a thing of joy like Muggle weddings were. But then Draco smiled shakily as he drew in a stilted breath, and Hermione realised he'd actually be afraid of what she'd say. Her fingers tightened on his hand as he repeated the vows back to her, his voice clear and steady though his grip was tremulous.

"And do you, Hermione, take Lucius Malfoy to be your husband, through hardship and triumph, through strength and weakness, through life and death?"

"I do."

And Lucius did, too. Another ring made its home on his hand, thicker still than Draco's and looking utterly at home on his pale finger.

It was a little strange to hear the minister 'marry' Lucius and Draco, though he used the word 'partner' rather than husband. And Hermione knew that's what it was between them: a partnership. They would raise their children as one, fight battles together, face the world as a united front.

When Draco and Lucius both said their final 'I do's' to one another, the minister touched Hermione's shoulder with his wand, and she gasped as she felt raw magic surge through her, culminating where her hands joined with Lucius and Draco.

For a moment, she could hear their thoughts. More than that, she could ~~feel~~ feel their thoughts, in the way one felt one's own thoughts, thinking in impressions and shards rather than full sentences.

Draco was happyscaredshy, and his heart hurt a little. Lucius was proudexcitedanxious, and he desperately wanted to give Draco a hug.

White ribbons of magic bound their hands together as Hermione watched with breathless laughter. She could see the minister's mouth moving, but there was no noise around her.

There was barely an instant between her thinking she wanted to kiss them and finding her arms full of both Malfoys. Draco's arms surrounded her and Lucius' lips crashed against hers, entirely too voracious to be called decent. And then Lucius pulled away to be replaced by Draco in a seamless transition that would be repeated again and again throughout their lives. Draco's lips were soft and gentle.

And then Lucius' proud feeling got stronger and stronger until Draco pulled away from the kissed and grabbed his father into his arms. Lucius seemed almost shocked at first, but he folded his son into a tight embrace, kissing his temple and smiling freely at Hermione. It wasn't a smile she'd seen a lot, and she was so glad it had made an appearance on their wedding day.

Almost shyly, Draco kissed Lucius on the cheek...the exchange of kisses was necessary, they'd been told by the minister, but Draco looked pleased to do it.

Hermione pretended not to notice Lucius' blush.

The triad signed the marriage certificate, Draco with trembling fingers, and the same white ribbons that had bound their hands now wound around the document before it disappeared, ostensibly to be filed at the Ministry.

Then the minister finally said, "I now pronounce you husband and husband and wife. I'd say you may kiss, but..."

Hermione didn't care that they'd jumped that gun...she wanted her kisses. And she got them, again and again, long after the minister left the room and after Kent and Marta gave embarrassed, unanswered congratulations.

The three easily Apparated outside the hotel room, and they entered in a sort of daze.

"Feels a little strange, doesn't it?" Draco asked, spinning the ring on his finger.

"It does," Hermione confirmed. "Are we going home tonight?"

Lucius sighed. "Home," he said in a nostalgic voice, as if he'd been away for years instead of days. "That sounds like a brilliant idea."

"I don't exactly fancy spending my first night as a married man in some sleazy hotel room, either," Draco said, directing his belongings to pack themselves. A moment later, as an afterthought, he packed for Hermione and Lucius as well.

"It's not sleazy," Hermione protested automatically, feeling defensive of the place she felt had given her so much.

But Draco continued on as if he hadn't heard her. "And that way we'll wake up ready for the party tomorrow."

Hermione groaned. "It's going to be a disaster, isn't it?"

"Of course," Draco said cheerfully. "And you'll love every minute of it."

The cross-ocean Apparition...not to mention the tearful good-byes and promises of visits and owls from Kent and Marta...exhausted all of them, though not as much as it would have before they'd benefitted from the triad's power. Hermione wasn't surprised to see that both men had Apparated directly into Lucius' bedroom before she showed up in the same place.

"Tired," she said pitifully, brushing out the wrinkles from her dress. Her bag ended up haphazardly on the floor, but there would be plenty of time to deal with things like that much, much later. Perhaps never.

"Come, pet," Lucius murmured, holding an arm out for her. She walked easily into the embrace, curling her arms around his neck as Draco completed the embrace from behind her.

"My husbands," she said happily. She reached up to tug on one of Lucius' long strands of white-blond hair, but he caught her hand and pressed a kiss to her palm.

"Our wife," he whispered, kissing her softly.

She'd grown so used to Lucius' half-ferocious kisses that the softness of this one left her a little speechless, if not quite as breathless as usual. Draco contented himself with sighing into her hair, but a moment later, his face became heavier against her neck, and she realised he could barely stay on his feet.

"Draco, get into bed," she said softly.

He obeyed after a moment, only opening his mouth to argue, but closing it immediately afterward. He undressed without flair and crawled into the huge bed, fairly disappearing beneath the fluffy duvet.

"Not exactly a romantic wedding night," she said, a little embarrassed. She was too tired, both mentally and magically, to even consider the things they usually got up to.

"We have a lifetime of perfect nights ahead of us," Lucius whispered. He pressed a kiss to her temple and unlaced the back of her dress. When it was loosened enough, he helped her step out of it and then undressed himself. "Let tonight just be enjoyed as the last calm night we'll have in quite some time."

Hermione wanted to groan again at the inference to the party. All and sundry had been invited, but there hadn't been time for RSVPs, so Hermione had no idea who would be showing up. She didn't want to know. Ignorance was truly bliss when it came to the melding of all things Granger and Malfoy.

Draco sleepily pulled back the blankets, and Hermione crawled in, followed by Lucius. There was barely time for entangling limbs before the three fell fast asleep.

"Great party, 'Mione!" Harry shouted over the din.

"What?" she yelled. The part of the hall was set up as the dance floor, and apparently hearing was an unnecessary bonus.

"The party's going really well!" Harry said, his lips moving dramatically.

"I'm getting out of here!" she said into his ear. He looked at her blankly, and she grabbed his hand and led him into the relative quiet of the 'grown-up' section of the party.

It was the only way to keep Hermione's friends from feeling uncomfortable around Lucius' friends and vice versa. Draco's friends mingled breezily between the two groups, slipping from world to world with the ease of true Slytherins.

Only Pansy Parkinson and Theodore Nott didn't join the melee in the dance room, preferring to stand by the crystal punch bowl and judge people with their eyes...especially Hermione. But she didn't mind, not with Draco casting her longing looks as Michael and Thello...or really, just Michael...demanded details of the magical ceremony. Thello looked around rather imperiously, smiling only when his eyes fell on Hermione, though he schooled his features quickly. She knew he was only too eager to play the promised game of Mario Kart, though Hermione suspected Draco would be begging off that meeting, if the heated looks he'd been sending her were any indication.

Michael and Thello had both been surprised to learn that the triad wouldn't allow them to split up without dire remonstrance. Thello even asked if Hermione was sure she wanted to be bound by such a volatile bonding, though he remarked immediately after that it was too late, anyway. Hermione didn't find it very difficult to convince him that their marriage was very stable, their magic the same. She'd never felt more in tune with two people, and she'd never felt more at peace.

Michael slipped his hand into Thello's, and when Thello didn't avoid the contact as he usually did in public, Hermione knew he understood exactly what she meant. Their triad wasn't meant to be; hers was.

Lucius was talking with his colleagues from the Ministry, and Hermione was studiously avoiding that entire corner. She didn't need to see the people she used to work for, and she didn't care if any of them had a thing to say to her. She was still miffed about those four lost hours during which she'd been *fraternizing*. She did suspect, however, that by the satisfied look on Lucius' face and the pandering postures of his co-workers, that Lucius' promotion would not be a thing of conjecture and speculation much longer.

As long as he loved his job, Hermione didn't mind that he climbed and climbed that ladder. She and Draco had Outreach, they had a mission, and Lucius being in a position of power was only to the good for everyone. No would could pull strings like Lucius Malfoy, and strings would need to be pulled and pulled hard.

"I must be getting old," Harry said, shaking his head like a dog to clear his ears from the noise.

"Can't party like you used to?" Hermione teased. Her eyes were wary as she watched Ron approach. He hadn't said his congratulations when he'd first arrived like Harry and Ginny had, but he didn't look entirely put out, either.

"Who can't party?" said Ron, cuffing Harry on the arm and gracing Hermione with a weak smile. "Mum says... congratulations," he offered sheepishly.

"Why do I get the feeling you're paraphrasing?" Hermione had long since given up any illusions she might have had about getting on again with Molly, but as long as she had Harry and Ron, and Michael and Thello, and Ginny... and of course her husbands...Hermione shivered; her *husbands*...she wasn't wanting for friendship.

"She wants to understand, Hermione, really. We all do."

Ron looked ready to launch into a tirade, but surprisingly it was Draco who saved them from his opining.

"You don't have to understand, Weasley. That's not your job. Your job is to accept it. Take your cue from Potter like you always have."

Harry frowned, but Ron didn't lose his temper. He only nodded sagely as if genuinely taking Draco's advice.

"Does anyone want something to drink?" he asked a moment later as the silence stretched on.

"I'd love a champagne," Hermione said, glad to give him something to do besides stew.

As he walked away, Draco was eyeing Harry warily. "Something to say, Potter?" he asked, the familiar rivalry rising all too quickly to the fore. Hermione raised an eyebrow at him, but he smirked at her in response.

"I already offered my congratulations, right after I recovered from heart failure," Harry retorted, looking as though he had absolutely no intention of rising to whatever bait Draco was tossing about.

"We appreciate it," Draco said in a new, softer tone. Harry nodded once, and the conversation quickly shifted to their favourite topic: Quidditch video games starring none other than themselves.

Ginny came up and handed Hermione a champagne flute, tearing Hermione away from Draco and Harry, who were debating the merits of single or multi-player.

"Ron left," Ginny said as they stationed themselves against the wall. They had a perfect view of both Lucius and Draco, of which Hermione took great advantage. Lucius was looking spectacularly bored by his company, though Hermione rather thought only she and Draco could see through his charade of interest.

"Is he all right?" Hermione asked automatically, not really concerned. Like everything else, Ron would get over it. Eventually.

"He's fine. He just feels weird here, you know?" Ginny paused and then gasped. "Oh, my gods, the way that man looks at you, I feel like *he* going to burst into flames!"

"What?" Hermione said, laughing at the non sequitur.

"Your husband!"

"You'll have to be more specific," Hermione said wryly. Both her husbands were looking right at her, so she didn't know which Ginny was talking about.

"Well, I meant Lucius, but now Draco's doing the same thing! Merlin, how can you stand it?"

"I can't," Hermione said lowly, feeling heat score her body as she thought about what she'd rather be doing at that moment.

Draco caught her eyes and slowly extricated himself from his conversation with Harry, walking nonchalantly toward the hallway at the far end of the room.

Then Hermione looked to Lucius, who was watching Draco leave. His gaze turned to her, and as she watched, he, too, left for the hallway.

"Er, I have to..." Hermione trailed off, blindly handing over her champagne.

"Go," Ginny said urgently, eyes wide.

Hermione tried for casual as she crossed the floor. She was stopped a few times for congratulations, but she barely heard a word. Finally she made it to the end of the hall where the light from Lucius' study striped the floor. She opened the door almost nervously and was immediately yanked into a bruising grip.

"You look positively edible," Lucius whispered against her ear, his breath hot and insistent. Her head fell back almost instinctively, responding to the need in his tone.

"That sounds like a wonderful idea," Draco said huskily from behind her.

Never was a protest so far from her lips. Hermione whimpered as Draco unceremoniously hiked up her skirt and yanked down her knickers, tossing them onto Lucius' desk. He turned her so she was facing him, and he held her eyes as he slipped to his knees, immediately seeking out her swollen clit with his tongue.

Hermione made more undignified noises as Draco teased and tortured her. Lucius contented himself with exploring her body with his hands, one hand eventually moving down to part her folds for Draco. Hermione rested her weight against Lucius and just floated away with sensation.

Her hand slipped into the younger man's silken hair, but when she gripped it reflexively, Draco stopped and stood, crossing the floor to the sofa and sitting back. Hermione panted as he leisurely opened his trouser placket and stroked his cock.

The party guests and unwarded door didn't even warrant a second thought as she was drawn to Draco as if leashed.

"Sit on my cock, Granger," he said, and Hermione's quim throbbed at the command. She moved to straddle him, but he shook his head.

"Back facing me."

It took some positioning, but Hermione lowered herself onto Draco's erection, her arse against his hips and her back resting on his chest. He burned at a thousand degrees, and she knew she was no cooler.

"So full," she moaned, feeling wicked and exposed as Lucius eyed her like candy.

Draco hooked her legs over his knees so her thighs were widely parted, and she moaned desperately as he spread his legs, opening her even farther. Her feet dangled and she had no traction to move, but Draco didn't seem to mind. He slid a hand between her thighs and teased her lower lips.

"Father," he said, breath damp against Hermione's neck. "I think she could use some attention, don't you?"

And Lucius' smile was predatory as he knelt between their spread legs and his mouth met her clit.

Keening, Hermione tried to get leverage to impale herself on Draco, but he seemed perfectly content to let her squirm, though she could feel his cock throbbing within her and knew he was almost as needy as she was.

Lucius' mouth on her was making her desperate, and she was vocally grateful when Draco began to thrust into her from below, slow, deep thrusts that dragged her body against Lucius' mouth and made strange things happen to her eyesight and heartbeat.

Draco's fingers twisted her nipples harshly, and the pleasurepain made her gasp as her orgasm blindsided her, making her arch and tighten and cry out in surprised ecstasy. Draco followed her immediately, holding her body against his as he pulsed into her.

But Lucius' mouth didn't stop even as Draco's cock lost its size within her. It was only moments before she was squirming again, and Draco groaned, shifting so he slid out of her.

"Stand up," Draco said, helping her steady herself as Lucius tore his mouth away to pull her up.

Her legs only wanted to hold her for a moment, which was lucky because Draco quickly moved off the sofa and then said, "Lie on your back. Good. Open your legs. Wider. Wider. Perfect, good girl."

Blood was pounding in Hermione's ears as Lucius knelt on the sofa between her legs and immediately sank into her very slick sheath.

"Wrap your legs around him," Draco instructed, seating himself on the armchair next to the sofa and watching avidly. Hermione met his eyes, and they were almost black with lust, despite the spent condition of his prick.

"Draco," Lucius rasped as he pounded into Hermione, and Draco seemed to know what Lucius was saying even though Hermione had no clue.

"Hold her down. Arms above her head." Draco moaned softly when Lucius did as directed, and Hermione was startled at the feeling of abandon the position inspired in her.

"Harder," said Draco, and Lucius fucked her harder.

"Slower," said Draco, and Lucius' thrusts became grinds against her body.

"Kiss her." This was barely a whisper, but Lucius obeyed eagerly, and Hermione was lost, only barely hearing Draco say more commands and experiencing Lucius follow them.

"Make her come."

"Come, Hermione, my beautiful wife, my perfect wanton creature," Lucius gritted harshly against her ear, and Hermionecame, soundlessly this time, overwhelmed and feeling entirely out of her own body and beyond herself.

When she came back down, Lucius was panting and resting his head against her neck. Draco was sitting with his cock in hand, stroking leisurely but seeming utterly satiated.

It was nearly an hour later when Hermione felt steady enough to clean herself up and straighten her dress.

It was another thirty minutes before she even suggested going back to the party.

And it was fifteen more when Lucius and Draco let themselves be convinced to join her.

"It was a good party," Hermione noted, speaking softly as if raising her voice would disturb the utter perfection of the moment.

They were all lying in Lucius' bed, which had become *their* bed by unspoken accord, discussing the events of the party they'd shut the doors to only moments before.

Hermione was exhausted, her feet ached, her jaw was sore from smiling, and she'd never been happier in her entire life.

"One to remember," Draco agreed, trailing his fingers along Hermione's side. His fingers grazed over Lucius' hand, which was resting proprietarily on her waist.

Hermione's eyes fell closed as she whispered goodnight to her two loves. Thinking about how lucky she'd become in this life was enough to make her fall apart, so all she could do was accept it, earn it, and give it back.

"Goodnight, pet," Lucius murmured against her shoulder, which he kissed softly before the pillow sagged a little as he rested his head.

"Sweet dreams, Granger," Draco said. He kissed her lips and whispered a good night to his father as well, which was reciprocated in a mumble and a touch of Lucius' fingers to Draco's cheek. His wedding band glinted a little in the dim light, and Hermione flexed her hand to feel her own wedding ring. It was heavy, yes, but not hard. Never that.

Some things, Hermione thought as her eyes finally fell closed and she mentally reached out for the parts of her mind that were Lucius and Draco *really do change*.

Fin.

Author's Note:

(Sequel news at bottom of note)

Thank you all so much for reading and reviewing this story. When I started this fic, it was supposed to be 10 000 words. The outline for it was a mere five lines. Now it's over 100 000 words posted over six months. When I began, I was brand new to fanfiction, having only read a lot and written nothing. Now... well, I've written probably about 500 000 words in the HP fandom, a variety of pairings, genres, kinks, lengths... and it's amazing to see so many of the same people review different stories.

Thanks to those who reviewed every single chapter. To those who PMed me to let me know that you enjoyed it or gave me ideas or support. To those who reviewed once just to say you were there. To those who rec'd the fic to other readers. And to those who just enjoyed the story as it was meant to be enjoyed. I write for you guys.

On that note, I do have other stories coming out. Right now I'm posting a Hermione/Remus fic. I have a Hermione/Snape completed that will be posting in January or thereabouts. I'm planning on extending a Harry/Draco oneshot into a longfic eventually. I've writing an original fiction (slash) for NaNoWriMo and I plan on posting that beginning in January. I also have ideas for many more stories.

If you want to be kept up to date, my Livejournal is the best place to look. I post most of my work there (only Back for Good and Some Things Change are not posted there, but from now on, that will be the home of everything I write). Feel free to friend me ([literaryspell](#)) and stay in touch.

Finally, a huge thanks to kazfeist who offered to beta for me at the very start, saddling herself with my massive fics and oneshots along the way. I'm so happy to have you on my team! You're indispensable.

And thanks to Krystle Lynne who stepped in to back-up beta, and who also beta'd this final chapter along with kazfeist. I can't thank you enough.

For those who want more in the Some Things Change universe, I have already begun the sequel. I plan to post the first chapter **tomorrow**, and every Tuesday thereafter. From my notes, it will be about 40 000 words. The sequel is going to explore Lucius and Draco's relationship, so it will contain slash and incest (this fic was originally supposed to, but I decided to leave it to the sequel for those who had stuck with such a long story and didn't like incest). The sequel will contain (this is not an exhaustive list!): threesomes, double penetration, bondage, discipline, explicit incest, explicit slash, possibly femDom (once), maleDom, object insertion (for Hermione), and the kinkiest thing of all: plot. Join Hermione, Lucius, and Draco as they traverse the business world, learn what it means to be married to two people, build up Outreach, and play PlayStation (even Lucius!). Also expect more Weasleys, Harry and Ginny, and Thello and Michael.

If you're not interested in the sequel but you still want an epilogue to STC, I *might* post the epilogue to STC as well as the sequel if I can make it work (not until the epilogue for the sequel is finished and posted, obviously).

I hope you all check it out!

I think this author's note helps explain why this fic ended up being ten times its original length! Thanks again and keep reading!