

Crowded Terminals

by sara lady dalian

Platform 9 3/4 is crowded at the end of 7th Year. Series of scenarios and how they play out for five couples, each complete on their own.

Malfoy's Weakness

Chapter 1 of 3

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Malfoy's Weakness

King's Cross always seems to be filled during the end of June. On that particular June day, there was undoubtedly more than one private school being let out. There were also families leaving on holiday. It wouldn't surprise anyone if there were some business travelers hanging around as well. The point of all this is that King's Cross station was a very public place. That was why I chose just then for the confrontation.

Everyone remarked how he had changed that year. Oh, he was still sarcastic and haughty, cold and distant—still the perfect Slytherin. But there were also little changes. He had actually smiled at a Quidditch game once—as if he had actually enjoyed himself. A test had occasionally been given back without him teasing Hermione about her perfect grades. But the arguments between Draco Malfoy and his archrival were as intense as ever. That would never change, even after what I was planning to do on that platform. Thank Merlin.

There were sides to him that nobody else ever saw, parts that he guarded assiduously. No one was allowed to know the weakness of the Slytherin Prince. That was my downfall, I guess.

As usual, the Hogwarts Express was unnoticed as it pulled into its berth. How anyone could miss the extra influx of people, I'll never know, but as I've heard many times from other wizards, Muggles just don't look properly. Everyone was on the platform, but those in the seventh year were hanging around as if they were reluctant to depart. I suppose that's something that happens most years, but I'd like to think that our class had more reason than most. We wouldn't stand exactly together, but we would stand near each other. Considering the circumstances and the company, that was an achievement in and of itself.

So, the platform was crowded. Very crowded. Outside the platform, Muggles were running everywhere. Trains were stacked on every line. On the platform, everyone and their parents had congregated. Anyone wanting to enter the barrier had to be extra careful not to let the Muggles notice, and leaving required even more care.

I could tell that he knew I was coming towards him. After all, he was a Malfoy—they were used to constantly guarding their backs. He stored his trunk on a trolley and tested the straps before turning to me.

One summer I went to the drug store for Aunt Petunia. She had called in her order; there was no way she trusted me to pick out what she needed. While I was there, I took the time to look around. After a few minutes I ended up in the hair dye section. I learned that day that his hair color was called platinum blond. I thought it was a bit amusing. I imagined he would expect no less—he had to have the best in everything. For years, I always thought of that hair color box when I looked at his hair.

That same hair was still slicked back, but not nearly as severely. His eyes were still dark grey—and they were still distant. To some, they would always be cold. His attitude was still arrogant, but then, well, he was Malfoy.

There was no surprise in those eyes. Lightening flashes, yes. Recognition, yes. Welcome—surprisingly, wonderfully, yes. Annoyance that I would choose this venue for this confrontation—that was there, too. But no surprise. How could there be?

“What do you want, Potter?” He almost spat out the question. I looked him right in the eye. I knew that he knew what I was up to. There was nothing stupid about Draco Malfoy. Not lately, anyway.

I had practiced what I wanted to say. For all my bravado and Gryffindor courage, I didn’t think I could do it without a run through in private first, with only the mirror to comment. “Draco Malfoy—” Before I could get the rest of my sentence out, he made some smart remark under his breath about Gryffindors having the temerity to use his first name. “Draco Malfoy. Seventh year is over.” I heard him muttering under his breath about stating the obvious, but I ignored him in the interest of keeping my place in a memorized speech. “You said when the year was over. It’s over. Pay up.”

He only raised his eyebrow. “Are you sure, Potter, that you want this particular bet out in the open?” The question was asked quietly, but there was no doubt that nearly everyone heard. Of course he would ask; he had been asking me that question since we struck the bet.

I took another step towards him. “That answer is the same as it always is, Malfoy. Once again, I will remind you that it’s the end of seventh year. Pay up.” My voice cracked there somewhere. Nearly eighteen years old and my voice cracks, great.

He took so long in responding that I began to worry he would back out. Something of my doubts must have shown in my eyes, because all of a sudden, I got my wish. He was standing inches away from me when I felt his fingers tangle in the hair at the collar of my loose robe. But those grey eyes were open when he kissed me. And they were not distant. The silence from the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws, as well as nearly all of the parents on the platform, was lost in a roar of approval from the Gryffindors and Slytherins.

“I don’t think we were as discrete as we thought we were, Draco,” I said with a smile pressed against his lips as he pulled a few millimeters away.

“No, I don’t think we were. But right now, I don’t think I care. As I believe I heard someone mention, seventh year is over.” He paused and seemed to savor the moment. “And I’ve been waiting for this day for far too long to care.”

I had always wanted to know what Malfoy’s weakness was. I’m just glad it turned out to be me.

AN: Thanks so much to slytherinlaurel for her beta skills.

The Graduation Gift

Chapter 2 of 3

Platform 9 3/4 is crowded at the end of 7th Year. Series of scenarios and how they play out for five couples, each complete on their own.

The Graduation Gift

The Gryffindor roar was rather deafening. Hermione was glad for Harry; he, more than any of them, deserved the bit of happiness he had just grabbed. She just hoped it didn’t turn around and bite him in the rear. However, thinking about the person that Harry was currently squeezing the stuffing out of, that had probably already happened.

Hermione had moved to the crowd’s edge to await her parents. The train from Sheffield was never on time, so she settled down to wait. Today, however, she had no book to keep her company; she preferred to simply watch her friends. Everyone seemed so happy, but she knew that for most people it was masking a deep sadness. The year had been trying; the last few weeks had been more trying than most.

She wondered, briefly, if there were Muggle stationmasters concerned about the crowds that just wouldn’t move on. There were people moving in and out of the barrier, groups of friends that seemed like they wished to permanently become joined to the station so that they wouldn’t have to leave. It was an emotion that she could understand. The ending of this year had caught most of them up short, and now they didn’t want those friendships to end.

“Miss Granger. Why, on this day of days, are you not over there sharing in the frolicsome ways of your classmates?” The voice that sounded from beside and slightly behind her was one she had come to know well over her seven years in his class, but especially well in the last year during their search for the potion that had eventually been key to defeating Voldemort.

She didn’t look up at him, but instead looked at said classmates. “Over here I can see them all. My picture of them is a happy one, finally happy.” She smiled slightly and leaned back into the brick pillar. She wanted to ask the professor why he was here, he hadn’t come with them on the Express, but she didn’t. That was a skill he had taught her over the last year—when not to ask a question.

They were still studying the crowd when she heard her name being called from down the terminal. She looked up to see her parents just crossing through the barrier, being let in by Arthur Weasley. Hermione felt Professor Snape tense up. He hadn’t meant to get caught here, she knew. Touching him with a small, unobtrusive hand she whispered, “Please, you don’t have to go. I’d like for you to meet them.” She risked turning her eyes up to him.

He only nodded, still tense, but he stayed.

Hermione stood and watched the two Muggles weave their way in and out of the middle of the crowd and down to the end of the terminal where she waited. She was sure that they had noted Professor Snape standing over her shoulder, though she did not know if they realized who he was. She had written very little over the last few months, and tried not to mention her work with him at all in case the mail was intercepted.

“Hermione!” Mother reached her first and pulled her into a tight hug. Hermione knew that her mother missed her very much, though her mother tried to keep busy. Her father, though, was nearly unbearable during the few weeks before the end of term. As one released her, the other scooped her up.

“Hello, pumpkin.” His voice was warm and tender. His hand came up to ruffle her hair.

“Hello back, Daddy.” She reached up to rub the balding spot on his head in their usual way. When he straightened up, she saw his eyes rest on Professor Snape, who was still standing near the pillar.

“Aren’t you going to introduce us?” There was something in his voice that made Hermione wonder what her father was thinking.

"Mother, Father, this is Professor Severus Snape, my potions professor and mentor this last year. Professor, my parents, Jonathan and Marie Granger." As she was introducing them, he unwound himself and stepped closer to his former student and her parents. His eyebrow rose with her introduction.

"Snape? The chemistry genius you told us about last summer?" Mrs. Granger was peering intently at the man her daughter had just introduced.

Snape's eyebrow went up again.

Hermione blushed. "Yes, Mum. Potions isn't exactly like chemistry, but..." She snuck a look at the dark Slytherin. He seemed to be enjoying her predicament.

"Really, Miss Granger, while the description is accurate, who would have expected you to admit it?" His voice was velvet wrapped around a steel purr, and she had long since stopped wishing it wouldn't send shivers up her spine.

"You're baiting, Professor, and I'm not biting today." She tried to look annoyed with him, but couldn't quite convince herself it worked.

Her father watched the byplay between his daughter and the professor. There was something there that caught his attention; and he wasn't sure if he liked it. He looked over at his wife and could tell she had seen the same thing, though it didn't seem to bother her.

In fact, it was Mrs. Granger who shocked Severus Snape out of his Christmas stockings. "Professor, we were planning on dinner here in London, a graduation dinner for Hermione. Would you care to join us? I would love to have you."

Hermione saw him pull himself up to his full height and think about what her mother had said. Then he looked at Hermione. She tried to project her approval of the idea, but she didn't want to push. He was looking at her cinnamon eyes when he said, "I can think of no other people with whom I would rather spend the evening."

Hermione felt as if that was the best graduation gift she could have possibly been given.

The Bare Bones of the Matter

Chapter 3 of 3

"It seemed, to Ron Weasley, that everyone was going a bit mad." Both his best friends were acting very peculiarly, and he had no idea what he was going to do about Susan.

A/N: CT was written before DH came out. In this installment, Amelia Bones didn't die. Please remember, as you read this, that sometimes endings have to happen before beginnings. And, as usual, I don't own this. Thanks to Slytherinlaurel for making my stories so much better.

It seemed to Ron Weasley that everyone was going a bit mad. Harry was snogging the lights out of Malfoy; even if Ron had realized what was going on quite a while ago and come to terms with the fact, that didn't mean he understood his best friend lusting over the White Ferret. Hermione was sitting at the far end of the terminal without a book in her hand. That in itself was something stranger than he wanted to imagine. And he was wondering what he should tell Susan.

Everyone about him was making plans to keep in touch, to not forget that they had become friends. But he and Susan didn't seem to be in any rush for that kind of declaration. There she was, as pretty as she had ever been to him, but he just wasn't stirred.

And to make matters worse, she looked like she was walking towards him.

"Hello, Ron..." Her voice was soft, quiet, and somewhat hesitant. Her eyes were not quite looking into his, and her smile didn't quite reach her cheeks. "I saw your family arrive. I'm glad..." She didn't seem to want to go any further.

He knew what she was going to say. She was glad that they were able to come. He was, too, and wished he could say the same to her. But he wouldn't, and she knew it.

"Where are you going? Did anyone come for you?" He hadn't seen any of her family and was a little glad he hadn't.

"Aunt Amelia is going to send a car. She just can't get away from the office right now." Susan looked around to all the families that were celebrating around her. It didn't seem right that she should have none of what was being so freely given and received by others in her class. Her family hadn't been decimated by the war; no one had died. But they were mostly dead to her nonetheless.

He knew what was going on in Susan's head. He had seen it often enough after she had decided to stay at Hogwarts last term. So many students had received the same letter. Some had acquiesced. Most had not. Susan had been one that had stayed at Hogwarts. She knew, because of her relationship with Ron, what was going to happen. She also knew that the end would come much sooner than any of them would want. And being the Hufflepuff she was, she stayed where her loyalty and diligence was needed. She kept the backstage area always ready. Somehow she managed to keep abreast of Madam Pomfrey, the house-elves, and those preparing for war.

But he also knew that she kept so busy because it was easier than remembering the letter that her parents had sent her, and the hurt it had caused.

She had slowly pulled away from everyone during those last few months until even he didn't know her anymore. It was something that he didn't like to acknowledge, but it was true. The girl looking carefully at some spot on his shoulder wasn't *his* Susan anymore. He shifted on his feet, not really knowing what to say to her. Somehow the carefully practiced words now either sounded wrong or terribly unfair. Over the Quidditch level voices, Ron could just hear Hermione's voice in his head. *Oh, Ronald!*

Despite the crowds, he was surprised to suddenly feel the elbow in his back. He stumbled forward, and Susan caught his shoulder to prevent his falling. He straightened up quickly. Her hands fell to her sides just as quickly as she let him go.

"I suppose you'll be working at the Ministry with your aunt, then?" He tried to sound cheerful, hoping he did.

She seemed inclined to play this game, if he was. "That's the idea. I don't know what I'll do, really--but she always has room for an extra set of hands. There is so much work, just now, you know." Everyone did. Those left to the task of putting together a functioning Ministry from the rubble rarely left the building or their work; there were parents meeting the Hogwarts train who hadn't seen real sun for weeks, Ron's dad among them. St. Mungo's assigned Medi wizards and witches to watch over the staff there so no one worked themselves to wretchedness.

"Charlie is trying to get Mum to let me go to Romania with him for awhile. I don't know if I will or not, even if she says yes." He looked back over at Harry who was still hanging on to the White Ferret for all that he was worth. His friend wanted him to go, had insisted in fact. "But something tells me that I'll be needed here again soon, so I thought I would stay for a while. I might see if Bill can get me a job at Gringotts." Somehow he thought his mum would have a harder time accepting him working with his

long-haired brother than his dragon-keeper brother.

Susan tried to smile, but once again, it didn't quite work. "I'm sure you'll decide on something. And I'm sure you're right. You probably will be needed back here before long." She was looking over his shoulder again. He turned to see what had caught her eye. It was just Hermione and her parents. There was nothing strange about that.

But as he watched, he noticed the shadow over her shoulder, saw their Potions Master materialize from that shadow and shake Hermione's Muggle parents' hands. His breath caught in his throat. The look that passed between his friend and their ex-teacher was nothing short of electrifying. That, more than Harry declaring to the whole Wizarding world that he was decidedly in love with the Malfoy turncoat, was terrifying to Ron. But Hermione was a big girl who, he and most of her friends thought, had been in love with Severus Snape a lot longer than even she knew--if indeed she did now.

"Ron..." Susan looked up at him for the first time that day.

He turned back to her, aware that there was none of that fire between the two of them. It was with some regret that he raised his hand and slowly ran his finger down her cheek. "It's okay, Bones." He tweaked a lock of her hair and, just before he walked away from her, said, "Take care of yourself."

It was simple, he thought, as he approached his own parents. He wanted what they had, and he missed the girl Susan used to be enough to want it for her as well--whenever that girl came back, and with whomever she wanted. That was, if she ever came back.