

Weary In Wiltshire

by Darkrivertempest

After suffering at the ignominious hands of Fate, Lucius Malfoy realizes that if he doesn't take it upon himself to change the direction of Draco's life, future generations might be at risk. Fortunately, he has a very willing partner-in-crime to help him accomplish this monumental feat: Rose Weasley.

One

Chapter 1 of 2

After suffering at the ignominious hands of Fate, Lucius Malfoy realizes that if he doesn't take it upon himself to change the direction of Draco's life, future generations might be at risk. Fortunately, he has a very willing partner-in-crime to help him accomplish this monumental feat: Rose Weasley.

"Turn on the wizard's wireless, Draco," Lucius mumbled as he shifted his body on the oversized bed. "Lovegood's program is about to start."

Hooking his arms under his father's, the younger Malfoy lifted Lucius' wasted torso, so that he could slip a pillow behind his back. That accomplished, he let his father settle against the plush feather bolster, shaking his head in disbelief.

"I don't know why you listen to that tripe." He handed Lucius a bowl of thick, nutrient-laden bisque, coaxing him to eat. "Mum is probably turning over in her grave knowing you're part of Luna's audience."

Lucius snorted. "Considering how your mother died, I hardly believe she's doing much turning." He smirked and added, "More likely indulging in mischief by causing Muggle-borns to sneeze with her ash."

"Just as well," Draco mused as he moved to the far table to twist the knobs on the radio. "I'll never acknowledge the fact that Lovegood is the reason Astoria is set to become the next Madam Malfoy."

Watching his son do his bidding, Lucius grimaced and murmured to himself, "Not if I can help it."

~*~

It'd been almost ten years since the end of the war, and things had changed drastically for the Malfoys. Not financially, of course, but the family as a whole had been irrevocably altered.

Narcissa, having deceived the Dark Lord with regards to Harry Potter's status of being amongst the living, was *Crucio'd* until she lay unconscious on the battlefield. It was unknown who had hexed her so venomously, but months later after she'd awakened from a coma in St. Mungo's, Lucius and Draco had gained an inkling of the damage to her nervous system from the continuous use of the curse.

Upon bringing her home, for the staff at the hospital could do no more for her and felt she would improve if surrounded by familiar things, they'd noticed she would pick up items and grip them fiercely, as if trying to ground herself to something steady and solid. This behavior had become increasingly worse when, in a fit of desperation during a particularly violent episode, she'd grabbed their oldest house-elf, Nini, and strangled him to death accidentally.

Afterwards, Narcissa had taken up the Muggle habit of smoking, much to Lucius' disgust, arguing it kept her hands busy and they shook less if she was holding a cigarette which happened to be all the time, barring her sleeping hours. At one point, Lucius had told her to choose between smelling like the foulest pit of Hell and he should know, as he'd spent considerable time in Voldemort's presence or spending time with her loving family without the crutch of smoking.

She'd immediately told her husband that he could go kiss a Hippogriff's bollocks and to go get her another carton of fags, thank you very much.

Since Draco was away at university, and a house-elf couldn't very well go to a Muggle market, it was up to Lucius to see to her request. He detested venturing into Muggle Salisbury the closest Muggle city that carried such things in their part of Wiltshire and had planned on telling his wife, upon returning to the manor, that if she wanted to pollute her body further she would have to find another accomplice, as he was through capitulating to this particular *habit*.

All his reprimands had died in his throat the moment he'd Apparated back to the receiving parlor to find black, acrid smoke billowing from Narcissa's wing of the house. House-elves had been scrambling and screaming everywhere, and he'd grabbed one and demanded to know what was going on.

Through its gibbering cries, Lucius had learned that Narcissa had had one last cigarette in her pack, crumpled as it was. Per Lucius' instructions, the elves had been ordered to prevent her from lighting up until he'd returned, in case she went into one of her *fits* while he was away. Apparently, in a pique of irritation, and a seizure at the worst possible moment, she'd cast Fiendfyre in a desperate attempt to light the tobacco, and had lost control immediately.

Of course, the blaze had alerted the Ministry as the Malfoys were always closely watched which had sent three Aurors to help contain the inferno Dawlish, Proudfoot, and Ron Weasley, the three available at the time. Upon arrival, Dawlish had emptied the manor of its inhabitants, while Proudfoot and Weasley had tried to gain control over the coiling fiery serpent making its way steadily through the massive house. At one point, Weasley had drawn the flame towards the lake in the back gardens, confident that it would extinguish itself with the cool waters, but one miscalculation in direction and he too was consumed by the hungry fire.

By the time the conflagration had exhausted itself, more than half the mansion had been destroyed, the strong wards on the manse the only thing that kept it from complete destruction. Weasley, Narcissa, and five house-elves had died. Lucius and Proudfoot had suffered severe burns to their torsos and arms that were unable to be healed magically. Dawlish had experienced concentrated smoke inhalation that had permanently scarred his lungs, causing him to be removed from Auror duties.

Lavish funeral services had been held for Ron and Narcissa, Lucius paying for everything more out of a sense of guilt than regret. Before, during, and after the services, Hermione Weasley had said not one word to anyone, not even to her five year old daughter, Rose. At the conclusion, Draco had said he'd observed Hermione grip Rose's hand tightly and Disapparate, leaving behind many bewildered mourners, friends, and family. Several months later, though she'd protested, Hermione had finally allowed her husband to be honoured by the Malfoy family by them building a Muggle-Wizarding library near their home in Ottery St. Catchpole. It was the last they'd heard from her.

That had been four years ago, and not a day went by that Lucius didn't miss his wife or Draco his mother. Healers had tried everything they could to help Lucius and Proudfoot with the resulting damage, but had only been able to do so much, and with the treatments unbearably painful in nature the older Malfoy had halted their work before they could achieve any measure of success. Eventually, Proudfoot had succumbed to his injuries a year later, but Lucius had stubbornly held onto life through multiple infections that could only be treated with several rounds of high-powered Muggle antibiotics.

He was a shell of his former self, an emaciated shadow that directed his business affairs from the comfort of his four-poster bed with Draco at the helm for the most part. He couldn't complain though, as the fire had spared his face, and Lucius was ever a vain peacock if there was one. He'd also gained an appreciation for Muggle things, like Arthur Weasley always had, much to his eternal hatred. The thought that kept him awake at night was how a mere Muggle medicine was able to fend off the ravages of disease when magic couldn't.

It was during the past year that Lucius had begun listening to the wireless in his spare time, relaxing with music when his muscles became tense and his flesh refused to budge because of the scar tissue. The soothing sounds would lull him into a stupor that allowed for a release of contracted tendons from the rigors of staying upright and not drowning in pulmonary fluids. He thought his entire ordeal rather repulsive, to be honest, as there was nothing more degrading than to expire because one didn't have the capacity to cough.

One evening, while listening to Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* on the wireless, Lucius was struck with a curious ache in his chest, which didn't cease until the music ended. Rubbing his collarbone, he felt his panic level rise and clutched at the duvet with his free hand, ready to call out to a house-elf, when he realized that the ache was not another symptom of his injured state. Hesitantly, he touched his face and realized he'd been crying as he absorbed the haunting movement.

Merlin's bones! He couldn't recall the last time he'd shed any tears, and that included his wife's funeral, though he loved her dearly. Malfoys just didn't cry; it was plain and simple. It was unmanly, it exposed too many weaknesses, it blurred the vision and clogged the sinuses take your pick of unwanted side-effects. Lucius abhorred all of them.

An ethereal voice interrupted his introspection.

"Do you find yourself longing for something unknown?"

Looking around, Lucius concluded the voice was originating from the wireless receiver. In a moment of sheer vulnerability, he whispered to the empty room, "Yes."

"Does your heart ache for the succor of a friendly voice?" the lilting register asked the audience.

Biting back a whimper, Lucius closed his eyes to will away the tears, but it was no use. "Oh, yes."

"Then you've arrived at the right place, gentle listeners," the voice assured. *"Welcome to Luna's Love Be Good, your connection to the witch or wizard of your dreams."*

If Lucius had been waiting for something profound to happen within his soul, he was sorely disappointed. Slowly, he opened his eyes and stared at the radio, his lips thinning. "Damnable chit!" he grouched, reaching for a pillow to throw at the device. "Leave off the chatter and return to the music!"

"Our first guest is Astoria Greengrass," Luna announced, ignoring Lucius' unheard threats. *"Please tell us what you're looking for, Astoria."*

"Pure-blood and rich," Astoria answered nonchalantly.

There was a significant pause that ended with Luna heaving an irritated sigh. *"Is that all?"*

"And handsome," the other girl added.

"What about intelligence?" Luna prompted, giving the witch a chance to prove she wasn't as vacuous as she appeared.

"Well," the other woman drawled. *"It's not needed. I can run things if he's a simpleton."*

"Oh, really?" Luna sounded like she was shuffling papers around. *"This here is Stephen Cornfoot handsome, pure-blood, and rich but in the Circe Ward at St. Mungos for the magically insane. Will he do?"*

Unable to help his curiosity, Lucius had been listening to Lovegood's program and now waited to hear what the Greengrass girl would say, as her family had not been particularly supportive of either side during the war. His interest in her answer was sidetracked somewhat when Draco entered the room bearing his quarterly reports.

"Here are the..."

"Hush, Draco!" Lucius hissed, waving him to sit. "Not at the moment."

"I'd prefer someone who wasn't so limp," Astoria groused.

"What the bloody hell are you listening to, Father?" Draco sneered as he took a seat near the bed. "Did you tune into the *Perverted Pages* again?"

Narrowing his eyes, Lucius glared. "That was an accident, boy."

Draco didn't even bother to hide his smirk. "Sure. And Professor Snape was a closet Flamenco dancer, as well."

"How did you know?" Lucius asked with a stunned expression.

This time, Draco's jaw dropped. "What, seriously?"

"Never mind," the older Malfoy muttered. "You're causing me to miss a most amusing conversation."

"So Cornfoot just wouldn't do? I understand." More riffling through pages. "I know! Let's visit the other end of the spectrum, shall we?"

"Erm..."

"How about Rabastan Lestranger? He's definitely a pure-blood, quite handsome in a devil-may-care sort of way, still rich even though he's incarcerated and a widower to boot." One could tell Luna leaned in closer to the mic. "I also hear he makes an exceptional goulash... when they decide to let him near cooking utensils, that is."

"I don't think my parents would approve," Astoria said hesitantly.

"Ah, so you need your parents' approval before you marry. Is that it?"

"It would be preferable, since they control my inheritance."

"What program is this?" Draco asked his father quietly. "I recognize old Looney, but who is the other woman?"

"Astoria Greengrass," Lucius answered in hushed tones. "You may remember her sister, Daphne, as she was in your year at Hogwarts."

"Astoria, you say?" Draco pursed his lips and tapped his thumb on his chin in contemplation. "If she's as comely as her sister, maybe I should make an offer in the upcoming season?"

Lucius snorted. "Comely though they may be, Draco, the Greengrass women marry later in life for a reason." He looked pointedly at his son. "They're all harridans of the worst sort."

"I don't remember Daphne being any such way," Draco countered. "Maybe you're a bit blinkered."

"Such common language, Draco," Lucius admonished with a tsk. "I do wish you'd stop."

Disregarding him, Draco continued. "Three of the last marriage contracts you've set for me have been terminated, Father. I don't think I have the luxury of being picky anymore, not if you want me to marry a pure-blood."

"Maybe I've been hasty..."

"Still no?" Luna sighed. *"Well, I am quite determined to find you a match,"* she told Astoria. *"How about..."* There was a significantly long pause in conversation as the listener could hear Luna tapping away on what sounded like a keyboard. *"I have it! Draco Malfoy!"*

"See? Even Lovegood thinks I'd be a great match," the younger Malfoy chided.

"It says he's CEO of his father's company, obscenely and filthy rich, and..." A little titter of laughter escaped Luna's lips. *"Oh, my! Quite the dish!"*

"Draco Malfoy?" the other woman whispered. *"Why he's positively dreamy! I'll take him."*

A loud and thunderous ovation erupted from a non-existent studio audience and floated in the air, along with whoops from male voices and whistles from female ones.

"We have a winner, my patient listeners!" The congratulatory applause ended abruptly as Luna continued. *"Let's hope he doesn't have the heart of a cucumber fried in snow. We will contact your intended and make introductions..."* She trailed off as someone knocked on the studio door and low murmurs of conversation could be heard. *"Well, it seems your beau has already provided us with an answer. Apparently he's eager to start producing little Malfoys."*

"What?" Lucius roared, turning his ire on Draco, who was smiling mischievously.

Draco shrugged his shoulders. "You should really pay more attention to your surroundings, Father. I penned a note of intent several moments ago and sent it off. It's not my fault you can't keep track of my whereabouts."

"That's all for today, my wonderful wizards and witches," Luna announced finally, ending her program. *"We'll be back next week and check up on our lovely Miss Greengrass and her chameleon on plaid, Mister Draco Malfoy hopefully we'll be hearing those wedding bells or rumours about them. But if not, always remember to put the cap back on the toothpaste, and never refuse homemade brownies."*

"Chameleon on plaid?" Lucius asked with raised eyebrows.

"Basically someone so adaptable as to be completely insincere," Draco explained tersely.

Lucius studied his son closely. "Are you insincere with your interest towards Miss Greengrass?"

"No, she seems reasonable enough." The young blond rubbed his temples. "At least there is no pretense that she would ever like me for my personality."

"Then why would Luna allude to..."

"I don't know, Father," Draco bit out. "She's mental, remember?"

Both Malfoys sat in silence. One pondered the peculiarities of Luna Lovegood and an upcoming meeting with Astoria. The other silently fumed about being outmaneuvered by his own son, and worried about the welfare of his seemingly distant heart.

~*~

It had been almost a year since that event, and now Miss Astoria Greengrass was set to become the next Lady Malfoy in a month's time. It was with immense gratitude that Lucius blessed his father's foresight to decree that any engagement in the Malfoy family be at least a year long, as he really couldn't stand the harpy, and anything that delayed the nuptials was golden in his book.

Once settled against the cushions Draco had provided, Lucius beckoned his son to sit with him and listen to tonight's program, hoping that some foolish twist of fate would steer his son away from the beautiful hag in another wing of the house. Of course, Draco might grouse about listening to the tripe, as he'd called it, but he ultimately liked to please his father, so Lucius knew he would stay.

"Welcome once again, gentle listeners, to Love Be Good," Luna cooed to her audience. *"It's the chilly month of December, and the winter is fully upon us. Happy Christmayulsolkwanzanukkah!"*

"What the bloody hell did she just say?"

Snorting with laughter, Draco patted his father's shoulder. "She just wished everyone a Happy Christmas, Yule, Solstice, Kwanza, and Hanukkah... all together."

"Barmy chit," Lucius muttered.

"No doubt."

"Tonight, we have a surprise guest that just popped around to our studio and begged to be heard."

"I did not beg, Auntie Luna, I simply asked."

Tinkling laughter filtered through the mic. *"Ah, yes, you did, dearest. Everyone, please welcome Rose Weasley."*

"Rose Weasley?" Draco questioned the wireless as if expecting an answer. "She's only ten, if that. Why is she on Looney's show?"

This was an interesting development, and Lucius planned to take advantage of it, as any good Slytherin would. "Perhaps she is there on behalf of someone."

"That's a laugh," Draco sneered. "Who would she..."

*"So tell us, Rose, how did you arrive at our studios and does your mum know where you are?"*Luna queried in a conspiratorial tone.

"Mum's out with Aunt Ginny, and she never pays attention when her nose is stuck in a book, so I decided to come here while they shop."

"Bit late, don't you think, to be out and about?"

"They're taking forever getting shagged," the little girl said grumpily.

Luna must have been drinking something at that moment because the audience heard lots of spluttering. *"Getting shagged, you say?"*

"Yes," Rose agreed. *"Aunt Ginny said mum needed to get shagged. I don't know what that means, but I hope that's what they're getting while they're shopping."*

"Erm, I see..." Luna cleared her throat. *"So what brings you in, dearest?"*

"Mum, of course," Rose replied. *"She needs another husband."*

There was muffled feedback from the mic as it was covered and low murmurs could be heard, but just as quickly, Luna returned and chuckled. *"You want to find a husband for your mum on my show?"*

"That's why you run the show, isn't it?"

"Quite right, milady," Luna sing-songed. *"What kind of husband is your mum looking for?"*

"She doesn't know I'm trying to find one for her," Rose whispered into the mic. *"But Uncle Harry told Uncle George that mum acts like Aunt Flow is never leaving, and if she doesn't bloody well stop moping, he's going to tear his hair out. And since Uncle Harry needs to keep what hair he has left so Aunt Ginny can grab it when they moan and shake the bed, I figure I'd better help him find her a husband so he doesn't have to worry about her moods."*

"You're a very thoughtful niece, Rose," Luna praised between titters. *"How long do you think it will take to find one she'll like?"*

"Well, most men are brainless, so she may have to try more than once to find a live one."

*"So you think it'll take several dates to find out if they're compatible?"*Luna asked, the audience obviously aware that she was enchanted with her wee guest.

*"On the first date, they'll just tell each other lies... and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date,"*Rose explained, having clearly worked out the answers for herself.

"But what about someone like your dad?"

"Mum loved Dad... a lot. She always told me, 'There's only one Ron Weasley,' and I know she's right because I never knew anyone else with that name. So, I don't think I can find anyone like Dad."

"I'll give the Weaselette her due," Draco drawled. "She definitely knew her father."

"Hush, Draco," Lucius growled. "It's because of us that she's fatherless."

"Don't tell me you actually care that Weasley perished in the flames," Draco snapped. "Because you certainly didn't care that Mother died."

"Get. Out." The older Malfoy gritted his teeth, seething. "You know nothing of the situation, or my regard for your mother."

"Fine," Draco spat, rising from his chair. "This utter nonsense was a waste of my time anyways." He left, slamming the door in his wake.

Lucius pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed heavily. His son was becoming more and more distant as the days went by, and he hadn't a clue as to how to reach him in time... before he succumbed to the nag from Hell, whose own heart was more frigid than a crone's teat. Lying back, he returned his attention to the sprite in the spotlight.

"What do you think dating will be like for your mum?"

"I think when somebody's been dating for a while, the man might propose to the woman. He'll say, 'I'll take you for a whole life, or at least until we have kids and get a divorce'."

"Really? You think so?"

"Dating is just practicing for when they might have to walk down the aisle someday and do the holy matrimony thing. Then they promise to go through sickness and illness and diseases together."

The listeners could tell that Luna was trying with all her might not to burst out laughing. "You don't say..."

"But I just did, Auntie Luna! Are you not paying attention?"

"Yes, dearest, I am." Luna apologized. "It's just you offer such a unique view on courtships, that's all."

"Is that good?" the girl asked in a worried tone. "I don't want my mum to get a vampire husband that'll suck her dry, or something like that."

"Oh, don't worry, Rose," Luna assured her. "I only have one vampire in my files and I can tell you he wouldn't be interested in your mum at all, unless she was O negative." She added, "What about kissing?"

"As long as they don't do it in front of me, it's okay," Rose said with disgust. "Last time I saw Uncle Harry kissing Aunt Ginny it looked like he was trying to steal her chewing gum. It was very gross."

"Sounds like it," Luna concurred. "How do you..."

"Rose Elizabeth Weasley!" came a shout over the airwaves.

"Ah, gentle listeners, welcome another surprise guest: Hermione Weasley," Luna ad-libbed.

"You're in such trouble, young lady!"

"But Mum..."

"How dare you disappear during one of the busiest shopping days of the year?" Hermione scolded. "You could've been kidnapped, or worse. And don't you even think of telling me it was for research, you incorrigible little..."

"Mum!" Rose tried to stop her tirade.

There was a telling silence where the mic was covered and the buzzing of raised voices could be heard, but no discernable conversation could be understood. Then, moments later, Luna returned to her hostess duties, sounding a bit frazzled.

"So, Hermione..." Luna began. "Rose was telling us about what you would like in a husband, care to elaborate?"

"What I'd like in a..." A girlish squeal sounded from somewhere in the room, but Hermione replied, "I don't think this is an appropriate discussion."

"I disagree," Luna said sympathetically. "It sounds as if you truly loved Ron. People who truly loved once are far more likely to love again." Minute snuffles could be heard coming from the other mic, but Luna went on. "Do you think there's someone out there you could love as much as your husband?"

"That's hard to imagine, Luna," Hermione answered quietly. "Ron was so unique; there'll never be another like him."

"Then, what will you do?"

"Well, I'm going to get out of bed every morning... breath in and out all day long. Then, after a while, I won't have to remind myself to get out of bed every morning and breathe in and out. After enough time has passed, I won't have to think about how I had it great and perfect."

"But it's been almost five years since Ron died," Luna said softly. "And you haven't moved on. Tell me what was so special about your husband?"

At first, Hermione was silent, and one could tell she was trying to gain control of her emotions, finally speaking when she felt she could muster the strength to continue. "How long is your program, Luna? It was a million tiny little things that, when you added them all up, meant we were supposed to be together... and I knew it. I knew it the very first time I touched him. It was like coming home, only to no home I'd ever known. I was just showing him how to perform the Wingardium Leviosa charm, and I knew. It was like deep, elemental magic."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" Luna grumbled. "Our time has run out!"

"That's quite all right," Hermione assured her friend. "I need to get Rose home and discuss some things."

"Don't be too hard on her," Luna pleaded. "She just wants to see her mum happy again."

Instead of addressing Luna, Hermione could be heard reprimanding her daughter once more, their voices fading until they were no more. Luna sighed.

"Gentle listeners, my heart aches for one of my dearest friends," she said sadly. "If any of you wizards listening think you have what it takes to stand next to a war heroine, then by all means send your correspondence to our show, and we'll see what we can do. Until next time, never cut what can be untied, and measure others by the size of their hearts, not their bank accounts."

That gut-wrenching feeling spread throughout Lucius once more as he found tears clinging to his lashes. Blasted and damnable Muggle-born! He didn't want to feel guilt for her situation. He didn't want to yearn on Draco's behalf for a love like she'd described with Weasley Junior. If he was a younger man and not disabled, he would issue a correspondence for Mrs. Weasley himself, but he knew deep in his heart that Narcissa had been his one true love.

Suddenly, a calculating idea struck him, and hard. Summoning a quill, ink, and parchment, he began writing a missive, laughing to himself every few sentences and congratulating himself on his supposed ingenuity.

Astoria Greengrass would never become the next Lady Malfoy. He'd bet his life's fortune on it or he wasn't the most manipulative Slytherin bastard that ever lived.

One

Chapter 2 of 2

After suffering at the ignominious hands of Fate, Lucius Malfoy realizes that if he doesn't take it upon himself to change the direction of Draco's life, future generations might be at risk. Fortunately, he has a very willing partner-in-crime to help him accomplish this monumental feat: Rose Weasley.

"Mum?" Rose called from the kitchen. "There's a *Bubo bubo* at the window, and it looks very cross."

Folding a freshly laundered jumper, Hermione tucked it under her arm and made her way into the kitchen, shaking her head in amazement at her daughter's thirst for knowledge. The girl had taken to calling animals by their scientific names instead of the titles they were commonly given. While Hermione was still the brightest witch of her age, she had a feeling that Rose would surpass her by leaps and bounds... and at a far younger age. What other ten-year-old knew the genus and species of the Eagle owl?

"Why does it look cross?" Hermione asked before entering the kitchen. Her question was soon answered when she passed over the threshold.

The animal looked like it had flown into a hurricane its feathers were that ruffled and it stared menacingly at her from the window ledge as if its condition were her fault. Hiding a smirk, Hermione opened the pane and moved back for the bird to hop down onto the counter. Since it didn't offer the rolled parchment to her, she waited until the animal sagged from exhaustion and kicked up its leg in what looked like an overly dramatic death scene. Upon seeing the seal on the missive, she now understood why the bird acted so fussy.

Malfoy.

Her lips pursed in aggravation. How on earth had the owl even found them to begin with? Wasn't there a Fidelius Charm on the cottage, with Luna as the...

"Blast all to sunder!" Hermione growled, rubbing her temple.

"Mum!" Rose whispered in shock. "You're not supposed to say *blast* or *wretched*," she pointed out to her mother.

Breaking the seal, Hermione muttered. "Well, your godmother *is* quite wretched at this moment, and I'm an adult, so I can say whatever I wish."

Rose snuck a biscuit from the jar while her mother was busy reading. "So how old will I have to be before I can say things like 'great Circe's tits', and 'Merlin's saggy bollocks'?"

"Rose Weasley!" her mother cried. "Where did you hear such language?" She held up her hand, forestalling her daughter's answer. "Wait, let me guess. Uncles Harry and George?"

The little redheaded girl sunk further into her seat so as to almost be under the table. "No eavesdropping, right?" she hedged.

Crossing her arms in barely controlled anger, Hermione closed her eyes to keep her temper in check. "After that spectacle you caused last week, I'm surprised you can still sit on your backside. You'd be pressing your luck if you think I won't confiscate your books for any other infractions."

"No, Mum! Not my books!" Rose whimpered, sitting straighter so that she could employ the maximum effect of her wounded-puppy look.

Hermione was rather proud of herself that she knew her daughter so well, and what would curb the girl's tendencies to get into more trouble than she, Harry, or Ron had ever gotten into combined... albeit temporarily. It seemed that Rose had inherited her mother's brains and the Weasley proclivity for mischief, and that was a recipe for disaster on a grand scale. There was nothing more infuriating than to try and punish your child for hexing Crookshanks hairless while she explained logically that it made perfect sense because it was sweltering outside and she only wanted to provide the poor animal some relief. Though she loathed admitting it, Hermione wouldn't be in the least surprised to see Rose end up sorted into Slytherin the following year for her ability alone to argue her way out of a mess worthy of Neville in Potions class.

"Who is the letter from?" Rose asked hesitantly, trying to steer her mother's ire away from her to something *not her*.

"Hmm? Oh, it's from Mister Malfoy," Hermione replied absently, perusing the message once more.

"Who is Mister Malfoy?"

Flipping the page over to look at the back, Hermione paused for a moment before answering. "Do you remember when your father died?" she asked quietly.

Nodding, Rose shoved the rest of the pilfered biscuit in her mouth. "The fire dragon ate him at that bastard's mansion."

Hermione just stared at her.

"That's what Uncle George..."

"Said. Yes, I remember," Hermione finished for her. "I think I need to find an alternative to leaving you with Harry and George when Aunt Ginny and I need some girl time."

"But I like staying with them!" Rose whined. "They treat me like an adult. Victoire is too snooty, James can't be bothered, all Albus does is mope in the corner and growl at me if I come near him, and Teddy fancies Victoire, so he thinks he has to be snooty too, but he's not, which really steams my kettle."

"Honestly, Rose," Hermione sighed. "I don't know where you come up with some of this stuff."

Rose shrugged and scratched her nose, leaving a smudge of chocolate behind. "So..." she said slowly, "what about dad dying?"

Taking a wet cloth, her mother bent low and wiped off the remnants of the biscuit her daughter had stolen. "Mister Malfoy is the owner of the house where he died."

"Oh." The little girl scrunched up her nose. "Does he want to build another library?"

"I wish." Throwing the dirty towel into the sink, Hermione leaned against the counter. "He wants to see us."

"Why?" Rose's eyes widened until they nearly engulfed her cherub face. "I promise Mum, I didn't do..."

"I know you didn't, munchkin." Hermione stopped the unneeded confession. "He says he has something for us."

"What?"

"That's just it," Hermione muttered. "He doesn't say, requiring us to go there in person, and..." she looked at the parchment again to make sure she was quoting him directly "...it would be advantageous to our situation if we were to acquiesce to his request."

"Blackmail," Rose said sombrely, nodding her head.

"Excuse me?"

Pointing at the paper, Rose gave her mother an impatient look. "He probably has secrets about your work and wants to sell the information to the highest bidder, but he's giving you the chance to pay him off first, so he's inviting you to a dinner party where he'll kill off his butler and frame you for the murder."

"That's it," Hermione said in utter bafflement. "I don't have a ten-year old; I have a midget with bad habits!" Pinching the bridge of her nose, she sighed heavily. "Rose, the Malfoys don't even have a butler, let alone secrets to sell. They have house-elves and detest Muggle-borns."

"Then why does he want us there?"

Narrowing her eyes, Hermione began tapping her foot. "I think it has something to do with that stunt you pulled last week, since he says in the letter he's been trying to contact me through Luna since then. It seems she's finally given in and allowed his sorely abused owl to find me, because the Wrackspurts were just too numerous and interrupting the flow of her program."

"So when are we going?"

"What makes you think we are?"

Rose actually snorted. "Mum, seriously?" She got off her chair and began washing her hands. "You've never been able to resist a good mystery." Stopping the water, she dried her hands the towel. "And this just screams Scooby-Doo."

Unable to hide her smile, Hermione shook her head. "You've been watching cartoons with Lily, haven't you?"

"It's the most brilliant thing, Mum!" Rose said with awe. "Tellies should be mandatory in the Wizarding world."

Ruffling her daughter's hair, Hermione smiled sadly as Ron's exuberance shone through Rose's eyes. "I wish it could be so."

"So?" Rose prompted. "When are we going?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "We'll see."

"That means no," her daughter pouted.

"That means maybe," she corrected.

"No," Rose countered. "You're just saying that. I've kept track, you know." Tilting her head to the side she closed one eye and figured it up in her mind. "You've said 'we'll see' seventy-eight times in the past five months, and each time it was followed up with a big, fat no."

"Big and fat no less, hmm?" Hermione drawled.

"There are no skinny no's that I've heard of."

Turning her daughter around, she gave a swift pat to her bum to push her in the direction of the sitting-room. "Off with you, moppet! You've got lessons to finish."

Rose sent Hermione a glare over her shoulder. "You can't fool me that easily, Mum."

Watching her disappear into the other room, Hermione closed her eyes against the emotions threatening to clog her throat. "I hope I never do."

~*~

"Mrs. Weasley and little missy Rose to see Master," the house-elf announced to the figure sitting in the massive, ornate bed.

"Thank you, Tessy," Lucius acknowledged with a nod. "Send them in."

Opening the door wider, the house-elf indicated the two ladies were to proceed inside to the well-lit room that had floor-to-ceiling windows with diaphanous curtains. In the middle sat the largest bed Hermione had ever seen, quite easily fitting five of her own with its parameters.

The patriarch of the Malfoy family sat off to the right side, beckoning them closer. "I'm so glad you decided to venture into Wiltshire, Mrs. Weasley," he purred, holding out his hand so that Hermione would take it. "And you as well, Miss Rose."

Hesitantly slipping her hand in his, Hermione was shocked to see how well Lucius looked, considering that when she'd visited the manor for Ron and Narcissa's funeral he'd not been able to attend because his injuries had been too severe. Draco had, though, and she was sure the son had filled in the details for the father. She'd read about Lucius' disfigured body in the *Daily Prophet* and often wondered how he fared with the disability because she knew him to be the most self-absorbed pure-blood that she knew of, barring Draco. Apparently, the flames had spared his face, for it was still absolutely flawless, even with the slight lines around his eyes revealing years of stress.

When the winter light filtering through the curtains dappled his arms, however, she finally saw the damage the fire had wrought. Crisscross patterns of healed flesh started at the back of the hand that held hers and made their way up his forearm to where they disappeared underneath the white of his dress shirt, most likely continuing to his torso. Curiosity compelling her, Hermione glanced at his left arm to see if the Dark Mark had been affected by the scarring, but it was covered by a sleeve, the cuff buttoned.

Lucius noticed the direction of her gaze and smiled to himself. "It's quite hideous, actually," he drawled, withdrawing his hand and moving to unclasp the link holding the cuff together. "But Draco has said it now looks like a dragon with a rather bulbous tail." He folded back the fabric to allow Hermione and Rose to see his marred skin.

Hermione had meant to tell him that she didn't need to see it, but she knew he would sense the lie, and so kept quiet. She wasn't sure if Rose should see such a thing, but since there was truly no way the ink on his forearm could ever be called a Dark Mark again because it was so mangled, she had no reason to keep her daughter from looking upon it. What she didn't expect was Rose's reaction.

"You used to be a Death Eater." The little girl with the deep crimson corkscrew curls looked Lucius in the eye, daring him to lie.

"Rose," Hermione hissed in embarrassment.

"It's quite alright, Mrs. Weasley," Lucius assured her. "The child has a right to know." Sitting back against the headboard, he studied the girl standing off to her mother's right. "Yes, you're correct, Miss Weasley."

A smile spread across her round face. "Wicked!"

"Rose!" Hermione buried her face in her hands.

Lucius didn't even bother trying to hide his returning smirk. "Yes, I was quite wicked. Loathsomely evil, I'd wager."

"May I see your Mark again? Mum was blocking the light and I didn't get a proper look."

"But of course." Lucius patted the side of the bed, indicating she was to hop up so that she could examine his scar to her heart's content.

Settling beside him, Rose waited until his wrist was bathed in light as Hermione was instructed to pull back the bed curtains. Looking into his eyes, the girl waited until he nodded before she began poking at the disfigured flesh, chewing on her bottom lip as if she were in deep concentration.

Lucius found it endearing.

"This isn't a dragon, Mister Malfoy," Rose told him, distractedly, still running her fingers over the misaligned ink. "It's three different runes now."

Dark blond eyebrows raised high on his forehead as Lucius looked at Hermione over the top of Rose's head. "Oh?" he said casually. "Do go on."

Hermione just shrugged and gestured to her daughter, waiting for the gobsmacked expression to disappear from Lucius' face. This wasn't the first time something like this had happened with Rose and everyone always had the same reaction.

"The first one is the symbol for strong family," Rose murmured, tracing the supposed rune at the top of the mark. "It means the faith in your family is strong and you would do anything to protect it."

Swallowing around the lump in his throat, Lucius nodded silently, waiting for her to continue.

"This is the rune for vision, but it's half filled, meaning a change in your outlook."

He stared in awe at the child sitting next to him who was touching him as if he were delicate and not something to be abhorred.

Rose frowned and twisted his arm somewhat to the side. "And this one is..." She turned it another way. "Either a deep heart or..." She looked up at him in all seriousness. "Death via piles."

Covering her mouth quickly to stop the laughter, Hermione struggled to remain impassive. "Rose, love? I think you've bothered Mister Malfoy enough."

Lucius refused to let Rose budge. "Nonsense!" Cupping the child's chin, he gently moved her face back and forth, observing her with a critical eye. "Mrs. Weasley, you have one of the most advanced witches I have seen in years, sitting before you."

Hermione quirked a sardonic smile. "Yes, I know... she's my daughter."

Releasing his grasp, Lucius thanked Rose for her time and asked that she wait in the hall until he finished his business with her mother. At first, the girl looked affronted, but quickly obeyed after a hard look from Hermione. Once she was gone, Lucius turned his attention to the woman sitting pensively next to the bed.

"Mrs. Weasley..."

"You know who I am, Lucius," Hermione said thinly. "Please use my name."

He looked contrite, but only momentarily. "I think you greatly underestimate your daughter."

"I find that hard to..."

"Hermione, allow me to be blunt." Looking between the door and his guest, he leaned forward. "She is just as powerful as Riddle was at that age."

Any colour Hermione had up to that point drained away at Lucius' words. "That can't be," she whispered.

"I assure you it is so," he confirmed. "From Dumbledore's first-hand accounts and my own personal experience, I recognize the power."

She snorted mirthlessly. "*You* would."

"*Touché.*"

Biting her lip to stop its quivering, Hermione apologized. "I'm sorry, that was uncalled for."

He cocked his head in acceptance and added, "But true, nonetheless."

"How do I make sure that she doesn't turn out like... like..."

Letting her flounder for the right words, Lucius examined her as closely as he had Rose. "You are an elemental, Mrs. Weasley."

Frowning, she wondered at the odd change in conversation. "Yes, I realized I could conjure and control several type of fire at a young age. What does that have to do with anything?"

"Why have you not schooled your daughter in her latent powers? You do realize she's an elemental as well, do you not?"

Her lips thinned. "I've known for a very long time, Lucius," she huffed in irritation. "However, knowing about it and doing something to help her are two separate concepts."

"Ah, I see," he drawled smugly. "Her ability is already far beyond your *talents*. Am I correct?"

"I can only do so much!" she ground out. "Her control is erratic at best, and if I try to teach her differently, one of us ends up getting hurt." She shifted to the side and pulled the hem of her shirt above her navel, revealing a pink stretch of scarred skin running from the front of her stomach around to her back. "This happened the last time I tried to *help* her." Dropping the fabric, she shook her head. "In this, I fully admit that I am not capable of teaching my daughter what she needs to know."

Lucius' eyes softened. "It is painful to watch our children stumble and not be able to help them stand."

Nodding silently, she reacted to the compassion gleaming in his eyes. "How do I prevent her from walking Voldemort's path?"

He winced as she casually spoke Tom's name, but then she'd never been his minion, and didn't understand just how much power it actually carried. "The Dark Lord had been starved of any emotion and human touch by that point, Hermione," he said softly.

"So was Snape, but he didn't turn into a megalomaniac!" she snapped.

Smiling ruefully, Lucius patted her arm in sympathy. "Severus had indeed suffered much in his young life before coming to Hogwarts. His obsession was of a different sort, however, not one bent on world domination. That was probably the only reason Potter was successful in defeating the Dark Lord." He closed his eyes and sighed heavily. "Had Severus been the one to set his sights on reigning supreme, no one would've escaped annihilation. I am extremely grateful his magic was tempered by his rigid control."

"Was he really that powerful?" Hermione asked, curious beyond belief concerning her old Potions professor.

"He was more powerful than Riddle by half," Lucius said, almost proudly. "He was voracious in obtaining any and all knowledge, discarding that which held no power as if it were yesterday's refuse. He once told me he could brew the Draught of Living Death before his first year. The only thing lacking was refinement."

Panic slowly seeped into Hermione's gaze. "I didn't think anything of it until she brewed a hiccupping potion just this year without me knowing about it," she volunteered in a worried tone. "She'd found all my old Hogwarts books several years ago and had been working her way through them at a rapid pace." Tears edged her lashes. "She'd admitted to slipping it into Victoire's tea so that she could watch it splutter through her cousin's nose." She buried her head in her hands and whimpered. "What am I to do?"

Lucius indulged in a calculating smile. "We shall see what we can do, my dear."

~*~

Swinging her dangling feet back and forth under the settee, Rose watched the goings-on at Malfoy Manor while her mother spoke with Mister Malfoy. At least that was until she spied the Ming vase standing innocuously enough upon a marble dais in the corner. Like a moth drawn to a bright flame, Rose slid from the sofa and walked to the pedestal, slowly circling and studying it in morbid fascination.

"Do you know what it is?" said a voice originating from the heavy shadows in the corridor.

She stopped, but did not startle as most children would when caught doing something they shouldn't. "It's a vase from the Ming dynasty, specifically during Emperor Jiajing's reign," she answered confidently.

Separating himself from the dark, Draco moved to stand next to the girl. "Very good," he said in a bemused tone. "You can't be more than twelve," he mumbled, sizing her up. "Who are you?"

"I'm ten," she corrected. Crossing her arms, she glared at him impertinently. "Who are *you*?"

Arching a brow, he smirked at her defiance. "Well, Ten," he drawled, "I'm Draco."

"Are you a Malfoy?"

He crossed his arms as well, mimicking her pose. "I am. What of it?"

"You're not a very good one, then." She had the audacity to look down her nose at him.

"Why you mouthy little..."

She rolled her eyes. "Like I haven't heard *that* before. At least try something original."

"I know that voice," he accused, his eyes widening in comprehension as he took in her red hair and freckled nose. "Rose Weasley," he sneered.

Fluttering her hands in the air in mock fright, she deadpanned, "Oh, no. The big bad wolf figured out who I am. Boo hoo. Someone save me."

"I'll teach you to respect your betters!" Draco snarled as he reached for his wand. He stopped suddenly when he realized she had wordlessly hexed his mouth so that he was missing his lips.

Instead of attacking her physically, as Rose had anticipated and would have her screaming her bloody head off to bring the adults running Draco calmly stepped back and closed his eyes, tapping his wand to the place where his lips would be if they'd not been spelled away. In a swirl of pink light, his mouth reappeared and he shifted his jaw, making sure everything was in its proper place. He then looked at the girl with intense scrutiny.

"Impressive."

The left side of her upper lip twitched in a grin. "Most impressive."

His eyes widened for a fraction of a second when he caught on. "Ah, but you are not a full witch, yet."

"You'll find I'm full of surprises."

"Of that, I have no doubt." Draco stood in front of her, trying not to smirk. "Join me, and together we will complete your training and rule the world as..." He floundered for a moment, and then his face lit up. "As Draco and Rose."

"Ha!" she shouted, catching his flub. "You ad-libbed!"

"I had to," he explained, bending to her level on one knee. "Ruling the galaxy as father and son just doesn't sound right, does it?"

"Hardly," she admitted. "Though, if that's your dad in there, then he'd make a great..."

"Draco? What's this?" a cool voice sliced through the air.

Rising, Draco took Astoria's hand and kissed the knuckles, smiling. "Astoria, this is Rose."

The willowy blonde turned her disdainful look upon the girl. "My, aren't you precious?"

"Not really," Rose retorted, giving her a sugary smile.

Draco stifled a snort. "We were just discussing the finer points of turning to the Dark Side." He waggled his eyebrows at Rose. "We have all the best biscuits, you know."

"It's not enough, Darth Malfoy," she snickered. "But I do hear you have some rather nice looking blokes."

"A child your age should be playing with dolls and watercolours, not thinking about boys," Astoria admonished the diminutive girl in a voice her mother said would earn anyone's attention.

And it did.

"Astoria, I don't think..."

"Playing with dolls?" Rose asked in a deceptively quiet tone, cutting off Draco's warning. Fire flashed in her eyes and she turned to look at him, pointing at the other blonde.

"Is she simple?"

"Only in the most basic sense of the word," Draco warned, feeling the air become oppressive in the presence of powerful elemental magic. Keeping her gaze, he shook his head. "Don't lose focus, Rose. You could injure innocent bystanders."

"Make her leave," Rose hissed as her curls began to stand on end, arcs of static fizzing all around her.

Moving subtly in front of his fiancée, Draco said authoritatively, "No, Rose. This is my house and my family. You need to back down. This is not something you will win."

Tears of frustration pooled in the girl's eyes, and he could tell she'd already passed the point of no return. "I must win," she whimpered, her skin becoming increasingly flushed. "I can't stop it now."

Draco had to wonder just how empty-headed Astoria was to not notice the increasing danger emanating from the child... and the electrified cracks hissing in the air. Centring his attention on the now terrified girl, his own magic started responding to hers when her eyes rolled back in her head, a sure sign the enormous power would be expelled immediately.

In a mad dash, Draco grabbed Rose and curled into himself, shielding Astoria from the stray magic and the girl from hurting herself. In the next moment, the surrounding atmosphere became so pressurized that when Rose's burst of magic was finally released, it shattered every fragile thing in the corridor... including the priceless Ming vase.

The flying shards were halted with a non-verbal spell by Draco that kept the three from further harm. He lay huddled around Rose's limp form on the floor as a frosty breeze begun drifting into the hallway from the broken windows, only moving when the door to Lucius' bedroom was flung open.

"Rose?" Hermione gasped, taking in the destruction. "Rose?" she said a little more frantically, searching for her daughter.

"She's here," Draco said wearily. He struggled to rise with his unconscious burden, but was helped by none other than Hermione herself pulling them both from the floor.

Taking Rose from him, Hermione cradled her, swaying back and forth as if almost in a trance, humming softly and kissing her daughter's forehead. "It's okay, pumpkin, Mummy's here." Looking over the mop of sweat-drenched curls, Hermione caught Draco's eyes and mouthed, *thank you*.

"That miserable little beast should be put down like the half-breed she is," snarled Astoria as she rose from the carpet, littered in broken glass.

Everyone froze. Draco darted his gaze to Hermione, who looked away initially and then closed her eyes, in agony, to nuzzle her daughter's cheek. No, this was not how it should be.

"Astoria, I want you to return to your chambers," Draco instructed in a tone that brooked no argument.

"No! I want to make sure that absolute terror receives punishment for daring to blemish my perfect body!"

Both Hermione and Draco stared at her, one in utter amazement, and the other in growing horror.

Moving to stand in front of her, Draco grabbed her arm and spun her around, looking over her supposedly 'perfect' body and sneering. "There isn't a mark on you, Astoria." He shoved her down the hallway. "Get back to your wing of the house."

She stamped her foot. "I want justice!" she screeched.

A loud smack echoed in the corridor.

"That *child* has no control over her magic, Astoria," Draco seethed, his anger barely contained. "She's a powerful elemental, and if I hadn't safeguarded her when her magic was expelled, you'd be dead."

Cupping her reddened cheek, Astoria glared at Hermione with hatred. "All the more reason she should've been drowned at birth."

Draco sensed Hermione's movement away from the scene and stopped her. "Stay, Hermione. Astoria was just leaving."

"I was not!" the frazzled blonde snapped.

He grasped her arm hard enough to leave bruises, lips thinning until they were white. "Yes, you were." He shook her to make her listen. "I'm an elemental, damn it! It's hereditary, so any children I have will probably be elementals. Should I drown *them* at birth, as well?"

"Our children would never have such impairments," Astoria huffed.

"Draco," Hermione whispered, drawing his attention. "I should leave, the chill is..."

"Please wait in Father's bedroom, where it is warmer." Draco pleaded with his eyes for her to follow his orders.

She studied him for a moment then nodded silently, leaving the hallway and closing the door behind her.

"Your father will take care of them," Astoria said with certainty. "He hates Muggle-borns and is probably hexing them as we speak."

A malicious grin played about Draco's lips. "You think so?" He concluded she really was a lack-wit since she had no idea how fascinated Lucius was by Muggles these days.

"Most definitely. I don't even know why they're here."

Eyeing her pretty neck, Draco wrapped his long and slender fingers around it, squeezing ever so slightly. "All you wanted was a rich pure-blood who was handsome, right?"

Clawing at his fingers, Astoria's eyes bulged as she tried to gasp for breath. "What... are you... doing?"

"Attempting to cleanse the pure-blood gene pool," he muttered, squeezing a bit harder, feeling nothing as her face turned a mottled shade of red.

"Draco, let her go."

He turned swiftly to see Hermione lay her hand on his shoulder, looking at him sympathetically.

Giving one last squeeze, Draco released Astoria. "Bleeding heart, Gryffindors," he grouched before turning to the blonde. "Get your things and get out." There was no emotion to be heard in his words.

"You can't... do this... to me!" Astoria coughed, trying to regain the use of her bruised windpipe. "I'll sue you... for non-disclosure of... magical abilities. And I'm keeping the ring!"

"Can she really do that?" Hermione ventured after they'd watched her stomp down the hall and disappear.

"Yes on both accounts," he said absently, rubbing the back of his neck. "I never registered my elemental status, so she can rightfully sue for breach of contract." He shrugged. "As for the ring, well... it was a fake."

Hermione tried not to laugh, but after the day's events she was a bit hysterical. "You would think a pure-blood would know the difference between a fake and the real thing."

"That should've been my first clue," Draco mused bitterly.

"What was the second?"

"My father actually warned me away from the Greengrass women."

Nodding, she smirked. "A sure sign the end of the world is near, when a parent gives sound advice to their children."

Mopping his face, he sighed and smiled wanly. "How is Rose?"

Turning towards Lucius' bedroom, Hermione tugged on Draco's arm. "She's knackered, as is to be expected."

"You knew she was an elemental."

Opening the door, she told him to be quiet. Rose was firmly curled around Lucius' legs, and both were asleep.

"I'm a fire elemental, have been ever since I can remember," she whispered, sitting down next to her sleeping daughter. "I knew something was different when she was about two months old." She smiled to herself as she watched Rose bury her nose against Lucius' shin. "I'm not as powerful as she is and it's very hard to keep electrical things around her; she just saps their energy. Harry has a strong dampening field on his home, so she goes there sometimes to watch telly, but otherwise... kaboom! I can't keep a dampening field at the cottage or else her magic is drained completely." Chuckling at his horrified expression, she reassured him that they hadn't been living like cavemen. "I've been able to spell a few items to withstand the current, but not much. And it's been growing as she matures. This was mild compared to her last... erm... fit."

"I see." Draco looked down at the slumbering girl. "I'm a water elemental. For the longest time, my parents couldn't give me a bath; only the house-elves could, since they were powerful enough to negate the magic to bathe me. Otherwise, the water would move or shift if they tried to place me in the tub. It got very frustrating for my mother." He laughed a short, humourless bark. "That or I would freeze the water into deadly shapes, like daggers or large squares, and hurt others..." He trailed off, staring intently at Rose. "I had no control, and what little I did have, I abused, until Professor Snape started teaching me to master my abilities."

Stroking the curls away from Rose's face, Hermione turned imploring eyes to his. "Can you help her?"

Draco shifted nervously. "I don't know..."

"Yes, he can," murmured Lucius from the shadows, one eye open. He turned it to his son. "You will teach her how to control and master her ability, and help her find her centre. This is my final word on the matter."

"Yes, Father," Draco said, nodding curtly to Hermione and exiting the room.

"I was asking for his help, Lucius," Hermione growled. "I don't want him to do this if he feels uncomfortable about it, and now you've just ordered him."

"Mrs. Weasley," Lucius stated very patiently, "your child is a highly powerful elemental, more powerful than your own fire magic, and much more powerful than even Draco. But he knows control and how or when to use it. Rose does not. He is only fearful because he's never had a pupil before." He smiled softly. "They will learn from each other. They will be good for one another."

Watching in trepidation as her daughter slept soundlessly, Hermione bit her lip and nodded. "I hope you're right."