The Point of No Return

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Meanwhile, Draco Malfoy gets an unexpected visitor and gift in the middle of the
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The Late Night Announcement

Chapter 1 of 1

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Chapter 1:

Late Night Announcement

It was late in the evening, and the library was almost empty save for one person. Hermione Granger had stayed up late to finish her essay on Vampires for Professor
Wingold, their new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

"Hermione!" shouted a voice from the doorway of the library.

"What? I'm almost finished," Hermione said, laying down her quill to talk to one of her best friends, Ron Weasley.

"Well, hurry up. We need to get the Great Hall for the announcement!" Ron said, tapping Hermione's essay that was already a foot over the expected with his wand.

"What, that was today?" Hermione screamed, causing the eagle-like librarian to shout a warning. "Why didn't you--Ron!!!" She added, for Ron's prodding of the essay had
caused it to set fire.

"Mione! What has gotten into you lately? You seem distracted... Is something wrong?" Ron asked, stowing his wand away.

"Oh, come on. We need to get down there, but I need to take something to the common room first." Hermione absent-mindedly closed her hand over a small piece of
parchment in her pocket.

Hermione and Ron walked into the Gryffindor common room to find it packed with students--and teachers. What was going on here? They walked in and sat down by Harry
on the couch by the delightfully warm fire.

"Harry, why are the... teachers here?" Hermione asked, rubbing Crookshanks on the head when he pounced in her lap.

"Oh, you know, they teach here, they make our lives a living hell... Anything else?" Harry snapped.

"You know what I mean, Harry. And don't take that tone with me," Hermione said, riled by what Harry said.

"Er--well, they came to tell us... something important. Hermione, something is falling out of your pocket," Harry said, reaching for the small bit of parchment hanging out of Hermione's pocket. Hermione grabbed it before Harry could and stuffed it into her bag.

"Like what?" Hermione said, ignoring Ron's attempts to see what was on the parchment.

"Like the fact that we have to--"

"Can I have your attention?" Professor McGonagall, head of Gryffindor house inturupted. "We as a staff have made a decision. Since the recent event of Lord Voldemort's return during the third task of the Triwizard Tournament, we have noticed even more of a split between the houses of Hogwarts. This is normal, but not this much. So, saying this, we think it will be a good idea to do something as a school. Even more so, a partner project. We will be picking partners within the four houses, and we will now announce the partners between Gryffindor and..." McGonagall pushed open the portrait hole to reveal a long line of students waiting outside of it. "Slytherin."

"WHAT?!?" Harry screamed, not noticing that he was getting many uneasy looks from the teachers in the common room.

"Yes, Potter," McGonagall, pulling a long parchment from the air. "Now, please settle down and, Slytherins, please have a seat." Harry and Ron gave Malfoy a death glare as he sat down with his two cronies; Hermione seemed to be trying not to look at Malfoy, and Malfoy must have been thinking along the same lines.

"I will now name off the pairs: one Slytherin and one Gryffindor to a pair," McGonagall said, piercing Professor Snape, who had just emerged from the shadows of the portrait hole, with a look of annoyance that she usually reserved for Fred and George... rule-breakers in general, of course.

"Ronald Weasley and... Vincent Crabbe." Ron groaned and Crabbe cracked his knuckles "Harry Potter and... Pansy Parkinson. Fred Weasley and... Millicent Bullstrode. George Weasley and... Blaise Zabini. Hermione Granger and... Draco Malfoy." Hermione actually gasped at this and sent Malfoy a glare that suggested that this was all his fault. She heard no more after this, or after she had seen the look that Draco--Malfoy, she corrected, sent her.

She was to be partnered with Malfoy? How could this be? He had something to do with this.

When the meeting was over, the Slytherins were released to go and the teachers left. Hermione jumped up and ran toward the portrait hole and disappeared.

"What was that about? Where is Hermione going?" Harry asked Ron, who shrugged his shoulders and continued to harp on about how unfair McGonagall was for doing this.

Hermione just caught up with Malfoy when he turned around, and she ran straight into him. Annoyed even more, she stepped back and glared at him.

"Watch where you're going, you little Mudblood! I just washed these robes," Malfoy said with obvious disgust.

"Watch it, Malfoy. What did you do to get McGonagall to pair us up together? I know it was you," she said, but just realizing as she said this that Malfoy wouldn't want to be paired with her, either.

"What are you harping on about? I didn't do anything, Mudblood. I think you asked McGonagall to pair us up because you fancy me and you want me to fall for you. Well, that's never going to happen." Malfoy strode away to catch up with Pansy Parkinson, who threw Hermione a look of deepest loathing. Hermione stood stock still because she was still in shock. She, Hermione Granger, fancy Draco Malfoy? Yet, she almost snorted out loud, he did give her an idea, even if she did think that he was extremely stupid.

"Hermione, where did you go?" Ron blurted out when she raced back into the portrait hole. He and Harry were plotting ways to get Snape fired.

"I... went for a walk," Hermione lied.

"Yeah? To see who, and to say what exactly?" Harry asked, trying to suppress a grin. Hermione shrugged her shoulders.

"I just went for a walk, that's all." Hermione grabbed her Runes book and buried her head in it. Harry picked up a paper airplane from off of the table Hermione was working at.

"That's not what Buzz here says," Harry said, indicating the paper plane. The plane gave a small shudder at the word 'Buzz' and flew up into the air out of Harry's hands.

"Oh, really? Well, what does your pet sneak say? That I cornered Malfoy and accused him of getting McGonagall to somehow pair me and that stupid little brat up? Yeah, well your paper plane is right! I did, and now I have a good idea, so leave me be for now, you two." Hermione grabbed up her books and parchment, stuffed them into her bag, and stalked off to her bed while giving a barely audible 'Good Night' to Harry and Ron.

When she was up in her room, she immediately mentally kicked herself for being so mean to her two best friends. But, they had no idea what she was going through. How could they possibly? She pulled the note out of her bag and slowly opened it up again for close to the hundredth time. She picked over the words carefully as if hoping to find something that said it was a joke. No way. She uncermoniously threw the note back in her bag and plopped back on the bed, just realizing that she was tired. She dropped off to sleep still dressed, dreaming first of McGonagall saying that she had failed her exams and had to give Malfoy a flower, which started buzzing and a thousand paper airplanes flew out of it. Hermione ran down the hall from McGonagall's office, screaming that she was sorry that she accused Hagrid of being a spider, and that she would never write to Viktor Krum again as long as Grawp lived.

Draco Malfoy wasn't having that good of a night, either. He was sitting on a four-poster bed talking to Blaise Zabini, who was sitting on the floor rummaging through his trunk for something.

"I'm sure it was in here," Zabini was saying. Malfoy wasn't really paying attention. Was what his father said really true? Was that why they needed... He bowed his head and put it in his hands.

"It doesn't matter right now, Zabini," Malfoy said wearily. He stood up and strolled over to the window. The night was dotted with clearly visible white and blue stars. The Forbidden Forest was dark and looked remotely forbidding. Malfoy had always hated the Forbidden Forest. Ever since his first year when he had been forced to go into the forest at night and look for a dead... or dying... unicorn. Then, something caught the corner of his eye. A completely brown owl with emerald green (or so he could see) eyes swooped past the window and then flew back to the window. It landed on the windowsill and tapped on it with its beak.

Malfoy opened up the window and the owl dropped a medallion in his palm. Malfoy stared at it, wondering who it was from. He looked back up to see if the owl had anything else, but the owl had disappeared. Zabini came over to Malfoy and sighed.

"Sorry, man. I can't find it," he said, stifling a yawn. "Well, off to bed I go. Who was that from?" Zabini pointed to the medallion in Malfoy's hand. The blond Head Boy closed his hand and shook his head.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I better be getting back up to the Head dorm. Maybe Granger will be up waiting for me. I've always thought that she fancied me." Malfoy smirked and Zabini laughed as heartily as he could manage.

"See you, Malfoy."

Malfoy walked out of the Slytherin common room and slowly trudged back up to the Head dorm. He held the medallion in his palm and stared at it the whole way. It felt cool to the touch. It was completely silver and black and had an indent on the back of it in a large shape that looked like some kind of animal with a tail, apparently. On the front it had the picture of a moon and an owl and then a bunch of odd symbols that Draco was sure was a language of some kind. He thought that he had read about the symbols in a book somewhere, but he couldn't think of where. He was standing before the portrait before he knew it.

"Dragon breath," Draco said wearily. The portrait swung open and Malfoy found himself facing an empty common room. He trudged over to the fire and stood staring at it for what seemed like hours, but was only a few minutes. He didn't notice the medallion was slipping out of his hand; he was too deep into his thought of the symbols on the medallion and who sent it to him. The medallion slipped out of his hand and landed in the fire. At once, before Draco had time to do anything, a loud, sinister whispering filled the room. It was speaking in a language Malfoy couldn't understand.

The whispering got louder and then quieter again. The medallion was on fire and a long flame was winding itself around the medallion. All at once, the whispering gave an extra loud minute, and the flames engulfing the medallion exploded. Malfoy was thrown back, he landed hard on the floor and the portraits around the room gasped awake. Before anything else could happen, the flames disappeared and the medallion was lying on the floor just the same as before. Except for one thing, though. A silver ribbon had wound itself around the medallion, and it now looked quite like a necklace.

Malfoy got up and, ignoring the angry muttering of the portraits, walked over and picked up the medallion. It was cold as ever, and the ribbon didn't feel anything like a solid. It was a mix between a gas and a solid, or so it seemed. Malfoy was exhausted. He tied the medallion around his neck and slowly walked up to his bed. If he needed anything right now, it was sleep.