

The Dragoness and Athos

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Mystique is *the* new club for Wizarding singles in search of a mate. The person sitting across from you could be anyone.

The flyer for a new club had been delivered to the Ministry of Magic the previous day. Kingsley Shacklebolt had checked into the particulars and approved its dissemination to the Ministry employees.

Mystique!

The Magical world's answer to Muggle dating services.

Glamours applied at the door assure a completely anonymous visit.

Club open to any unmarried witch or wizard.

Come find the witch or wizard of your dreams.

At lunch that day, Hermione discussed the possibilities such a visit might open up with her friends and co-workers.

"Hermione, you've been dating in the same circle of men for several years and not one of them did anything that ignited your passion. Try this. What could it hurt? I know Harry would agree with me." Luna was, for once, not being her usual ethereal self.

"I agree with Luna," added Angelina Weasley. "Ron sure didn't light that eternal flame, did he? George and I think you need to broaden your horizons."

Pansy Parkinson slid into the booth beside Luna and said, "Yes, we both need to go to this place, Hermione. I am at wit's end trying to find a compatible male. Make you a deal: we go, and I'll buy lunch for a week."

Hermione laughed. "You don't have to buy lunch, Pansy. I was actually planning to go anyway. I just hope Mystique doesn't turn out to be a mys-take."

Luna, Angelina, and Pansy all howled with laughter at Hermione's pun.

The club had only been open a few days when Pansy and Hermione decided to go. The entrance was artfully hidden inside the Piccadilly Circus tube station. One merely had to walk down the stairs and stop at the tiny magic shop kiosk set near a wall. Handing the flyer to the person in the kiosk opened a door. The girl in the kiosk had assured them that the kiosk and the doorway were both covered by a Muggle-aversion charm and an identity suppression charm. No one would notice they hadn't gotten on a tube train and left the area.

The door opened to a hallway that directed ladies to the left and gentlemen to the right.

Behind the door at the end of the hall, a woman asked them to choose a unique Glamour, assigned to only them. The Glamour books were set in cubicles for them to go through. Pansy picked one with blonde hair and large green eyes and a tiny heart-shaped birthmark at the end of her left eyebrow.

Hermione picked darker, straight hair with blue eyes and a tiny dragon tattoo on her right shoulder. Once they had the Glammers applied, they entered the club.

"Ah, ladies, permit me to escort you to a table. I see you," the waiter spoke to Pansy, "have chosen our Belle Coquette Glamour. And you," he said to Hermione, "have chosen the Chinese Fireball Glamour. Lovely. Enjoy your time here, ladies." He found them a table and took their drink order.

He was back within minutes, saying, "The club manager sends his greetings and has paid for your drinks himself. He is the gentleman at the bar in the Edwardian Glamour. He usually greets the new clients personally. He'll probably be over to talk to you both in a few minutes."

Pansy was looking around, trying to see if anyone looked enticing. "I hope there are some interesting men here. I am so sick and tired of the same old grab-arse routines of those hide-bound males we went to school with. I'd even be interested to find out what your old beau, Viktor, is up to. He was certainly shaggable. Have you heard from him lately?"

"He was definitely shaggable, which is exactly why I spent some time in Bulgaria after I took my parents to Australia. I still hear from him. But I think we have become more friends than friends with benefits."

"I can't believe it. You actually shagged Krum and didn't crow about it. Your first time?"

"If you *really* must know, yes, he was my first and it was absolutely heaven. Now, drop it. Here comes the manager." Hermione was trying hard not to laugh at her friend's bluntness.

"Ladies, I'd like to welcome you to Mystique. Let me explain about the Glammers. They cover your identity while you are in the club and disappear once you leave. They will re-form when you come back to the club. No one else will ever use the same Glamour. This is the main room of the club, but there are additional rooms for more private meetings. If you and a gentleman wish to have a very private conversation or something more intimate, the rooms are available. Just send word with your waiter. There are no fees associated with the club other than drinks. We really are here to assist you in finding the perfect mate. Enjoy yourselves."

He bowed to both of them before going back to the bar.

The girls got up to mingle, meeting several interesting men. A man dressed in Cavalier finery caught Hermione's eye at once. They danced and talked for most of the evening until Pansy re-appeared from her tryst in a 'private room' with her Sherlock-Glammoured flirt. Both Hermione and Pansy decided they had found interesting, potential mates.

Several visits later, Hermione came to the club alone, having worked up her nerve to actually bed her Cavalier.

"Ah, the Dragoness returns alone. Shall we dance or simply sit and talk, my lady?" The Cavalier had materialised at her side almost as if he had been waiting for her.

"I think sitting at that table in the corner is a good idea. You can order us drinks, please."

He merely raised an eyebrow, but ordered the drinks before leading her to the secluded table.

"There is something on your mind, my lady, isn't there?" he asked after the waiter had delivered the drinks.

The touch of his hand on hers was gentle, sensual, and non-threatening. She raised her eyes to meet his almost defiantly.

"Yes, I think it's time for us to..." She faltered at the look of surprise in his eyes.

"I know there is an attraction between us, my lady. Are you saying you want to explore just how far that attraction goes?"

"Yes, exactly that. It's not my first time. I'm tired of being the quiet one, the bookish one. I want to see if there is a wilder, freer side of me."

His face lit with humour, but he simply picked up her hand and turned it palm up. He bent as if to kiss it, but ran his tongue across her palm, which made her shiver. His eyes caught and held hers as he drew each of her fingers into his mouth and sucked on them.

She knew she was blushing, but his actions had lit a fire in her belly that hadn't been there since her summer with Viktor years before.

"Please, Athos, I want to..."

"I know what you need, my lady. Let me secure a room and we will discover just how wild you can truly be."

Again, she had the strangest feeling she knew him, but dismissed it. He was back with more drinks and led her down the hallway to a private room.

The door opened to a bedroom/sitting room. There were two chairs set beside a table where he set their drinks. The bed was in the corner of the room halfway hidden behind an ornamental screen carved with dragons.

Very slowly, he drew her closer and into his arms. "So beautiful, innocent, yet sensual."

His lips claimed hers, and his tongue teased her lips until she opened them to allow him access.

One hand had moved to cup her breast, and she shivered again. His lips trailed fire across her neck and down to her collarbone. His fingers unbuttoned her blouse and pushed it open. With a shrug, she dropped the blouse as he unhooked her bra. As he slid the straps down her arms, he had captured one nipple in his mouth and was suckling greedily. Her skirt was pushed up and he pulled her knickers down.

He was unbuttoning his shirt as he looked at her passion-glazed eyes. "Are you sure, Dragoness? You can still escape."

She was stepping out of her skirt and knickers. "No, Athos, I don't want to escape. I want this more than I have wanted anything in a long time."

She nearly panicked when she saw his phallus emerge from beneath his shirt. *Oh, my, he's even larger than Viktor was.*

When he touched her, she moaned. His hands were incredibly warm on her breasts. He massaged them gently at first, and then pulled each nipple into a hardened peak, which he rolled between his fingers. Sharp pangs of desire made her moan again as she reached for his phallus.

Instead of allowing her to touch him, he swung her up into his arms and carried her to the bed, where he set her down.

"Do you trust me, my lady? You can stop me at any time by saying so. But I want to take you farther into your fantasies than you may feel comfortable with." His hands were moving over her body, rubbing, pinching, and separating the curls at her mons.

"Yes, I do trust you. Teach me. I am not going to stop you." She was surprised because she did trust him implicitly.

He sat her at the corner of the bed facing the full-length mirror. At his direction, she spread her legs. He sat behind her, rubbing her back and nuzzling her neck. "Show me how you pleasure yourself, Dragoness."

His hands began to massage her waist and her hips, and she tentatively cupped her breasts and teased the peaks into hard buds. Then she separated the curls at her mons and ran her fingers along her slit to wet them. He moved his hands to her breasts, and rolled her taut nipples between his fingers. She gasped and rubbed her clit. Her head fell back as she stimulated her clit to climax. He held her until she quit quivering.

Then he handed her a silver dildo. He pushed her forward so that she barely sat on the bed, but was only a few inches from the mirror. He nibbled on her neck as he urged her to experiment with the dildo. She ran the cool metal over her skin and down her body until she slid it into her sheathe. He was again rolling her nipples and urging her to push the dildo in as far as she could.

"Can you feel it by your cervix? Slide it in and out. Use your other hand to stimulate your clit. No, open your eyes; watch yourself come. Good, now watch what I am doing to you."

He had her lie down with her legs spread as wide as she could, tilted the mirror so that she could see as he took the dildo, and began to slide it into her as he licked and sucked at her clit.

Her body reacted to his efforts just as he wished. Her hands were clenched in the sheets as he worked her to climax. As she moaned, he lifted her up and sat down in her spot on the corner of the bed. He lowered her onto his erection as he sat facing the mirror.

She had a view of his phallus sliding into her sheathe as he spread her labia so she could see what he was going to do. He lifted her so that her knees were on either side of him and he was holding her upright. She braced herself with her hands on his knees as he thrust into her. Her head lolled to one side as he spoke again, "Touch your clit, Dragoness. Watch."

She looked at the huge phallus plunging into her and scraped her nails across her clit. She moved a hand to his sac and rolled his testicles gently. Then she massaged her clit in time with his thrusts. She watched herself as her leg muscles tightened, and the juices oozed down his phallus as he continued to thrust into her.

Her climax was the most powerful she had ever had. Her nipples puckered and his hands jammed her down hard as he shot hot semen into her. He pulled her back to lie on his chest until they both had recovered a bit. She moved off him, crawling up the bed to lie across it.

"That was absolutely astounding, Athos. I've never come so hard in my life."

Breathlessly, he asked, "Not even with any other lover?"

"There was just the one. I was seventeen and he was my first beau. I had thought things would work out with him, but we grew apart."

"No other men in your life, Dragoness?"

"Oh, I've dated several, including one I liked in school, but they just weren't right. What about you?"

"There is no one in my life now, Dragoness. Have we fulfilled your fantasies for tonight?" he asked teasingly.

"What about your fantasies, Athos? Tell me or better yet, show me."

"My fantasies are rather mundane, Dragoness. I want to find my soul-mate, marry her, and raise a family. I have wanted that for years now."

"I understand that. The whole dating thing has been a nightmare for me. The men I know from school haven't grown up sufficiently to not play around. The men I know at the Ministry are either married or too intimidated by me. That's why I was so glad to find you, a man I could actually talk to and enjoy being with. The fact that there is incredible sex is an added bonus." She rolled over to kiss him.

He laughed, saying, "Do what you want with me. I think you wore me out before."

She took that as a challenge. She ran her hands across his chest, dragging her nails across his nipples. At his gasp, she suckled one. Then she nibbled her way down his abs to his phallus. Taking it carefully in her hands, she kissed it. When it jerked in her grasp, she closed her lips on the head of it. Her tongue circled the head and licked the length of it. He was growing hard again as she teased him.

"That definitely works as a fantasy, Dragoness." He was trying hard not to groan.

She licked and sucked at him until he came again.

After a short rest, they showered and rejoined the club atmosphere. Dancing to the last song of the evening, she whispered, "Will you be here tomorrow?"

"I will be here. Dragoness. More fantasies to explore or just more exquisite sex?" he asked.

"Yes to both, but most of all I just want to be with you. You are so different from the other men I know, but at times, you remind me of someone. For the first time since the war, I feel free to be me, not one of the Order of the Phoenix. I feel like I'm finally breaking out of my chrysalis. Thank you."

"You honour me, my lady. I am yours to command." He kissed her to seal those words, hoping when his identity was revealed that she wouldn't reject him.

He watched her walk out the door before he returned to the bedroom they had shared. A wave of his wand returned the room to its original configuration...his office.

The club manager and a tall, exotic Egyptian looking woman walked down the hall towards him.

"Is everyone gone, then?" he asked.

At their nods, he raised his wand to meet theirs and together they dismantled the Glamour warding.

Bill and Fleur Weasley looked at their friend and saw he wasn't in any mood to talk, so they slipped away out the back door and left him to ponder the possible outcomes of this charade he had lent himself to.

He hadn't thought that, even with the Glamour, he would know Hermione instantly. He had never intended to get involved with a club patron, but the fact that he had loved her for years overrode all his good intentions. The instant she walked into the club, he had known who she was; he could literally feel her presence.

He had tried talking to Fleur about it, knowing her family was part Veela. Nevertheless, all she had come up with was that Hermione must be his soul-mate. Bill had offered to look through the books at his in-laws' home to see if there was any esoteric information on soul-mates. They knew how desperately he loved Hermione, how it had nearly driven him insane to walk away from her after the war.

When the idea for Mystique became an alternative to enacting a Marriage Law, he had offered to fund the project. Now, six years after the fall of Voldemort, he was involved in a scheme to assure that Wizarding Britain did not suffer any more of a decline in magically viable births. The spells and charms used to make Mystique so unique were things he had learned at Durmstrang. They weren't technically Dark Magic, just incredibly old magic. The Glamour spell was the same one that Merlin had used on Uther.

He looked at himself in the mirror and closed his eyes against the memories of Hermione in his bed again after all these years.

He pushed away the thought that he might lose her again, not wanting to consider that. He would be her casual, teasing Athos forever, if necessary.

The next night they danced several dances before going to the room. She seemed anxious while they were dancing, though.

"What's wrong, my lady? Are you uncomfortable about last night?"

"No, it's not that. I am just worried about my friend. She has gotten very attached to that Sherlock Glamoured fellow, and I'm afraid he might not be as attached to her."

"They are both adults, Dragoness. If they are meant to be together, it will all work out. Are you sure there isn't something else bothering you?"

"You know I work for the Ministry, right? Well, some people at the Ministry want a Marriage Law passed. They are pressuring the Minister. The thought that I might have my choice taken away from me is very unsettling."

"Why would your choice be taken away, my lady?"

"Because I am Muggle-born. Most of the pure-bloods I know would rather kill me than marry me."

"I cannot believe that, Dragoness. Are you certain there isn't a pure-blood wizard who would treasure you?"

"There are a few, but most of them are more like my brothers. There was one, once, my first lover. I thought ..."

"I think you are worrying too much. Let me take your mind off everything except me." He kissed her gently.

Later, as they lay in bed, he risked asking her the question foremost on his mind. "What were you going to tell me about your first lover, Dragoness? Was he simply out to bed you or did he really care for you?"

"I thought he really cared for me. We had been writing to each other for several years. I went to visit him after the Order helped me relocate my parents; that's when we made love the first time. He asked me to marry him, but I never gave him an answer. After the war was over, he rather faded away for awhile, but eventually he started writing again. I wasn't sure what had happened, and I was hurt. I guess he just wasn't my soul-mate. I just wish I knew what had happened."

"And if he came back into your life, Dragoness? What then? Would you leave me for him?"

"No, Athos, I don't think so. What I had with V... him is completely different than what we have. I can talk to you and nothing gets too intense. He was so much a part of who I was; that when he disappeared, I felt bereft. Sex with him was almost as good as with you. He made me feel like I was on a pedestal. I wanted to be a partner in the relationship. I guess I was expecting too much. I feel more at ease with you. He would never, ever, have done the things we did last night."

"Poor bastard, his loss is my gain. I'll warn you now, Dragoness, I intend to monopolise you. A lady like you should be treasured." He kissed the side of her neck where he knew she was extremely ticklish.

She looked at him strangely, but said nothing.

Over the next days and weeks, Hermione was spending more and more time at the club with Athos. Sometimes they made passionate love, yet sometimes they simply talked after having dinner sent in.

They were friends, teasing, passionate lovers, and yet still strangers. She began to want more. The more they made love and discussed their lives, the surer she was that she knew who he was.

One night, weeks later, she had been almost asleep after a particularly satisfying encounter when she heard him whispering something. It wasn't until the next day at the Ministry that she remembered what she had heard.

"Obicham te, Dragoness."

She knew who he was! Over lunch with Pansy, she tried to keep calm. "Have you sussed out who your 'Sherlock' is yet, Pansy?"

Pansy did something Hermione never expected. Blushing, Pansy ducked her head and answered, "Yes, he finally told me. Please don't be mad at me. It's Ron Weasley and I love him."

Hermione was pleasantly surprised. "Pansy, I never had that kind of feeling for Ron. I hope he makes you as happy as Athos makes me."

"Have you sussed out who Athos is yet? I notice the two of you are seldom in the club proper, always off in one of those private rooms."

"No, Pansy, I haven't sussed it out yet, but I do have an idea. I'm going to confront him tonight. I really do think I've found the perfect man for me."

That same afternoon, Bill came back from his trip to France with a spell written in old French for Athos to look at. Bill was hoping his translation was correct.

"Look at it, mate. This is the soul-mate spell; I know it. Fleur said it has been in the family grimoire for as long as her family had had a grimoire. It is to be used by the females only. Says that a man will literally feel the presence of his soul-mate when she is near. That's what you've been feeling, isn't it?"

"Yes, I can tell when she is near. I feel it like a humming on my skin. When we are together, it is better, not so stressful."

"I think if she casts the spell, it will lead her to you. I've talked to my brother; yes, my youngest brother. He's pretty much fallen for your lady's friend. He is the one in the Sherlock Glamour. He still doesn't know who your lady is or her friend, but he definitely wants her friend. He says Hermione is happier lately, but isn't sure why."

"Maybe you should have Fleur tell Hermione and her friend about the spell. If it tells her I am her soul-mate, maybe she'll forgive me for not telling her my identity earlier."

"You need to quit thinking so much. You've been spending a lot of time with her in your office... unless your office isn't your office at the time. That's it, isn't it? You've been shagging her. What happened to 'I'll never get involved with a club patron'?"

"We were involved before, *that* kind of involved. After the war was over and I had to take over my father's business, I rather shut her out of my life for a few months. We never got back together completely. Hell, Bill, I quit playing Quidditch to take on this fucking club. If shagging her was the only way to be near her, I was going to go for it. I love her. Have loved her for years before the war was over. Give it a rest. I feel bad enough about it already."

"Okay, now, I understand. I'll get Fleur to tell her the spell. I hope it works, just to put you out of your misery, you poor bastard."

The club was due to open in half an hour. The Glamuors would reappear. He transfigured his office into the bedroom again, possibly for the last time.

By the time she got to the club, he was nursing his third drink. He saw Fleur catch her just inside the door and whisper the spell to her. He turned back to the bartender and ordered a double. Bill appeared by his side and cancelled that order.

"You need to stay sober. If you're drunk and she does the spell, you'll ruin everything. Come on mate, you know the spell will pick you."

"I may have to kill you after this," he groaned.

"Watch it, mate. Here she comes."

Hermione had stopped at the table where Pansy sat with her Sherlock-Glamoured Ron Weasley; she was laughing with them.

Suddenly, Hermione looked to the bar, feeling his eyes on her, and raised her wand. He watched her lips say the soul-mate spell and a small burst of reddish gold light rose into the air. It slowly circled the room before zooming in to tap him on the shoulder. It then zoomed back to her.

He followed, almost afraid not to. *Bloody fucking hell, what if I blow it?*

He stood before her holding his breath, afraid as he had never been before.

"Athos, the spell says you're my soul-mate. Can we go talk about this?" She was chewing her bottom lip, not a good sign.

He led her to the bedroom again and pulled out the chairs from the table.

"I think there are some things you need to tell me."

He took her hand in his and kissed her palm. "I knew from the beginning we were soul-mates. I also knew who you were from the minute you walked in the door, Hermione. I should have told you who I was from the beginning, but was afraid to. I had screwed things up after the war and thought I had lost you. I'm sorry." He summoned the mirror and with a murmured spell, the Glamours on the two of them dropped away.

"Viktor, I was hoping I wasn't wrong. From the beginning I had the feeling I knew you. It only got stronger as the weeks went by; when you knew where I was ticklish without being told, and finally, last night, you whispered '*obicham te*', after we made love. That was the final clue. Why were you here at the club?"

"I own it, love. Bill and Fleur help me run it. This was Kingsley's idea to pair up the young magicals without enacting a marriage law. I had the money, so I came up with the spells and the ideas for the Glamours."

"You quit Quidditch?"

"My father was injured badly in the final days of the war. That was what had me disappearing from your life abruptly. I took over his business until he healed. I was trying to take care of the family and play Quidditch, and somehow I left you out of the equation. When I had things under control, I started writing again, but your letters were full of who you were dating and how much your job took of your time. I thought I had lost you."

"You never lost me. I thought you had found someone else. You had my heart from that first day in the library; didn't you know that? Ron only thought he and I were a couple. I never encouraged him, but I did hope it would make you jealous."

"It made me crazy until you showed up after going to Australia. That month we had before Bill and Fleur's wedding was the most wonderful time of my life. Do you remember me asking you a question?"

"You asked me to marry you. I never gave you an answer, did I? Well, I'll give you the answer now. I will marry you: whenever, wherever you want. I love you, Viktor Ilya Krum."

She emphasised her words by throwing her arms around him and kissing him. They were married just days later, the first of many soul-mate connections engendered by the club.

A/N: Obicham te is Bulgarian for I love you.

Piccadilly Circus is the location of the statue of Eros, so it seemed fitting for the club to be situated there.