

But by Degrees

by SS Lupin

Harry and Draco have fought the Dark Lord, Death Eaters, and their inner demons, but can they fight the obstacles within their own relationship? Sequel to "My Own Worst Enemy," it comes before "Island of Enchantment."

One-shot.

Chapter 1 of 1

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What wound did ever heal but by degrees?

Othello William Shakespeare

Harry liked mornings.

Before, he'd wake up, resentful of the fact that life had gone on without him and that he had let it happen, that his own life was not under his control, not even after the war. He had been enclosed in a cage filled with Ministry functions, deadlines, and boring paperwork.

And the hangovers hadn't helped much either.

Now when he woke up, there was usually a body entangled with his. Draco's body, to be precise. And though he did spend six years sleeping in a dorm with other guys (and several months sharing a sleeping bag with Ron during the Horcrux search), sleeping with Draco Malfoy was a different matter altogether. Especially since the other people Harry had slept with never brought him off in the morning.

Draco was already grinding into his morning hard-on, and Harry had a feeling the other man wasn't asleep any longer.

"Good morning, Harry." Draco reached behind him to grasp Harry's cock.

"Mmm... good morning." He returned the favor, slipping his hands into Draco's pajama bottoms and curling his hand around his length. He tried to stroke in rhythm, but the friction on his own cock made it difficult to concentrate.

"Draco. Turn over."

The kisses he had been bestowing on Draco's back and shoulders migrated to his jaw and lips. Draco's golden beard stubble rasped against his own jaw, and Harry found that he liked it, along with the faster jerks on his cock.

"Not much more," he panted against Draco's lips.

Draco responded by arching his back, his firm chest meeting Harry's, his loud breaths turning into high-pitched moans.

When they both came, Draco following Harry, their breaths slowly evened out. Harry continued kissing Draco enthusiastically, memorizing the soft press of Draco's lips against his as Draco idly stroked his belly.

Draco pulled away and gave Harry a final kiss. "Morning breath."

"Hasn't stopped you before."

"I've obviously taught you some bad habits. Merlin, I even came in my pants!"

"And in your pajamas, too."

"You'll have to clean me up now."

"Shower sex?"

Draco sauntered out of bed and into the bathroom, his pajama bottoms riding along the curve of his arse. "Maybe."

"With no lube?"

Draco entered the bathroom, leaving the door half open. "Hasn't stopped you before."

Harry followed him, leaving the bed's comforter on the floor in haste.

He amended his previous thoughts. He loved mornings.

~*~

"Does anyone know about us?"

"I suspect Tonks does. She always gives me this wink when she asks about you."

"She asks about me?"

"Yeah. 'How's my little cousin? Are you treating him right?' Then she winks at me."

Draco stared at the kitchen table pensively. "I remember once, when I was little she and her mother visited the Manor. Mum was so happy to see them, and Tonks didn't seem so bad she'd change her nose into a pig snout and back to make me laugh. Then she knocked over a vase mid-transformation, and at the exact same time *he* came home. Never saw her or Aunt Andromeda for years."

"Did you ever want to?"

"I was only four, and that's when it was made clear to me that Malfoys never talked to Muggle lovers." Draco continued to stare at the table, lost in memories.

"How about now?"

"Next time she asks about me, tell her I'd be interested in seeing her."

Harry nodded, even though he didn't fully answer Draco's question.

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"Bellatrix Lestrange captured. Rodolphus Lestrange captured." Harry scanned the scroll of active Death Eaters on his desk. He turned his eyes away from the names and looked to the column of their current status. More often than not, the phrase 'location unknown' accompanied the name instead of 'captured' or 'deceased.' Dolohov was still missing. Nott was still missing. With a twinge of guilt, Harry breathed a sigh of relief. Both Narcissa and Lucius Malfoy were marked as 'deceased.'

As he pinned the scroll back to its customary place on the cubicle's wall, Harry saw a shadow falling over the wall's dull surface.

"I should take you out more. This job is turning you crazy."

Harry grinned up at Ron, who was standing just outside the cubicle's doorway. "I'm getting there. Come in nothing will bite." Staying true to his word, Harry spelled his desk drawers to remain shut.

Ron nodded and inched his way into the small cubicle, folding his lanky figure into a chair Harry conjured for him. He shook his head so that his long red hair obscured the left side of his face, a gesture Harry now recognized in his friend, meaning he was nervous.

Harry cast a Silencing Charm on the cubicle. "Er... do you need another loan?"

Ron shook his head again, giving Harry a glimpse of the mottled scar tissue on his face. "No. I actually came here for a job at the DMC," Ron said, using the Ministry shorthand for the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

"Going to fight for house-elf rights, then?"

Ron made a face. "It's just a desk job, but I think I could do something about the werewolf situation. Bill can still work at Gringotts 'coz he doesn't transform, but Lupin he's always from job to job, and he has two working eyes."

Harry tried not to wince, but Ron picked it up anyway. "Sorry. I didn't come here to depress you. I actually came to ask you if you were free tonight. For drinks and a laugh or two."

Harry considered it. He could tell Ron tonight and let the secret out. Only, he wanted to tell someone else. "Can you bring Hermione?"

"I'll see if she's free now she's with some Healer from St. Mungo's a right bore if you ask me."

"Oh."

"Yeah... so I'll see you at eight?"

"Sure. Eight."

When Harry stood to watch Ron leave, he saw that Ron didn't take the elevator out. Instead, he headed for the corridor of Auror's offices.

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Harry had sent an owl to Draco letting him know about meeting his friends before he Apparated to an alleyway close to the pub where he'd usually drink with Ron or buy a quick dinner for Draco and him. The Wooden Leg was a Muggle place that gave Ron the ability to hide his face and Harry the anonymity that only Muggle areas could offer.

When he entered the pub, Ron was already there, digging into a basket of chips. Harry made sure to approach him from his right side as he took a seat. "Hey, Ron."

"Hey," Ron said around a mouthful of food. "Mione said she'd be here a little late. Want some?" He offered Harry the basket, which was half empty.

"It's okay. I'll order us some beers."

As he brought three opened bottles to the table, he figured he could ask Ron why he stayed in Harry's department after speaking with Harry.

Hermione's sudden entrance prevented him from doing that, however. Harry was relieved when she showed, despite her still wearing witch's robes in a Muggle pub. Hermione usually didn't join Ron in their nights at the pub, but if Ron needed pacifying after Harry's news, Hermione would be the best witch for the job.

Harry was surprised when Hermione was more upset after he'd told them about Draco.

"But, Harry, he could be dangerous and he's been living with you for how long?"

"Erm... five months maybe?"

"And how long have you've been..."

"Our first kiss was about seven weeks in, and then I first sucked him off"

"Merlin, Harry, I don't want to know!"

"Sorry, Ron."

"It's okay. Just don't mention you... and him..." Ron took a big swig out of his bottle.

"Fine. But don't try to brag about your shags either. Whenever I hear about you eating out some bird"

"I'm still here, you know." Hermione took a gulp of her beer as well. "I'm trying to be understanding, but this is Draco Malfoy."

"I wasn't asking your permission to be with him. I was merely informing you." Harry knew his words were harsh as soon as he said them, but he had never judged Hermione for her romantic interests and that fling with Zacharias Smith had been pretty awful.

Tears sprang up in Hermione's eyes. "I was only trying to" She grabbed her jacket from her chair and stormed out of the pub.

Ron stood and patted Harry's arm. "She'll come around, mate."

Harry swallowed the lump in his throat with some beer. "Hopefully."

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"I told them." Harry slumped into the flat, pissed as hell.

"What happened?" Draco, who had been reading in his corner of the couch, set his book aside and greeted Harry with a kiss. "Merlin, you stink."

"Hermione yelled and left, and Ron-and-me drank the whole night away!"

"And a big part of the morning. Come to bed, Harry."

Harry smiled, taking Draco's concern for innuendo. "I'll come, alright," he said with a lewd grin.

Draco held up his hand to steady Harry, and the movement made him dizzy. "I don't think so. Come on." He tried to wrap an arm around Harry's shoulder but was pushed away.

"What was that for?"

"You don't want me now? Am I too stupid for you? Too drunk?"

"Actually, you are too drunk."

Harry sensed that Draco was angry, but his liquor-loosened tongue wouldn't stop. "It's not like you're such a great catch. An ex-Death Eater, Daddy's little toy. You were even Bellatrix's pet"

"If you're pissed because your little Mudblood friend deserted you, don't you dare take it out on me."

"Don't call Hermione that!" His heart pounding madly, Harry pushed Draco into the wall hard enough to make a thud against the plaster.

"Don't push me." Draco grabbed a fistful of Harry's shirt and backed him up into the couch, making Harry realize he had gone too far.

Draco shoved Harry into the couch and held Harry's wrists over his head.

"Don't push me, Harry. You may have saved me from that alley, but you do not own me. I'm not your housewife, and I'm not your bitch. I'm your equal, and it's time you recognize that!"

Harry felt Draco's lips more than he saw them somewhere in their row, Harry's glasses had fallen off, and all he could see was the flash of molten silver in Draco's eyes, the blur of blond hair that fanned out against his chest as Draco sucked a mark into his skin.

"You're mine, Harry Potter," he whispered in low breaths as he gave the mark a final lick. "Don't ever forget that."

Draco unfastened Harry's jeans and took Harry's cock into his mouth how did he get hard for Draco when he was so mad at him? He arched up into Draco's wet heat anyway, one hand dangling to the floor and the other inching to hold on to Draco's hair...

Draco pulled his mouth from Harry and grabbed the base of his cock a little too hard. "Don't touch me."

Harry gasped from the pleasure-pain and pulled his hand away. The sucking on his cock continued, only this time Draco added his hand, jerking him with hard pulls.

"Come for me, you bastard." Draco only used his hand now, letting his thumb slide over the head to catch the droplets forming there.

"I... I... yes..." Harry's words became moans as he came into Draco's hand, that didn't stop pulling.

"Draco... Draco, it hurts!"

Wiping his hand on Harry's trousers, Draco stood and tossed Harry's glasses on his stomach.

"Maybe you'll see more clearly in the morning." Before Harry could say anything, Draco had Disapparated.

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Harry woke the next morning with a splitting headache and a tongue that tasted like ash and grindylow piss. Sleeping on the couch probably hadn't helped; his back and neck felt like they were made out of tight knots.

"The Prince has woken. Sound the trumpets."

"God, Malfoy, it hurts." Draco's voice clashed around in his head more than it should have.

"Poor baby." Draco sat down next to Harry and brought Harry's head into his lap. "You were a bloody arsehole last night, and I hope you know that."

"Bloody arsehole? But you never fucked me."

Draco slipped his fingers through Harry's hair. It felt nice. "I should have."

"Where'd you go last night?"

"I talked to Granger."

Harry tried to bury his head further into Draco's lap. "What happened?"

"I gave her my honest reasons for why I love you and why she should bugger off."

"No! Wait... what?"

"She should bugger off. You've got your love life. She's got hers. But the thought of her getting buggered by anyone... ugh."

"I meant the other bit."

Draco paused, letting his fingers continue to wander in his hair. "I love you? I know it's a foolish delusion on my part, but"

"You *love* me?"

"Yes, you idiot, I love you. Otherwise I would have been doing something much more entertaining than visiting your friend last night."

"Draco, I'm so sorry for what I said."

"You should be." Draco's relaxing fingers ceased their ministrations. "The things you said to me were unacceptable, though I think the booze was mostly behind it."

"It was. All of it."

Draco ran his fingers through Harry's hair one last time before pulling away. "Go back to sleep."

Harry sat up, the pain in his head intensifying. "No. I'm getting up. Going to take a shower, try to eat, and make things up to you."

"A blow job isn't going to be a sufficient apology."

"You thought it was a pretty good form of punishment." Harry could feel his cheeks burning from the haze of angry lust of last night.

Draco smirked. "I wouldn't say punishment. It was more like... a claiming."

Harry shook his head. "Semantics. It all comes down to the same thing."

"My Harry? Using an expanded vocabulary?"

"I do read," Harry said as he slowly stood up.

Draco gave him a look that said, "You're lying," even though he was familiar with Harry's book collection.

"Let's see if I'm lying after my shower," Harry said, squeezing Draco's thigh and heading for the bathroom.

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Harry woke again two hours later, this time on a lumpy yet comfortable sheet covered mattress instead of a hard leather couch. If only he could have some of the sheets...

"Mine."

"I may be yours, but the sheets are shared."

Draco burrowed further into Harry but kept his grip on the blanket.

"Malfoy..."

"Fine, Potter." Draco turned so that he lay on his back and raised his arms over his head.

"Can't even tuck me in?"

"Are you still drunk?"

"I ache all over." The bruise from last night had darkened into a shade of splotchy purple on his neck; his face was still reddened from the beard stubble Draco had refused to shave off, and his arse...

"Good."

Harry grunted and covered himself with the blanket. His nose still felt cold, so he nuzzled it against Draco's side.

"Stop! That tickles!"

"That was the point. You're warm." Harry moved so that his cheek brushed against Draco's skin.

There was silence for some time, as both played with the idea of staying awake or slipping back into sleep. Then Draco spoke.

"Will you always blame the alcohol?"

Harry shook his head into Draco's side. It was just one slip. He'd never...

"Because I won't just sit and take it. If you have an issue with me"

"It was a mistake. And I make a lot of them."

"How about the night you found me? You were drunk then."

"That wasn't a mistake. It might have been the one good thing I've done."

"So melodramatic... you've also saved the wizarding world, killed a shit load of Death Eaters, and got on all fours for me today."

Harry laughed, even though Draco had changed the subject too soon. "It all comes back to sex with you, doesn't it?"

"I'm Draco Bloody Malfoy. It comes with the name."

Harry persisted. "So... everything's fine now?"

"No, everything isn't *fine*. There isn't a spell or potion to resolve relationship problems. But we can try harder, and you can fuck up less, and we can have hot morning sex along the way."

Harry let Draco's rationalization wash over him as he gave him a kiss because it all boiled down the fact that Draco was going to spend many mornings in his bed and life after all.

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They had all agreed to meet at the pub that Saturday afternoon, much to Harry's combined fear and happiness. He didn't want another scene there, and even though Hermione seemed to calm somewhat...

"No Mudblood comments?"

"As long as I don't hear about Pureblood Supremacist Nazis."

"No jokes about weasels?"

"Same condition as before."

"No 'Potter is my obedient sex slave'?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "That's your fantasy, not mine."

Harry laughed and slid his hand around Draco's waist as they walked to the pub.

"And one more thing. Hush, Draco, this one's serious."

"I'm all ears."

"Ron... his face."

"You've told me about that already."

"It's just that... he's really sensitive about it"

"I won't say anything. Is the lecture over?"

"Compared to the speech I gave Ron, you've heard nothing."

When they entered the pub, Harry found Hermione sitting at a table.

"Hi, Harry... Draco." She gave them both a small smile "I wanted to tell you that"

"It's fine." Draco extended a hand to shake, but Hermione got out of her chair to hug him.

"Hugging is the Hermione way." Harry sat down, relieved.

"So is hexing," Hermione muttered as Ron entered the pub, his hair pulled back for the first time since the incident. His face was in full view, and Harry could see his friend's freckles, the scarred skin on his face, and

"I told you not to wear it outside so soon."

"I had to try it again, Hermione. Besides, I think it likes me." The bright blue eye strapped to the left side of his face rolled around in what seemed to be a pleased response to Ron's words.

"So that's why you didn't leave my floor the last time you visited."

Ron's cheeks reddened. "Yeah. I was called there... thought it was about my training days, but Moody had put in his will that his eye be given to the first Auror needing it"

"That's great, Ron."

"I didn't even know I'd be able to see again... with both eyes. It has a mind of its own sometimes." The eye swiveled down to the table. "Er... Malfoy..."

Harry felt the hand on his thigh move up until it held on to his own hand.

"Voyeur," Draco said, amused.

As everyone's laughter subsided, Harry said, "At least we have our nights. And mornings."

- end.

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Author's Note: Many thanks to the following people: BB for challenging me to write 'real smut,' even though I haven't managed to go very far yet, LPG, Remy Davis and S. Kaiba for reading it when it was still rough and grammatically incorrect, SilentAuror for her porn assignment, and Southern_Witch_69 for her comma weeding beta skills.