

Time Will Tell

by Punkindoodle

A magical clock, a secret message, time travel and a murder that must be prevented.
Nominated at Quill to Parchment, Dangerous Liaisons and He Had it Coming.

1

Chapter 1 of 27

A magical clock, a secret message, time travel and a murder that must be prevented. Nominated at Quill to Parchment, Dangerous Liaisons and He Had it Coming.

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and all related characters belong to J.K. Rowling.

Monday:

"What the bloody hell is HE doing here?" Ron Weasley asked, screwing up his face like he was sucking on a lemon.

Everyone in the Great Hall turned and followed Draco Malfoy as he progressed to the Slytherin table where he took a seat next to Blaise Zabini.

"I can't believe he would even show his face around here!" Harry said, watching Blaise slap Malfoy on the back in a friendly manner.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "He has every right to be here, and you know it!"

"But he tried to kill me last year!" Ron exclaimed, almost shouting at her.

"It's a pity that he didn't try a little harder!" Hermione snapped back, giving him a dirty look.

"You're not still angry about what happened this summer, are you?" Ron asked with a frown.

Hermione's eyes just about popped out of her head. "Still angry? STILL ANGRY! You bet your cheating ass I'm still angry! You thought you could kiss my cousin and I would just forgive you?"

"Shhhh!" Harry said. "You're making a scene!" Everyone had stopped what they were doing to watch the heated exchange between Ron and Hermione with interest.

Draco paused in the middle of his conversation with Pansy and looked over at the Gryffindor table. He narrowed his eyes at the Mudblood, who was obviously in a heated argument with the Weasel.

"But it was a mistake!" Ron said in a pleading voice, silently begging for Hermione to understand. "I told you it won't ever happen again."

Hermione stood up and threw her pumpkin juice in Ron's face. "You're damn right it won't ever happen again because we're through!"

Draco watched her stalk out of the Great Hall, her strides making the hem of her skirt sway seductively around her thighs. "It's going to be an interesting year," he said to Blaise. The conversation went back to normal and no one paid any attention when Draco exited the hall a few minutes later.

Hermione ran down the hall and took refuge inside the girls bathroom. She clung to the sink and glared at herself in the mirror. "How could he do this to me?" she cried. "I thought he loved me!" She tangled her hands in her hair and screamed at the top of her lungs.

"Holy fuck, Granger," a voice suddenly said.

Hermione whirled around in surprise. "Malfoy!" She aimed her wand at him with a shaky hand.

He was peering in the door, and as she watched, he opened it all the way and stepped in. "Frustrated?"

Hermione backed up until she felt her bottom graze the sink. "W... what are you doing! This is the GIRLS bathroom!" Her mind was racing with various thoughts. Here she was, alone with Malfoy. He could hurt her, and no one would know of her whereabouts.

"Relax, Granger," Draco said, leaning on the wall. "I'm not going to hurt you."

The hungry look in his gray eyes told Hermione different. "If you're not going to hurt me, then what?" She steadied her hand and aimed her wand into his face. "What do you want, Malfoy?"

Draco smirked. "That remains to be seen, Granger," he said, walking slowly towards her. He noticed the look of sheer panic in her eyes and was very pleased.

Hermione's heart was pounding as he towered over her. He was very tall and intimidating. "Get away from me," she said calmly. "Before I hex you." She was now bent over the sink backwards as far as she could go. She had to lower her wand, just to keep her balance.

Draco leaned in so close that his mouth was almost touching hers. She could feel his hot breath on her lips; her legs were shaking unsteadily, threatening to give out from underneath her. He looked into her eyes as if searching for something.

Hermione thought she must be going insane because unless she was mistaken, Malfoy was going to kiss her!

Draco licked his lips and inwardly smiled as he saw Hermione close her eyes. He grabbed the back of her head and...

When nothing happened, Hermione's eyes shot open. He was just staring at her. She looked at him, confused. He winked at her, released her head, and then left without another word.

After a minute, she went to the door, opened it and looked out into the hall. He was nowhere to be seen. "Did that just happen?" she asked out loud. She went over to the sink, turned on the facet, and splashed water on her flushed face, and then she decided to go lie down for a little while.

Wednesday:

The day was sunny and warm, and Hermione stripped off her socks and shoes and plunged her feet into the cool water of the Black Lake. She was lounging and totally relaxed when the person she least wanted to see sat down next to her.

"Nice legs, Granger. A bit pasty but well shaped."

Hermione looked over at him and frowned. "Go fuck yourself, Malfoy."

"Are you EVER in a good mood, or are you always a bitch?"

Hermione's jaw dropped. "How dare you!" She pulled her feet from the water and stood up.

Draco gazed up at her, a grin plastered on his amused face. "Has no one ever bothered to tell you the truth?"

"What would you know about telling the truth?"

"Plenty. I LOVE telling people the truth. For example, you are a stuck up, frizzy-headed prude. You flaunt your oversized brain; you have absolutely no fashion sense whatsoever, and you have a really hot body that you hide because you want people to like you for your mind and not your nice rack..."

"Just shut up!"

Draco smirked. "And last, but not least," he continued, ignoring her, "you are the biggest bitch in the world! I just came over here to have a decent conversation with you, and right away you treat me like shit!"

Hermione pursed her lips angrily, gathered her socks and shoes and started to stomp off.

"Oh, Granger! You dropped something!"

She turned around and saw him holding up one of her shoes. Walking over, she snatched it from his long fingers.

"You might want to say thank you," he said, raising his eyebrow mockingly.

Instead of thanking him, Hermione slapped him in the head with the shoe and yelled, "The day I thank you for anything will be the day Hippogriffs fly out of my ass!"

Draco rubbed the top of his head as he watched her walk away. "I love you too!" he shouted to her retreating back.

She paused, her heart hammering in her chest. She was about to turn around when she heard him laugh. "God, I hate that boy!" she said through clenched teeth and continued walking toward the school.

Thursday:

"I need to get some lacewing flies from the cupboard. I'm all out," Hermione said to Harry, who was sitting next to her in Potions class.

Harry paid no attention to her; he was concentrating on not blowing himself up while mixing his potion.

Hermione stepped into the small cramped room and climbed the ladder. She was about to reach for the flies when a voice floated up from below her. She jumped and almost fell.

"I never thought you would be the type to wear black knickers with tiny Golden Snitches embroidered on them!"

"What do you want, Malfoy?" Hermione said, quickly descending the ladder.

"I haven't decided yet, Granger."

The room was too small for two people, and she realized that in order to get out, she would have to touch some part of his body. This repulsed her and excited her at the same time. "Please move so that I can get through the door."

"No."

Hermione glared at his smug face. "Fine!" she said, clutching the box of lacewing flies tightly. She took a deep breath and tried to slide past him. Being the bastard that he was, Hermione was not surprised when he pressed his body up against hers. She was in a state of pure panic when she realized that she could feel his erection through her robes. The harder she tried to squeeze through, the harder he pushed up against her.

"Stop struggling, Granger, and maybe I'll let you through." His voice sounded deep and husky. He cupped her chin and lifted her head up.

Hermione immediately stopped moving and looked at him. His face was flushed and his eyes were very dark. He looked so damn sexy with his pale hair that cascaded across his forehead.

He was bringing his lips down to meet hers when they were interrupted.

"Time is up! Cork your flasks and bring the samples to my desk!" Professor Slughorn said loudly.

Hermione shook the fog from her head and pushed Draco out of the way. She dropped the box and almost fell in her haste to get away from him.

"Where have you been?" Harry asked. "You were gone forever!"

Hermione glanced over at Draco's table to find him sitting there. He was acting as though nothing had happened. "I couldn't find the flies," she lied. "Must be out of them."

Friday:

"I'm going to bed. All this studying has fried my brain!" Ginny said, yawning. "Coming?"

Hermione looked up from her notes. "No. I think I'll stay a little longer."

"See you at breakfast," Ginny said and left out of the library.

Hermione was deeply engrossed in her notes when someone slipped their hands over her eyes.

"Guess who!"

Hermione put down her quill. "Is it an arrogant jackass who likes to corner women in small closets and rub their private parts on them?"

"How'd you know?" Draco said, sitting down next to her.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Can I ask you something that has been bothering me for the last week?"

"Shoot."

"Why are you sexually harassing me?"

Draco put his hand over his heart and pretended to swoon. "You think I'm sexually harassing you?"

Hermione shifted in her seat and looked him directly in the eyes. "Yes."

Draco leaned in and whispered in her ear. "It's only harassment if you don't like it, and I think you LOVE it!" He smiled in her face. "Don't you?"

Hermione's cheeks were suddenly burning. "I think YOU love it! You're the one who has tried to kiss me... not once... but twice!"

Draco leaned back in the chair. "Who says I was going to kiss you?"

"Well, weren't you?"

"I would never kiss you," Draco said with a sneer. "You disgust me and I hate you."

Hermione snapped her book shut and gathered her things. "Well, if you hate me so much, then leave me the hell alone!" she hissed angrily

"But, Granger, it's so much fun to bother you!" He was rocking on the back legs of the chair, arms behind his head, trying to look cool. "And I think I'll continue to bother you whether you want me to or not."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "When are you going to grow up? One would think you would have gotten tired of acting like an immature prick a long time ago!"

"I really never knew you had such a filthy mouth, Granger. Kind of turns me on." Suddenly, he felt the front legs of his chair collapse from under him. He hit the floor with a thud, and quick as a flash Draco grabbed her by her arm.

Hermione frantically looked around for help, but the library appeared to be deserted. There was no sign of Hogwarts' librarian, Madam Pince, who was always near by. She would never leave the library unattended. "Take your damn hands off me now, Malfoy, or I'll scream!"

Draco smirked at her arrogantly. "No, you won't."

Hermione gave him a malevolent smile. "You bet your sweet ass I will."

"You think I have a sweet ass, Granger?" Draco said, pulling her close. "My lips are sweeter still." He slowly brought his mouth down to hers.

To Hermione's horror, and Draco's surprise, she kissed him back.

After leaving the library, Draco made his way to the Slytherin common room. He was reliving the last half hour of his life in vivid detail. He had NEVER thought she would actually kiss him back, let alone make out with him for as long as she did. Things had definitely gone too far. All he had wanted to do was piss Hermione off, not almost have sex with her!

Lately he had become bored with his life, and harassing Granger was entertaining. Why her? Because she was an easy target. It didn't take much to set her off, and he so enjoyed watching her when she got angry. It was fun, and after the horrifying events that had occurred at Hogwarts last year, he needed to have some fun again. There was also the fact that he secretly sort of liked the girl.

He approached the door, but instead of going in, he paced the hall. "That can never happen again," he said to himself. "I have to keep my distance." He knew that after what had just happened, it was not going to be easy to stay away from Granger.

"Ginny! GINNY!" Hermione called, running into the sixth-year girls dorm room, where Ginny, along with two other girls, resided. "Have you seen Ginny?" she asked the startled raven-haired girl.

"I think she went to your room to look for you actually," she replied.

"Thanks!" Hermione said and rushed to her room. She found Ginny lying on the bed, flipping through a magazine.

"Where have you been? At the library all this time? That's a lot of studying, even for you." Ginny took one look at Hermione's flushed face and immediately knew something was not right. "What's wrong? What happened?" she asked, concerned.

Hermione took a deep breath before responding. "If I tell you something, do you promise not to repeat a word of it?"

"Cross my heart!" Ginny said excitedly. "Tell me! Tell me!"

"Well, for the last week, this certain person has been... I don't know what to actually call it..." She searched for the right words. "Coming on to me, I guess you could say."

Ginny's jaw dropped and her eyes widened. "What? Who?"

"I don't want to say just yet."

"Why?" The disappointment in Ginny's voice was clear.

"Let me tell you what just happened, and then I'll tell you who it is." Hermione sighed.

"All right." Ginny was beyond curious. Clearly this person, whomever it was, was someone who her friend was fond of. Why else would she be so happy and excited?

Ginny impatiently listened as Hermione told her of the 'encounters' with Malfoy, but deliberately left out his name, and by the time she had finished telling her what had just happened in the library, Ginny was certain that Hermione was in love with this man.

"Okay, now tell me who it is," Ginny said, blue eyes gleaming as she wrung her hands in anticipation.

Hermione's eyes fell to the floor uncertainly, and she said in a small voice, "Malfoy." She glanced up, expecting Ginny to shout at her.

Ginny was grateful that she was still sitting on the bed and not standing up. Otherwise, she would have collapsed on the floor. "Are you telling me that you just kissed... ew! That you touched..." Ginny was grossed out beyond belief. "Malfoy?" she asked, trying not to gag.

Hermione started to cry. "I knew you'd react this way! I shouldn't have told you!" she exclaimed frantically.

Ginny jumped off the bed and put her arms around Hermione. "I'm sorry. It just came as a shock to me. That's all!" she patted her back, trying to keep the sound of pure disgust out of her voice.

"I just had to tell someone." Hermione said, drying her tears. "I don't know what to do!"

Ginny raised her eyebrows. "Do? There is nothing TO DO! Obviously, Malfoy is just trying to get to you."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked, confused.

Ginny sighed. "He's toying with you, Hermione. This is all just some game. Clearly, he's playing with your emotions just for the hell of it. Do you honestly think Malfoy has real feelings for you?"

Hermione looked at her best friend in disbelief. "Is it so hard to believe that a man would actually like me? Am I that hideous?"

"I didn't mean it like that! All I'm saying is that this is Malfoy we're talking about. You know... the evil vile bastard that has tortured you for years? Why would he all of a sudden want to get into your knickers?"

"I DON'T KNOW!" Hermione shouted in frustration.

Just then, the door opened and Parvati and Lavender strolled in. "What's all the shouting about?" Parvati asked, looking for some good gossip.

"None of your business!" Hermione said angrily.

"Jeez! Sorrrrryyy!" Parvati said, rolling her eyes.

"I'm going to go," Ginny said. "Think about what I said. I'm only looking out for you. I don't want to see you get hurt."

"I'm big enough to take care of myself, thanks," Hermione said as she walked to the door with Ginny and then closed the door behind her.

Saturday:

I don't want to be late for the unveiling ceremony! Hurry up!" Ron said.

Harry and Hermione struggled to keep up with the long-legged strider as they walked swiftly through the corridors. "I wonder what it is?" Harry asked curiously.

"Whatever it is, it has to be something wonderful. After all, Dumbledore was a great man," Hermione said, a little breathless.

"I bet it's a statue dedicated to him," Ron said excitedly.

"That's boring! I bet it's a new wing for the school or something," Hermione said as they joined the crowd at the front entrance. There was a huge sheet that was draped over a large object that stood in the corner, and all the students looked up at it in awe.

"I told you it was a statue!" Ron said to her smugly.

Hermione ignored him. The less she spoke to him these days, the better. They were trying to retain a friendship, but it was very difficult, and they fought even more now than before. She wished daily that their relationship had never happened and that things would go back to the way they were before. Of course, there was no way to go back in time... anymore. They had broken the entire supply of Time-Turners during the battle at the Ministry, and for some reason, they had never been replaced.

"I wish they would fucking get on with this dumb-ass ceremony! I have important things to do!" Hermione froze when she heard Draco's voice so close to hers. She tried to will herself not to turn around, but it was a fruitless attempt.

"What ARE you looking at, Mudblood?" Draco said to her. "You are not ALLOWED to look at me, you ugly, fuzzy-headed chipmunk, so turn the hell back around!" He tried to say it in a vicious way, and he hoped his remark sounded genuine because he didn't mean it at all.

Hermione glared at him. He sure sounded like his old bastard self, but his eyes told her something different. "I'll look at you if I want to, not that you're much to look at, that is," she said with a smile and turned around.

"Can I have your attention please?" Professor McGonagall said over the noisy crowd. "Silence!" she shouted and then the crowd fell silent. "That's better! The unveiling will now begin. As you all well know, Albus Dumbledore was... was... the greatest wizard who ever lived, and I hope this memorial does him justice."

Filch grabbed the sheet and pulled it off. There were gasps and then some snickers from the crowd. It was a huge grandfather clock that stood from the floor to ceiling.

"A clock?" Draco sneered. "The greatest wizard of all time deserves a CLOCK?" He then laughed along with his cronies.

"Silence!" Professor McGonagall said angrily. "I want to thank the Unspeakables from the Department of Mysteries, who built this clock. Albus, before he died, had asked them to build him a magnificent time piece. I think they went above and beyond..." She wiped the tears from her eyes. "Everyone may queue up if they so desire to read the plaque."

Harry, Hermione and Ron lined up and then read the words together: 'you'll never get anywhere else if you don't leave where you are now.' After reading the inscription, they looked at each other in bewilderment.

"What the bloody hell does that mean?" Ron asked. "And why is the letter 'u' in the word 'you' bigger than the other letters?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," Harry answered, reading the words again.

"Those are the exact words Albus requested to be inscribed on the clock," Professor McGonagall said to them. "Strange, I know." The clock suddenly chimed so loudly that everyone covered their ears.

"How am I supposed to sleep with all this racket?" Draco said.

"He has a point you know!" Ron said after overhearing Draco's last words. "He needs a good night's sleep so he can get up early to wash and dry his hair," he added sarcastically.

Draco shot him a dirty look. Without another word, he turned and walked toward the dungeons.

Tuesday:

It was midnight, and Hermione lay in her bed, listening to the clock chime. It was the fourth night in a row that this had happened, and she was starting to wonder what it all meant. There was something about that clock, something strange and mysterious. It beckoned her to come closer, like it knew and wanted her. She decided to have a closer look.

Early in the morning, she made her way to the entrance hall and silently stepped over the red-velvet rope that blocked off the clock. She peered closely at the dark walnut finish, noticing a flaw on one side.

With a shaky hand, she pushed the panel forward, and it opened. "A secret room?" she whispered and stepped inside. It was small and dark and smelled like a tomb. "Weird," she said, feeling the walls. They were smooth like marble and cool to the touch.

Hermione wanted to light her wand, but thought that it was too close to breakfast time and didn't want to get caught being out so early. She gave the walls one last feel and then stepped back out into the hall. After shutting the panel, she stepped over the rope and stood there, staring at the clock. "What do you want?" she asked it.

"Talking to a clock. Now there's a sign of insanity," Draco said, coming up the stairs. He stopped next to her and after a moment of silence, climbed over the rope. "There is something creepy about this clock, don't you think?" he asked her, eyeing the clock warily.

Hermione was startled. "What do you mean?" she asked, wondering if he too felt the strangeness of the device.

"For one thing, the pendulum doesn't swing."

Hermione's eyes opened wide at the new revelation. "I never noticed that!" She looked, and sure enough it wasn't moving, but the hands on the clock face were working just perfectly.

Draco's fingers slid over the shiny wood as if feeling for something he thought was there. "Aha!" he cried at last and pressed the secret panel. "Right where it said it would be."

"Right where who said it would be?" Hermione asked, confused and a little frightened.

"The clock."

"The CLOCK told you where to find the hidden door?" Hermione scoffed in disbelief.

Draco smirked at her. "Every night since the unveiling, I've had a dream about this clock."

Hermione's heart fluttered. "You have? I've been waking up at midnight, just as the clock chimes. I know I was having a strange dream, but I can never remember it!" She shook her head to clear her mind.

He closed the panel and walked to the front of the clock. "In my dream, I wake up and come down here. It's like the clock is calling to me or something. The rope isn't here, and I just walk over and stare at the clock just like I'm doing now." He paused and then turned around. "It whispers to me that I have to find the door, so I feel the sides until I find it."

"What happens?" Hermione asked, intrigued.

"I open it and step inside. The door closes, and I'm plunged into total darkness just as the clock chimes midnight." Draco stepped over the rope. "And then I wake up."

Suddenly noise filled the halls as students began to wake and head towards the Great Hall for breakfast.

"Meet me here at 11:30 tonight," Draco said and rushed off so that he wouldn't be seen talking to her.

"Tonight," Hermione said softly. She glanced once more at the unmoving pendulum and hurried off to the Great Hall.

The day passed slowly for Hermione. It was Sunday and therefore boring. There was nothing to do, but hang around the Gryffindor common room. Hermione didn't feel like watching Ron and Harry play YET another game of wizard chess, and listening to Ginny's constant degrading comments about how Draco was an ass was not an option. The library, her only refuge, was where she decided to spend her afternoon. Perhaps she could find some useful information about dreams.

Hermione leafed through a huge volume of dream interpretations. She found quite a few things that made her heart leap into her throat. "To dream of a clock signifies the importance of time or that time is running out. Clocks are representative of death, especially if the clock has stopped." Hermione inwardly moaned.

She flipped through the pages until she found the next subject of Draco's dream. "Chimes," she read out loud, "represent memories or the passage of time." She rolled her eyes. "That's not much help!"

"D... where's the D's?" Her eyes scrolled down the glossary page until she found what she was looking for. "To dream that you are groping around in the darkness symbolizes that you have insufficient information to make a clear decision." She paused, quill in her mouth. "I wonder what decision that is?"

She then searched for the word 'door.' Finding it, she went on to read: "The door signifies new opportunities. You are entering into a new stage in your life and moving from

one level of consciousness to another." She shut the book with a snap. "So... death, time, insufficient information and a new opportunity. I have no idea what it all means together," she muttered to herself in frustration. She looked at her watch, 10pm, an hour and a half left before her meeting with Malfoy. She decided to go ahead and wait for him by the clock.

It was almost 11:30, and Draco made his way to the entrance hall. To his surprise, Hermione was already there. "I couldn't wait." She smiled shyly.

Draco smirked. "Couldn't wait to see me? Or couldn't wait to investigate the clock?"

Hermione blushed. "Investigate the clock of course!"

Draco wiggled his eyebrows. "Whatever you say, Granger, but you and I both know..."

"Shut up! We're not here to fight," Hermione said, feeling a little irate. "We're here to get to the bottom of this mystery." 'Oh, great, now I sound like Velma from the television show, Scooby Doo!' she thought sarcastically.

"Right!" Draco said, trying to act serious.

"By the way, I looked up your dream in a dream dictionary..."

"Shhh! Listen!" Draco said, interrupting Hermione as he concentrated, listening to the high pitch mewling of a cat, Mrs. Norris, and then heavy footsteps in the distance approaching closer. "Filch!"

They both scrambled to the secret door, and it shut behind them.

"What did you hear, Mrs. Norris? Students out after curfew?" Filch asked the cat.

To Draco and Hermione's dismay, the caretaker sat down on the steps and started humming to himself.

It was almost midnight, and Filch still hadn't moved.

"Doesn't that stupid Squib ever sleep?" Draco whispered harshly.

"Get your hand off my ass, Malfoy!" Hermione hissed just above a whisper.

"No, I like it right where it is!"

Hermione was about to slap him when the clock started to chime loudly. They both put their hands over their ears. It seemed like the noise went on forever. When it finally stopped, Hermione pushed the door open, not caring whether Filch was still there or not. She needed to get out.

Draco thought she had the right idea and started after her. His escape was thwarted, however, when he abruptly bumped into her back. "What the fuck? Move it, Granger!"

Hermione didn't move, but stayed rooted where she was standing. "Malfoy? I think we have a slight problem," she said, trying to remain calm as she felt a wave of panic come over her.

Draco pushed her aside and stepped out of the door. His jaw dropped at their surroundings. "Where the hell are we, Granger?"

to be continued...

2

Chapter 2 of 27

Where have Draco and Hermione found themselves?

"I think we're in the land of Kemet," Hermione said, looking at the blazing sun.

"The land of WHAT?" Draco asked, looking at the bushy-haired witch incredulously.

"K-E-M-E-T. It's what the ancient Egyptians called their land," Hermione explained.

Draco smacked his forehead in irritation. "I don't really care what the friggin' Egyptians called this fucked up land. I just want to know how the bloody hell we ended up here and how the bloody hell we're getting back."

"Let's just get back inside the clock and return to Hogwarts," Hermione said, turning around to go back inside the device. Finding it no longer there, she hissed, "Shit!"

"What?" Draco asked, baffled.

"The clock is gone!" Hermione replied, wide-eyed with wonder.

"What do you mean it's gone?" Draco yelled. He knelt down and started digging frantically in the burning sand. "Maybe it's buried."

"Get up!" she said, pulling on his arm. "Why would it be buried? That's just stupid!"

Draco stood up and brushed the sand from his pants. "This is all your fault, you know!"

"My fault? You're the one who told me to meet you at the clock! It's all YOUR fault!"

"If we ever get out of here, I'm going to make you pay for this!" he said, giving her a death glare. "Look at my face. I can feel it burning already!" He touched his face and then winced at the tender, hot flesh.

"Oh my! You might get some colour. It's the end of the world for Draco Malfoy!" Hermione exclaimed sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

Draco glared at her. "I happen to be proud of my white skin," he said haltingly.

"White!" Hermione scoffed. "You're so white you're practically clear. You're whiter than a fart, for Merlin's sake!"

Draco couldn't help himself, and he burst out laughing. "I never in a million years thought I'd be standing in the middle of a desert listening to Hermione Granger using the term fart!"

"Oh shut up!" she replied, shielding her eyes from the sun and peering into the distance. "Do you have your wand?" she then asked.

"My wand?" Draco replied, puzzled, and wondered why she needed his wand. He narrowed his eyes at her suspiciously.

"Yes, your wand," she said in exasperation. "You know that piece of shiny wood that you wave around to make magic happen?" she said, pulling out her own wand from her under her shirt.

"Maybe we can just Apparate back home," he said hopefully.

"I don't think it works for time travel, but what the hell, let's give it a try," Hermione replied skeptically. They both closed their eyes and concentrated on their destination point, and after a few unproductive moments, they gave up. "Well, that was a complete waste of time!" Hermione huffed in frustration.

"What the fuck are we going to do, Granger?"

"Why are you asking me?" she snapped. "It's not like I've been in this situation before, you know!"

Draco was about to respond when the sound of voices stopped him. He and Hermione looked at each other, and panic was evident on their faces. "Quick!" He pulled out his wand and changed their clothing into proper Egyptian attire.

"Nice wig!" Hermione said sarcastically. He quickly pulled the black braided hair-piece from his head.

Draco looked Hermione over. She could pass for Egyptian; she had a deep tan, and her eyes were sort of brown. "They'll believe you're one of them, but look at me! I'll never pass!" he complained.

Hermione knew he was right. He was just so pale, and the colour of his eyes, even though they were quite striking, was definitely not brown. "You need to darken your skin and eyes. Hurry!" she said urgently as she heard the voices drawing closer, just over the sand dune.

Draco reluctantly changed his hair and eyes, and then turned his skin to a beautiful, golden bronze colour. "How's this?" he asked, posing.

Hermione was speechless. "You look... look... you look fine." In fact, she thought he looked more than fine. Fleeting visions of herself running her hands over his tanned, muscular chest flashed through her mind. "... They're here!"

Draco turned around and beheld what he thought were priests of some kind. One was very tall, both of their heads were bald, and they wore long, white, linen robes. One carried a bundle of papyrus scrolls, and the other a plate of bread.

They seemed to be arguing and didn't notice Draco and Hermione until they were right in front of them. The priests stopped in their tracks and fell to the sand, bowing and worshipping them.

"This is more like it," Draco said with a smirk. "Worship me! I'm the god of..."

"Hair care?" Hermione finished with a raised brow.

Draco gave her a roll of his eyes. "You're just jealous."

"I AM not!"

"Are too! Right now, with that wig on, you look like a beaver with corn rows!"

"Just shut up, Malfoy!"

"Stop telling me to shut up or I'll..."

"You'll what? Huh?" she asked. "You're not man enough to DO anything!"

The priests looked at Draco and Hermione in confusion. They were speaking a language that was unknown to them, but clearly they were arguing.

Hermione paused in her tirade and saw that the two Egyptians were frightened. "It's all right. We're just having a row, nothing to worry about! It happens all the time."

"They don't understand what you're saying, Granger."

Hermione frowned and stepped toward the prostrated men. They jumped up and started speaking rapidly, clearly scared out of their minds at the divine presence of who they thought were the god and goddess, Osiris and Isis.

"We need to do something about this. Do you know of any spells that would make us understand each other?" Draco asked her. "If we could talk to them, maybe they could tell us how to get back."

Hermione thought for a moment. "I've read about a spell that might work. Come over here, away from them, so they can't see us."

They walked a few steps away from the priestly men and then huddled together. The two priests were left standing there, waiting.

"I sure hope you know what you're doing, Granger," Draco said, watching her warily.

"I always know what I'm doing," she replied, full of confidence.

Draco looked like Christmas had come early as his eyes gleamed in excitement. "So you knew what you were doing when you kissed me? When you let me stick my hand up your shirt? When you put your hand on my..."

Hermione thumped him on the head. "Would you please try and concentrate?" she said through clenched teeth. "And stop thinking about that!"

Draco laughed in glee. "Never, Granger. Whether you like it or not, I'll think about it whenever I want," he said smugly. "It's not like you can stop me from remembering how my fingers felt when they pinched your hard nipples or how it felt to kiss the soft skin on your stomach..."

"I think you better stop remembering before you have an orgasm right here!" she said, pointing to his growing erection. "And you never kissed my stomach!"

"Oh, yes, I did!"

"Just shut up and let me cast this spell!"

"Yes, ma'am!" he said, smirking. "I love it when you order me around. Oh, Malfoy, kiss me there! Oh, yes, mmm... more!"

Hermione was tempted to hex him to death, but refrained from doing bodily harm to the insufferable git. "Are you through? I'd like to get this over with and find a way home, if that's all right with you?" she said calmly.

"Go ahead, do your stuff! Thanks for asking my permission," he acquiesced arrogantly.

"Honestly! You are so impossible sometimes!" She raised her wand and muttered a spell Draco had never heard before.

"Say something," Draco commanded Hermione. "Hey!" he blinked in surprise. "This is weird!" He was hearing himself speak English in his mind, but what came out of his mouth was Egyptian. "Can you understand me?"

Hermione nodded her head. "Can you understand me?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then understand this: I NEVER want you to mention what happened in the library EVER again! Pretend it never took place, because I do!" she bellowed.

Draco was stunned and hurt. "You do?" he asked slowly, trying to mask his feelings.

"I can't believe that I even let you touch me! I absolutely regret it!" she said in disgust, ignoring the dark look he gave her.

Draco glared at her angrily. "You ARE a bitch," he hissed venomously. "You know you wanted me!" He suddenly grabbed her and shook her vigorously. "I think you STILL want me," he sneered.

"Get your hands off me, Malfoy, or so help me I'll..."

"You'll what?" he asked mockingly. "What could you possibly do to hurt me more than you already have?"

"Plenty!" she shot back at him hotly, her dark eyes blazing with fire.

The two Egyptian priests listened in disbelief at the bickering amongst the two supreme deities. One of them built up his courage and approached them. "Please..."

Draco let go of Hermione, and they both looked at the man intriguingly. He was bowing again and wouldn't lift his eyes from the ground.

"What do you want?" Draco snapped in irritation, brows furrowed.

The other priest came forward and spoke. "We wish to offer our services to our god, Osiris, and his heavenly wife and sister, the goddess Isis."

Draco's eyebrows shot up in shock, but he quickly composed himself, and Hermione felt as if she would faint.

"Did you say 'god'?" Draco asked, amused.

"Are you not Osiris, Lord of the Underworld?" the priest asked, befuddled.

Draco gave the priest a dazzling smile. "Yes, yes, I am."

Hermione slapped his bare arm. "No, you're not!"

The priests seemed to hesitate. "You are not Osiris?"

Draco gave Hermione a defiant look and then turned his attention to the two priests. "Do not listen to her! She is but a woman! I AM Osiris!"

The priests fell to the sand and started worshipping him. Draco smiled insolently at Hermione, who was clearly upset.

"Come! We will take you to Pharaoh. He has been expecting you!" The taller of the two Egyptians said.

Draco looked over at Hermione, who was still standing in the same spot with her arms crossed, glaring at him. "You heard what the man said! Come, Isis! The Pharaoh awaits!"

to be continued...

3

Chapter 3 of 27

Draco and Hermione are led to the Palace. Has the High priest succeeded in making the Pharaoh believe they are imposters?

"Excuse me," Hermione said to the taller priest. "Did you say that the Pharaoh was expecting us?"

"Yes. It has been foretold in the sacred scrolls that you would come."

Draco, who was basking in his newfound Godhead, said with an air of superiority, "And we have. Now get me some water. I'm parched!" He knew he could just wave his wand and make a glass of water appear, but he wasn't sure how the priests would react to something like that.

"My Lord Osiris, we do not have any water. Soon, we will reach the palace, and there you will find a vast supply of water and wine."

"But I am thirsty NOW!" Draco said, puffing up. "You either find me water right this minute or I'll rip you a new asshole!"

The priest stopped in his tracks. "What is this asshole you speak of?"

Draco looked incredulously at the Egyptian. "Are you serious? You don't know what an asshole is?" He laughed like this was the funniest thing he'd ever heard. "Well, allow me to show you what an asshole looks like!" He turned around and bent over. "You like it? It's so brown, so puckered, so..."

Hermione, who was disgusted beyond belief by his infantile attitude, took his arm and yanked him. "Would you just please, for once in your life, shut up?"

"Granger, I told you that if you said that to me one more time..."

"Oh please! What are you going to do? Nothing, that's what. I'll say it all I want. Shut up, shut up, SHUT UP!"

The Egyptians were shocked and speechless. Draco darted his eyes in their direction, and Hermione stopped ranting. "I'm terribly sorry!" she said apologetically. "He just gets to me sometimes."

"In more ways than one," Draco said with a small laugh.

Hermione glared at him. "Now," she said, turning back to the priests. "Are you saying that there is some kind of prophecy saying that Osiris and Isis will return?"

"Yes," the shorter one said. He unrolled the scrolls he carried and read aloud. "Horus and Set still battle with one another, and victory falls to neither. When Horus will have vanquished his enemy, Osiris will return to earth and reign once more as king of Kemet."

He looked up at them. "Our land has been in despair. Set has caused disease and famine to run rampant through all our land. For seven years, we have all starved and watched as our loved ones perished." The priest paused and then took a huge breath. "Two days ago, during the full moon, a shower of stars fell from the sky. This was the great battle between Set and your son, Horus, as you must know."

Draco rolled his eyes. "Of course we know, you twit!"

Hermione gritted her teeth together and balled up her fists, she wanted so badly to knock him out. "Please, go on," she said to the Egyptian, settling for shooting Draco a vicious glare.

"All of Pharaoh's priests came together for a great meeting. The sacred scrolls were read, and it was decided that Meruitensa, head priest of the temple of Osiris," he motioned toward the tall bald man that stood next to him, "and I, Saneha, Steward to the Pharaoh himself, should go and greet our Lord, Osiris."

"You've said nothing about Isis. How do you explain me?" Hermione asked, raising her eyebrow.

The tall priest, Meruitensa, spoke. "It is true that we were not expecting you. It is a wonderful surprise! Although, anyone who knows the lengths you went to to find the severed parts of your beloved Osiris should have known that you would surely accompany him!"

"Wait!" Draco said, putting up his hand. "Severed parts? What PARTS?"

"Do you not remember?" Meruitensa said, his liquid, brown eyes gazing at him suspiciously. "Your brother tricked you by making a richly adorned chest and luring you inside it, he locked it and then flung the chest into the Nile!"

Hermione looked sideways at Draco. "You REMEMBER how I searched for you relentlessly, and after finding you, I hid your body in a swamp?"

Draco blinked stupidly. "Ah, yes... Must have slipped my mind. Tell me, my dear WIFE, what happened next?" He smiled at the priest. "I just love to hear her tell it!"

"Your dear brother found you and cut you into fourteen pieces, including your manhood."

Draco's face turned pale, and his hand automatically covered up his privates. "And... and then you found all of my... parts? You brought me back to life?"

"Of course I did! I love you SO MUCH that I'd do anything to keep you alive!" she said, a hint of sarcasm in her voice. "Anything!"

Draco opened his mouth to send a snappy retort her way but was cut off.

"Shall we move on?" Saneha said. "The palace is not far from here." He had sensed something in the air and wanted to get the God and Goddess to the Pharaoh as soon as possible.

Meruitensa watched Draco. There was something not quite right about this situation. He was determined to find out exactly who these strangers were, because he could sense that they were definitely NOT who they said they were.

Draco felt a glimmer of fear, and goosebumps broke out all over his body. The priest seemed to look into his soul, searching for a truth that Draco did not want him to see. "Yes! Let us continue to the Palace! I am very eager to meet the Pharaoh." He leaned down and whispered so that only Hermione could hear him, "Yeah, right!"

They had been walking in the baking desert sun for only an hour when Hermione fainted.

"Now look what you've done! You've killed her!" Draco said angrily. "And I was just about to make her carry me on her back!"

Saneha fell to his knees in the hot sand and lifted her up. "She needs water."

Draco, who was about to die from thirst himself, decided that it was time to use magic. He pulled out his wand and made a small pool of crystal-clear water appear in the sand. "Everyone drink!"

The two Egyptian priests backed up and almost ran away in fright. They had never witnessed such a blatant display of magical ability, and they were clearly in awe.

Draco couldn't help but smile as Saneha started bowing and praising him. "Yes, I know I'm great and all-powerful. You can kiss my feet later, however. First, you need to get her a drink."

The tall Egyptian priest, Meruitensa, who was still looking at Draco suspiciously, suddenly smiled and said in a sickly, sweet voice, "I cannot wait to see the ceremony."

"What ceremony?" Draco asked, annoyed at his own ignorance. Why did it always seem as though everyone knew what was going on, except for him?

Meruitensa watched Saneha sit the girl up and attempt to have her drink the water from his cupped hands. It seemed very suspicious to him that a goddess would collapse from thirst. "Why, the ceremony where you and your beloved Isis make love, naked, in front of everyone in the Temple."

He wanted to see their reactions to this announcement. If they were indeed who they said they were, then they would already know about the ceremony.

Draco's jaw dropped, and Hermione choked on her drink. Meruitensa smiled innocently at him. Draco knew he had to tread carefully around this man; he was crafty and sneaky. "Actually, I'm rather looking forward to it. A bunch of bald, sexually deprived priests standing around watching me ravish a beautiful woman... I hope you can

handle it," he laughed. "I dare you not to whip out your pecker and give it a pull!"

The tall, shocked priest was now certain that this was not the real Osiris. There was no way Osiris would ever speak like this to a High Priest of the Temple. He thought about just leaving them in the middle of the hot desert and letting them slowly die as the birds pecked away at their shriveling eyes. Instead, he decided to have some fun. He was going to make their lives a living hell until they confessed to being the impostors that they were. "Yes, my Lord, that IS part of the ritual. You and Isis will make love while we priests 'pull on our peckers', as you so colorfully put it. We will collect your ejaculation in a sacred bowl, and then the goddess, Isis, must drink it."

Hermione jumped to her feet. "I will do no such thing!" she shouted. "That is just disgusting!" Her face was green, and she clutched her stomach.

Draco couldn't help but laugh. "You heard the man. You MUST drink it. Who knows, maybe you'll like it."

Meruitensa raised his eyebrow and said, "And maybe YOU will like the next part of the ritual, my Lord, Osiris."

Draco looked at him, fearful of what he was about to say. "What happens? I have to wrestle a crocodile? Eat camel balls? What?"

Sinister laughter came from the Egyptian. "No, nothing that pleasant! One of the priests will act in the part of Set and cut you into pieces. Your manhood will be first, of course!"

Draco pulled out his wand. "If you so much as lay one finger on me," he warned. "Or her," he added as an afterthought, cocking his head towards Hermione, "I'll kill you and take your worthless soul back to the underworld and torture you for all eternity!"

"My Lord, why are you reacting this way? IF you are really Osiris, then you will not die! Your wife will resurrect you with her powerful magic, just like she did so long ago! That is, if you are really who you say you are..."

Saneha watched in utmost horror. He was confused as to why the High priest of the temple of Osiris was speaking this way to his god. "I hate to interrupt, but we really should keep moving."

"I agree. Let's go." Hermione took hold of Draco's arm. He looked at her and slowly lowered his wand. She smiled at him. "The sooner we get to the palace, the sooner we can figure out what's going on," she said softly.

"After you," Draco said, waving the priests forward. "Lead the way."

"It is just over this dune," Saneha said, out of breath. "I hope you find the Palace to your liking!"

Draco stopped suddenly on the top of the dune. "Holy fuck!"

"What?" Hermione said, expecting the worst; maybe an army, waiting on the other side, prepared to kill them. "It's... beautiful!" she sighed. Hermione had been to some gorgeous places, but this was the most awe-inspiring thing she had ever laid eyes on. It was as if a picture postcard had come to life right before her eyes. The Nile was so clear, and the lush plants and trees of the oasis were a startling, vibrant green, contrasted against the dull brown of the sand.

"I never pictured it this way," Draco said. "It's gorgeous!"

The view was breathtaking to him. It was lush with trees and bushes dotting the landscape. And there, in the distance, was the famous Nile River. As he watched, a huge barge drifted past, carrying a massive stone statue.

"I feel so strange. Tingly, or something..." Hermione said in a daze.

"Yeah, I know what you mean. I feel as though I could rip off all your clothes and take you right here in the rough sand like an animal..."

Hermione frowned. "Your mouth always ruins the moment."

"Or makes the moment." He grabbed her and planted a big, wet, juicy kiss on her unsuspecting lips.

Saneha blushed and averted his eyes while Meruitensa rolled his in agitation. "There will be enough time for that during the ceremony. The Pharaoh awaits our arrival!"

Draco slowly released her from his suction and was knocked to the ground as her fist connected with his face. He sat there, confused for a moment, rubbing his rapidly swelling lip. "Did you just hit me, Granger?"

"You're damn right I did, you... you... womanizer!" she said, kicking sand in his eyes. "How dare you kiss me?" She wiped her mouth, as if trying to get rid of something gross and unpleasant. "I should kill you for that! Or better yet..."

Draco reached his hand forward, and before she knew it, he had pulled her legs out from under her, and she had landed with a thud next to him. He rolled on top of her and held her arms. "I'm not letting you up until you admit that you like my kisses and that they turn you on."

"Then I suppose we'll just lie here like this until the sun bakes us alive and the vultures pick our bones clean because I will never admit to something that's not true!"

"You'll find, my dear liar, that I can be very persuasive." He lifted her struggling arms above her head and held them with one strong hand.

"What are you going to do?" Hermione asked, trying to sound brave.

Draco smirked. "Are you ticklish, Granger?"

Hermione pleaded with him. "Please! Don't, Malfoy!" She screamed in laughter as Draco's fingers tickled her stomach. "Stop!" Tears were running down her face, and she could barely breathe.

"Say it, Granger! Say my kisses turn you on!" He tickled her harder, making her scream as she tried twisting out of his grip.

"Really, this is too much!" Meruitensa said. "Stop acting like children and get up! And who is this Granger you keep speaking of?"

Saneha watched Draco and Hermione, thinking that he had never seen two people more in love than Osiris and Isis. It was nice to see they possessed human qualities such as anger, love and humor. He had been afraid Osiris was going to be violent and hard to deal with, and he was glad that the opposite was true.

"Say it!" Draco said, ceasing the torture and leaning in close to her flushed face. "Tell me you like it when I kiss you."

The laughter died in Hermione's throat as she looked into Draco's eyes. They weren't the stormy grey that she was used to seeing, but they were beautiful just the same. "I like it when you kiss me," she said softly.

He brought his lips to hers, and just as they touched, Saneha shouted, "The Pharaoh approaches!"

Hermione threw Draco off and jumped to her feet. She wiped the sand from her dress and straightened her wig. "Get up, Malfoy!"

Draco sighed and slowly got to his feet. He walked over to where the others were watching an army approach on foot. Ten of the soldiers, or whatever they were, were

carrying the Pharaoh on a richly adorned litter. "Now that's the way to travel!"

Hermione, Draco and the two Egyptians made their way down the sand dune. Hermione was very nervous, but Draco wasn't. Why should he worry? He had a wand. If they tried anything, he'd just whip it out and curse the bastards.

Saneha stepped forward and helped the Pharaoh down from the litter. He led him over to Draco and Hermione, who just stood there, unsure of what to do.

The Pharaoh was a very impressive figure. He was tall, bronze and very handsome. He was naked from the waist up except for a stunning necklace of gold around his neck. He wore the crown of Egypt on his head and bracelets of gold and lapis lazuli around his wrists, and his eyes were outlined in black kohl, making his orbs look huge. "Welcome, my Lord, Osiris!" he said and fell to his knees. "I, Pharaoh Djoser, am your servant!"

Draco darted his eyes around, licked his lips and said the first dumb thing that came to his mind. "You call this a welcome? Where's the band? Where are the strippers? Where the hell is the booze?"

Hermione wished she could sink into the sand. Saneha stood with his mouth hanging open in shock, and Meruitensa just smiled.

Djoser looked up at Draco, confused. "Is my Lord not pleased with your Pharaoh?"

Hermione elbowed Draco in the ribs. "What? No, I am not pleased! You send two bumbling idiots out to greet us, make us walk for an eternity in the hot, sweltering sun, and to top it off..."

Hermione thought the time had come for her to interfere. Although she wasn't sure whether she should touch him or not, she stepped forward and placed her hand on Djoser's shoulder. "What he means to say is..."

"I didn't ask you to interpret, ISIS. I'm sure the Pharaoh here is smart enough to understand that I'm not very happy with him right now!" Draco smirked at her.

"You are going to get us killed," she said through clenched teeth. "Please, Draco, for once in your miserable life, just be quiet."

Saneha, sensing another argument between the gods, calmly spoke. "Pharaoh Djoser, should we not proceed to the palace?"

Djoser got to his feet and, after a calculating look at Draco, said, "Yes. On toward the palace! The God and Goddess will ride. I will walk."

Draco was elated as he climbed into the litter. "Now, I'm finally being treated like the god that I am!" He lounged back on the cushions and relaxed.

The linen curtains were closed around the two of them, and they were lifted into the air. Behind them walked the Pharaoh, Meruitensa whispering in his ear. Saneha kept giving the two of them sideways glances. The High Priest was proving to be very untrustworthy, and he would have to let Pharaoh Djoser know it.

"Come here, Granger. You look like you need some loving," Draco said, patting the pillow next to him and winking suggestively.

"I'll stay over here if you don't mind!" she snapped. "I'm not in the mood for your sexual foreplay!"

"Damn! Why didn't you say so? I'm all for skipping the foreplay and getting down to the fucking!" He started to undress.

Hermione threw a cushion at his head. "We have no time for pleasure! We have to figure out how to get back to our present time!"

"So, you're admitting that it would be 'a pleasure'?" He ran his fingers over her bare arm, watching as her eyes glazed over. He inched closer and kissed her softly on the shoulder.

"If you come any closer, I'll..."

"You'll what? Throw caution to the wind and actually do something fun for once in your life?" He kissed her neck and placed his hand high up on her thigh, where he made gentle circles with his index finger.

Hermione closed her eyes and was suddenly thrown forward as the litter was set on the ground.

"I knew you'd come around!" Draco said from underneath her.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "We've stopped."

"Stopped? I was just getting started!"

"We've stopped MOVING. We must be at the palace." Hermione got off a disappointed Draco, crawled over to the opening and stuck her head out. "You should really come and look at this view! It's so beautiful!"

"Yes, I know," Draco said softly, looking at Hermione.

"What did you say?" Hermione asked, turning around, looking bewildered.

"Nothing important," Draco sighed.

The curtains were pulled back, and they were helped out by Saneha and the Pharaoh. "This way, my Lord."

They walked down an avenue lined with huge statues of Horus, then through an archway, and finally came to a beautiful courtyard. Shady trees surrounded a huge pool of water in which lotus petals floated. The men and women who were gathered to welcome them bowed as Draco and Hermione were ushered past and led through a door.

The door slammed behind them, and two guards stood with spears in front of it. Another four aimed their sharp weapons at Draco and Hermione.

"And now, you will tell me exactly WHO you are!" the Pharaoh shouted angrily.

Hermione's hand found Draco's, and he squeezed it.

Draco and Hermione find an interesting prophecy in an ancient scroll.

"What the bloody hell is going on?" Draco said angrily.

Meruitensa stepped forward, an evil grin plastered on his face. "I have informed the Pharaoh that you are no more Osiris than I am Anubis!"

"Well then, you better just bust out the bandages and canopic jars because I AM OSIRIS!" Draco shouted to a stunned room. "And I'll prove it!" He let go of Hermione's hand and pulled out his wand.

"Draco..."

"Shh," he whispered to her. "Just follow my lead."

Hermione, who had never trusted Malfoy one tiny bit, decided there was a first time for everything and pulled out her wand as well.

Pharaoh Djoser stood his ground, not frightened a bit, but the others in the room backed up in fear, not knowing what the god and goddess were capable of doing. Djoser glanced around, annoyed by the way his servants were quaking in fear like cowards. He then turned to Draco. "Do as you say! Prove to me that you are Osiris!"

Draco smirked. "As you wish." He turned to Hermione. "Shall we turn them all into hippos, or perhaps something less flashy?"

Hermione was totally in awe of Draco's cool composure. It's like he was having the time of his life or something. "Maybe we should just do some simple spells and see what happens?"

"That's lame, Granger. I expected more from you."

"Sorry to disappoint you."

"Don't let it happen again." He raised his wand, slashed it through the air and sent a huge pillar of fire soaring through the air. It circled the room, causing the astonished guards to fall to the ground and cover their heads. He then made a swift movement with his wand and sent the flame crashing into the floor where it exploded, sending sparks and embers hurling into the smoke-filled room. The building shook, and a long crack appeared in the floor. Meruitensa and the Pharaoh ran for cover, but Saneha just stood there with a knowing smile on his face.

Hermione stood watching in amazement. "I never knew you could do something like that!" she said. "That was... was..."

"Fucking awesome, right?" He lowered his wand and addressed the panic-stricken people. "And now my lovely wife will demonstrate her powers. You may want to stay close to the ground for safety's sake." He turned and bowed to Hermione.

Hermione bowed back and then raised her hands into the air. She slowly made a circle with her wand, and the temperature in the room dropped several degrees. A cold wind swept through the chamber, making the Egyptians shudder.

Everyone was looking apprehensively toward the gathering clouds in the room. Suddenly, there was a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a sonic crack of thunder. The clouds darkened and rain poured out, drenching the terrified onlookers.

Hermione glanced at Draco, who had his face turned up into the rain, smiling. "Are you pleased?" she shouted through the wind and thunder.

Draco spat water out of his mouth. "Very!" he said, laughing, and turned his face back toward the cloud-covered ceiling.

Hermione could hear the people shouting for her to stop. "Please, goddess!" the Pharaoh yelled. "I have seen enough!"

Hermione waved her wand, and the storm dissipated. She made a beautiful rainbow appear and added the sound of birds singing. "A little too much?" she asked Draco, who was shaking his head, eyebrow raised in an annoyed way.

"Showoff!" he said, crossing his arms and pouting. "Always have to out do me, don't you?"

"It's not that difficult to do, Draco."

"Don't call me Draco." He smirked. "I might get the impression that you fancy me or something." He winked at her and wiggled his eyebrows. "Wanna kiss me right now, don't you?"

"As if I would ever fancy you! You make me sick!" Hermione said. "I'd rather kiss a crocodile!"

The Pharaoh shot a glance at Meruitensa, who nodded as if saying 'I told you so.' The Pharaoh did indeed find it strange that the god and goddess would talk and argue with one another like they were. He explained it away, however, by deciding that even a goddess would lose patience with a god who acted the way Osiris was acting.

Meanwhile, Draco's eyes flashed in anger. "That can be arranged!" He waved his wand, and a Nile crocodile appeared at her feet, snapping its jaws. She jumped back, clutching her chest.

"Oh, yeah?" Hermione shot back. Suddenly a Hippogriff was flying at Draco. He raised his arms over his head and ran around the chamber, screaming as the animal flapped its wings and tried to tear into him with its sharp beak.

Everyone in the room ran away in fright except for the Pharaoh, Saneha, Meruitensa and one other man. "Please! We believe you! Stop this at once!" the Pharaoh pleaded.

"It's amazing how quickly the two of them jump from being friendly to almost killing each other," Saneha said to the unknown man. "I have only been around them for a few hours, and I have already witnessed a few scenes of anger and many instances of what can only be love."

The man watched Draco as he waved his wand, turning the huge animal into some kind of child's toy. He then picked it up and threw it at Hermione, hitting her in the head. She screamed obscenities at him and shot a ray of blue light from her wand, which missed him and hit the wall behind him, blowing up a clay pot. "I struggle to see what you see. Love? All I see," he said, turning to Saneha, "is hatred... and possibly unresolved sexual tension."

Saneha laughed. "You would, Imhotep! It's always about the sex with you, isn't it?"

"Always!" Imhotep said with a small smile. He was looking hungrily at Hermione. "Sex with a Goddess. Now that's something not everyone can say they've done..."

Saneha blanched. "Imhotep! You wouldn't!"

He turned toward the Steward. "Now that I have finished the tomb for our Pharaoh, I think I deserve a little fun, don't you, Saneha?"

Imhotep stepped in between the two fighting deities. "If you would kindly stop trying to kill each other, I will take you to your rooms."

Draco stopped in the middle of calling Hermione a bitch and frowned at the Egyptian with contempt. "And who the hell are you to tell me to stop anything?"

The Egyptian bowed low to the ground. "I am The Chancellor of the King of Lower Kemet, the first after the King of Upper Kemet, administrator of the great palace, hereditary lord, the High priest of Re, the foremost builder, sculptor and maker of the Pharaoh's tomb... I am Imhotep."

Hermione rolled her eyes and whispered to Draco, "His ego is bigger than YOURS."

Imhotep looked up at Draco. "I am your servant."

"Can I talk to you alone?" Draco grabbed Hermione by the crook of her arm and dragged her over to the corner. "What do you know about this Imhotep person?"

Hermione glanced over at the man, who was now standing next to Djoser, waiting patiently. "He was the first human to be deified as a god." Hermione lowered her voice even more. "He became the god of medicine, worshipped and revered by all of Egypt." She paused. "Oh, and he was the one who built the so-called Step-Pyramid."

Draco sized the man up. "I don't like him."

"You don't even know him."

"I can spot an evil bastard like that!" he said, snapping his fingers loudly.

"It takes one to know one, is that what you're saying?"

"Why must you always be so bloody mean to me, Granger?"

"Ah! Did I hurt your feelings?" she said, making a sad face.

"I must insist that we take you to your rooms. We have a ceremony to prepare for," Meruitensa said, walking toward them.

Draco turned around and pointed his wand directly in the priest's face. "You were serious about this 'ceremony'?"

"Only parts of it."

"Which parts?" Draco asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Just the part where you and Isis make love." There really was no such ceremony, but he was sure he could trick the Pharaoh and Saneha into thinking one existed.

Draco smiled. "Well, in that case, let's get the show on the road!" He turned to Hermione and smirked in triumph. "After all, it's been so long since I've had the pleasure of making love to my 'wife!'"

"You wouldn't dare, Malfoy!"

"You don't really know me at all, do you, Granger?" He let himself be led out of the chamber by the Pharaoh and Meruitensa, laughing all the way.

Hermione was left alone with Imhotep and Saneha.

"Why do you let him speak to you the way he does?" Imhotep asked. "You are Isis, mother of Horus, a very powerful goddess. You should not be treated with such disrespect, especially by your husband!"

Hermione sighed. "It's very complicated."

"I would think that someone with your beauty, strength and intelligence would have the courage to put him in his place."

Hermione could tell that Draco was right. This man was not a good person. He was up to something. "Ah! But you are forgetting that he is also very strong and intelligent," she said, walking toward the door. "And we must not forget that he is also extremely powerful!"

"Yes, that is a problem..." Imhotep said, stroking his chin.

Draco's room was splendidly decorated with the best furnishing ancient Egypt had to offer. It seemed that everywhere he turned there was gold, which he was already accustomed to, being from a wealthy family.

"Are you pleased with your chamber, my Lord?" Djoser asked.

"Yes, it pleases me very much!" Draco jumped when the heavy door to the room opened and several young female slaves entered. He looked at Meruitensa questioningly.

"They are here to bathe you, my Lord."

"Bathe me? As in lather me up and scrub my unreachables?"

The priest raised his eyebrow at the Pharaoh. Djoser just shrugged his shoulders. "Yes. You must be cleansed before the ritual begins."

"When is this 'ritual' to take place?" Draco asked them while winking at one of the slaves.

"When the moon rises in the sky, you will take your wife and make love to her, symbolizing the conception of our beloved Horus."

"And then what?"

"There will be a celebration in your honour! You will take the throne as ruler, promising never to leave us again!"

"That's asking quite a lot, don't you think?"

"You do not want to rule?" Djoser asked. "But it was foretold in the sacred scrolls that you would return and rule for all eternity!"

Draco looked around uncertainly. "Um... yeah. Where are these scrolls?" He thought maybe he and Granger would be able to find something in them, something that would help them get out of Kemet and back to Hogwarts.

Meruitensa narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "Why?"

"I would like to read them for myself! Do not question me again, priest, or I will make your scrotum swell until it bursts!" he said angrily. "Now, when I get back from my bath with these attractive ladies, I want those scrolls waiting for me! Is that clear, priest?"

Meruitensa bowed as anger and humiliation burned in his heart. "Yes, my Lord."

Hermione paced the floor in her room, waiting for Draco. Saneha had come with a message from Draco, saying that he would come to her room as soon as he could manage to slip past the guards.

The door opened, and he came creeping in, trying to be as quiet as possible. He was carrying scrolls and looking smug.

"What the hell took you so long?" she asked angrily.

"Well, if you must know, I was being bathed by four nubile, young Egyptian ladies." The corner of his mouth twitched. "That was the most erotic thing that's ever happened to me; I just might stay here and rule forever like they want me to!"

"What do you mean, 'rule forever'?"

Draco laid the scrolls down on Hermione's bed. "Well, according to these ancient prophecies, Osiris is supposed to come back and rule for all eternity."

"Let me see those!" she picked one up and unrolled it. "These are in hieroglyphics! How did you read them?"

Draco rolled his eyes in exasperation. "If you can cast a spell to speak the language, then obviously you can cast another so that you can read it! I just so happen to know of such a spell." He grinned at her. "Would you like to know what it is?"

"Of course I would. Now what is it?"

"Maybe I don't want to tell you. Maybe I want to be the smart one for once."

"We don't have time for your childish jealousies. You'll never be smarter than me, so just accept it and tell me the damn spell!"

Draco wanted more than anything to show her that he was just as smart, or smarter, than she was. He vowed there would come a time when he would prove it to her, but now was clearly not that time. She was right about time being short, after all. "Fine!" He told her and watched as she cast the spell as if she had done it a million times before.

"Let's see. When Horus has defeated Set and the world is once again at peace, the Lord of Duat will once again set foot in his beloved land to rule for all eternity." She scanned the scroll and found something of interest at the very bottom. "In the reign of the Great Organizer, on the longest day of the year, look to the east. He will appear in a wooden coffin adorned with gold, and a wondrous noise will accompany his arrival."

Hermione looked up at Draco, who was pacing the floor. "This could describe the clock, you know. It's wooden, and the pendulum is gold..."

"And that clock makes a godawful noise when it chimes!" He stopped and lifted up another scroll. This one was more worn than the others, as if it had been read numerous times before. "More about Osiris..." He glanced over it until he came across an interesting statement. "Granger, listen to this. The coffin will appear once more, during the darkest part of the night. He will try to enter it, descending once more into Duat."

Hermione just about jumped for joy. "This must mean that, if these scrolls are correct, the clock is going to appear again, maybe around midnight?"

"We need to get to that clock, Granger!"

"That's going to be difficult. We're guarded by soldiers everywhere we go."

"I managed to slip past the guards. I could do it again." He moved the scrolls and plopped himself down on her bed. "The thing that I'm worried about is this ritualistic ceremony in a few hours."

Hermione bit her lip in frustration and asked apprehensively, "Are you willing to go through with it?"

Draco sat up quickly, almost falling off the bed. "You can't mean that you would actually... that you would..."

"Have sex with someone I despise in front of everyone so that we can keep up the façade of being Osiris and Isis, and thereby earn their trust so that we may escape and get back home? Yes."

Draco smiled. "You really despise me that much?" He reached his hand out to stroke her linen dress, only to have it slapped away. "Ow!"

"You'll have a chance to touch me all you want in about four hours," she said, blushing.

Her heart was about to explode in fear just thinking about what she had to do. It wasn't so much that it would be Draco who would take her virginity, which was actually kind of all right with her; it was doing it in front of all those strangers that terrified her.

"I better get back to my room," he said, picking up the scrolls and moving toward the door. "I'll see you in a few hours. Try not to think about the hot sex we're going to have; I don't want the guards bursting in and seeing you fingering yourself!" He smirked and shut the door.

The guards almost attacked him before he could say, "Obliviate!" He then made his way to his room, thinking about what he had to do to Hermione during the ritual. It was both exciting and revolting at the same time. He wouldn't mind having sex with her... when she actually wanted it. To him, this was going to be too close to rape to enjoy it. Draco might be a bastard, but he would never stoop so low as to force a girl to have sex with him.

Hermione tried not to think about the nightly festivities, but it was hopeless. She wondered if it would hurt and if she might like it, or perhaps it would be so disgusting that she would throw up. As the hours dwindled down, she began to panic more and more, until she was sweating and on the verge of tears.

Saneha came in and, seeing her in anguish, kindly embraced her. He tried to comfort her by telling her it would only last a few minutes and then it would be over. It was something that must be done, or the officials, the Pharaoh and the priests, would not believe they were the gods, and they would be put to death.

"What a way to make me feel better, Saneha!" Hermione wailed.

Saneha sighed and then stood. He bowed and left. He leaned against the wall, thinking. He knew of the scrolls, of course. He knew that there was a way for the gods to escape. He just wished there was some way he could help them.

Imhotep and Meruitensa stood in Draco's room, ready to escort him to the temple. They were both eyeing him suspiciously because he was sweating profusely and talking to himself.

"You can do it, Draco. She won't mind, it was her idea to go through with it..."

"If you please, we must proceed to the..."

"TEMPLE! I BLOODY FUCKING KNOW!" he screamed. Sitting down in a chair, he leaned forward and put his face in his hands. "I don't know if I can do this..."

"If it would please my Lord, I would be willing to act in your stead and ravish the beautiful goddess in your place," Imhotep said.

Meruitensa stifled a grin as Draco charged at Imhotep, his wand out, and screamed threats at him. "How dare you! If you ever lay a finger on her, I'll chop off your hands and shove them up your ass! I'll cut out your filthy tongue and make you eat it! I'll..."

"I get the point, my Lord. She is untouchable."

Draco blinked, surprised at the audacious way this man was speaking to him. "The next time you interrupt me, or speak to me in that sarcastic tone again, I will kill you." He stepped back and lowered his wand. "I'm ready. Let's go."

Hermione was led into the temple where Draco was already standing, leaning on the throne where Djoser sat. She saw that he was shaking and looked quite sick.

Hermione was placed in the middle of the room where there was a circle drawn on the ground and then left alone. She looked at Draco, who wouldn't meet her eye.

Imhotep stepped forward and raised his arms. "We have been privileged to witness the second coming of our god, Osiris! He is all-powerful and all-knowing! He is the teacher of the law! The bringer of order and justice!" Imhotep lowered his arms and turned toward Draco. "His love for his sister and wife knows no bounds! Together they created 'He Who is Above'! Let us bear witness to this love, that we may share in it!"

Draco stepped into the circle and, with a shaky hand, slipped Hermione's dress from her statue-like form. "I'm sorry," he whispered.

Hermione said nothing, but Draco saw the tears in her eyes. He knew she was frightened and embarrassed. She didn't move as he lightly caressed her bare shoulder, or when he kissed her neck tenderly. She did, however, close her eyes as he trailed his fingertips over her stomach and touched her in between her legs. She stiffened and held back a whimper as he gently slid his long finger inside of her.

Draco pulled her head back with his other hand and was just about to kiss her soft lips when he noticed a tear break away from her tightly shut eyes and slip down her flushed cheek. It broke his heart, and he knew he could never go through with this. "Open your eyes." He pulled her dress back over her head and then stepped away. She smiled at him thankfully.

The Pharaoh stood up. "What is the meaning of this?"

Draco took Hermione's hand in his and announced, "I'm afraid that we have been lying to you."

"We are not Osiris and Isis."

"I knew it!" Meruitensa said angrily.

"If you are not the god and goddess, then who are you? How is it that you can do magic?" Imhotep asked.

"It doesn't matter who we are or how we can do magic. All that matters is that we are getting the fuck out of here!" Draco said, and then he hit the ceiling with a powerful spell that made the temple shake.

"Arrest them!" the Pharaoh yelled. Soldiers ran toward them, spears aimed.

"Ah... not happening!" Draco said and hit them with a spell that sent them flying across the room, where they hit the wall with a sickening thud. Debris was falling from the ceiling, causing a thick dust to hover in the air. People were screaming and running around, trying to get out.

"Let's get the hell out of here!" Draco said, pulling Hermione by her arm.

"I think the entrance is over here!" Hermione said, trying to pull him the other way.

"No, it's not! I'm sure it's this way!" He said, yanking her in the other direction.

"I'm telling you. I came in that way!" Hermione pried his hand from her arm.

"No, you didn't! Now just shut the fuck up and follow me! We need to get out of here!" Draco turned around and was met by ten sharp spears being thrust into this face.

"I'm afraid that you are going nowhere but to your deaths!" Meruitensa said, stepping over the rubble. He laughed maniacally and punched Draco right in the face, knocking him out.

"Where the fucking hell are we, Granger?" Draco asked, trying to sit up. His head was throbbing, and there was a ringing noise in his ears.

"We're in a secret chamber underneath the Step-Pyramid. We've been buried alive."

Draco's eyes tried to focus in the gloomy darkness. "They left us here to starve to death?"

"Starvation is the least of our worries..." She pointed to a message on the wall that was glowing green.

Draco almost fell back against the wall and smacked his head. "But that's written in English!"

"How observant of you!" she said sarcastically.

"But how did it get here?" He scooted forward and ran his fingers over the letters.

"Your guess is as good as mine."

Draco read the message out loud, "If a man Doesn't know where he is going, there is no telling where he'll be when he gets there."

"Any idea what this means?"

Hermione pulled her knees up in front of her, wrapping her arms around her legs. "I don't know, Malfoy. All I know is that we only have a few hours to find a way out of here."

Draco looked away from her and back to the eerily glowing message. "Did you notice that the 'd' in 'doesn't' is bigger than all the other letters?"

"Yes," Hermione said wearily. "I noticed. I don't think it's important. Probably just a mistake the crazy writer of the message made."

Draco wasn't so sure it was a mistake.

5

Chapter 5 of 27

Will Draco and Hermione be able to escape from Egypt with their lives?

A/N: Thank you so much to my very lovely Beta, Angel Mischa!

"How much air do you think is left?" Draco asked. "I really don't want to suffocate to death."

"There's plenty of air. Can't you feel that draft?" she said, a little snippy.

Draco waved his hand in the air slowly. "Where's it coming from?"

"That crack in the wall over there."

Draco crawled over and inspected it. "There is no way we can break through this. If only they hadn't taken our wands!"

"Well, they did, and now we'll just have to sit here and die, won't we?"

"Giving up so easily, Granger? I was counting on your intellect to find a way out."

"You figure it out! It's all your fault we're down here in the first place!"

"How do you figure that?" he said angrily.

"If you had just gone ahead and had sex with me like you were supposed to, then we wouldn't be in this predicament!"

"Gone ahead and had sex with you?" He was in complete disbelief. "You were crying!"

"I would have gotten over it!" she yelled. "I know you wanted to do it. Why did you stop?"

"What kind of monster do you think I am?" he shouted back. "I may be a lot of things, but a rapist I'm not!" He was shaking uncontrollably. "You hate me when I'm a bastard, and you hate me when I do the right thing. I can't win with you, can I?"

"Fine time you picked to become all good and noble!" she said.

"You are such an ungrateful BITCH! I saved you from total humiliation, and I don't even get a thank you!" He glared at her. "Don't expect me to EVER do it again."

"I don't need you, Malfoy. I can take care of myself." She crawled into the corner and turned away from him.

"Are you crying, Granger?" He could hear her sobbing quietly, and all it did was annoy him. He was counting on her to be strong; after all, he had never really seen her as a weakling. "Stop your damn bawling and help me find a way out of here!"

She turned around and glared at him. After a second or two of them staring each other down, she finally gave in. "Fine. I'll help you!"

"There is some sort of door on the wall up there, almost to the ceiling," he said, pointing.

"How are we supposed to reach that?" she asked, knowing the answer already.

"Climb on, Granger!" he said with a smirk.

She hesitated. "I'm not sure I trust you enough to not let me fall."

He sighed, clearly offended. "You have to trust me. You have no one else!"

She knew he was right, so she hitched up her long white linen dress and climbed onto his back.

"Damn, Granger! You're a lot heavier than you look!" he grumbled as he took her hands and helped her to stand on his shoulders.

"It's pure muscle, Malfoy. Now hold my feet," she said, wobbling and groping the wall.

The bottom of her dress was over his head, and if he looked up, he had a clear view of her...

"Stop looking up my dress!" she reached down and took it off his head.

"It was dark under there. Don't worry, I didn't see anything!" he laughed. "What's the big deal anyway? It's not like I didn't get an extreme close-up that day in the library!"

Hermione reached her hand down and smacked him upside his head. "I told you to never speak about that day again!"

"Whatever you say. I really don't know why it bothers you so much." He braced himself against the wall, trying to keep her steady.

"It just does, okay? Now hold me still. The door is a little out of my reach." She stood on her toes as Draco held onto her ankles. She reached her fingertips up the smooth wall.

"Can you open it?"

"Just a little bit further!" she said, straining to reach the handle. "I've got it!" She grabbed it and pulled with all her might. It wouldn't budge. "No!" she yelled, trying to turn it with no results. She gave up on the handle and started to pound on the door instead. "Help! Let us out!"

"Stop moving, Granger!"

"Please! You can't leave us to die down here!"

"I said..." Draco did not get to finish his plea because she came tumbling down, knocking him to the ground. She landed right on top of him, her face not even an inch from his. "If you wanted to be on top, Granger, all you had to do was ask."

Her eyebrows came together and he could tell she was about to give him a tongue lashing like only she could. So, to stop it, he grabbed her head and smashed his lips onto hers.

She struggled for only a second and then kissed him deeply and with a passion she never knew she possessed.

Saneha stood outside the pyramid, hidden in the shadows, listening to Hermione pounding on the door, pleading for release. He knew this was wrong and was going to do something about it. He looked at the guard. This man was tall and muscular but not very bright. This would be an advantage.

"Excuse me," he said. "I was told to deliver a message to you."

The guard looked down at the steward. "And what message is this?"

"It is from the Pharaoh himself."

At the mention of the Pharaoh, the guard bowed low to the ground. Saneha took out a dagger and plunged it into the man's back. There was a look of shock and surprise on the guard's face as he fell back against the pyramid wall. Saneha pulled out the knife and plunged it into his chest. As he watched, a blood bubble formed on the soldier's mouth, and he fell face first into the sand.

Draco pulled Hermione's dress up over her hips and squeezed her tight little ass, lifting his hips up and grinding his erection into her. She broke the kiss and sat up, straddling him. He closed his eyes as she leaned in and kissed his bare stomach, dipping her tongue in and out of his belly button.

Hermione paused and looked up at the door. "Did you hear something?"

"Only the blood rushing from my head into my cock."

Hermione stood up and walked over to the wall.

"Where are you going?" he asked, not able to move.

"Shh! There! I heard it again!"

"I hear nothing!" Draco said. Suddenly, sand fell into his face as the door opened and Saneha threw down a rope.

Hermione was almost jumping for joy, she was so excited. "Saneha!"

"Please, climb up the rope! There is no time to waste! It is almost midnight!"

Draco got up and stood next to Hermione. "Ladies first..."

"Then maybe you should go," she said with a huge grin.

"I'll get you for that!" he said, lifting her onto the rope. He watched her slowly climb to the top where the steward helped her out.

He made it swiftly up, and in no time was pulled out by Hermione and Saneha. "You have the most wretched timing!" Draco said to the Egyptian. "But thanks!" He shook the embarrassed man's hand. "Whoa!" he said, spying the guard lying in a pool of blood.

"What will they do when they find out what you've done?" Hermione asked, concerned.

"It does not matter. All that matters is that justice has been served!"

"What do you mean?"

"He is not the only man I have killed this night!" Saneha said proudly. "This reign was corrupt! The Pharaoh had no real voice! Imhotep was the true ruler, and Meruitensa was his lap dog!"

Hermione paused. "You killed Imhotep?" She was astonished. "But Saneha, in the future, he is worshipped! By killing him, you have made him a god!"

Saneha squared his shoulders. "I care not! My conscience is clear! When my heart is weighed against the feather of Maat, I shall be found worthy!"

"This is all very interesting. Now shouldn't we be getting to the clock?" Draco said impatiently. "We have a lot of ground to cover, and only a couple of hours to do it in."

Saneha frowned. "Well, my Lord, we actually only have an hour."

"What!!!" Hermione and Draco shouted at the same time.

"But it should not be hard to do with the help of these!" The Steward pulled out their wands and held them out.

"Oh, Saneha! I could just kiss you!" Hermione gushed, taking her wand.

"That would not be appropriate," he said, blushing.

"Damn right it wouldn't," Draco mumbled.

Hermione embraced the man. "I don't know how to thank you enough!"

Saneha looked at them both. "You can thank me by getting away from here, living long productive lives, and having lots of children."

"With each other?" Draco asked. "That'll never happen."

"Never say never. You love each other. Perhaps you don't see it yet, but there will come a time when you won't be able to deny it any longer."

Hermione smiled. "I'll miss you, Saneha."

"I will miss you, my goddess," he said, smiling back.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Sorry to interrupt this blatant display of emotion." He shivered as if disgusted. "But we need to hurry our asses up, unless you want to stay in this horrid country where everyone is obsessed with death and architecture."

Hermione laughed. "All right! I'm coming!" She kissed Saneha on the cheek and then walked over to where Draco was standing, thinking hard.

"How are we going to get there so fast?"

Draco snapped his fingers. "I've got it! But first..." He waved his wand, turning his features back to normal. "I feel like my old self!" He was now wearing his usual attire... black pants and black shirt. He looked Hermione up and down and then waved his wand, turning her Egyptian linen dress into a black and green plaid skirt and a low-cut white shirt. She had white knee socks on and shiny black patent leather buckle shoes. "I like this look on you."

"You would!" She had to admit that this was how she felt most comfortable--except for the low-cut top.

"And now, for our transportation!" He closed his eyes and concentrated.

Hermione let out a little scream when a broomstick appeared in Draco's hand. "How the hell did you do that?" She was quite impressed.

Draco smirked and winked at her. "It's a secret, Granger. I'd tell you, but then I'd have to kill you." He climbed on the broom and held out his hand to her.

"But I hate flying!" she whined.

"That's because you've never flown with me! Now get your sexy ass on this broom right now!"

Hermione, her heart beating rapidly, mounted the Firebolt and put her arms around Draco.

"Goodbye!" Saneha waved.

"I'll never forget you!" Hermione said sadly.

Without warning, Draco took off from the ground at an amazing speed, Hermione holding on for dear life, crushing his ribs.

"Ease up a little, Granger. I can't breathe! You wouldn't want me blacking out, now would you?"

Hermione's head was instantly filled with images of herself and Draco falling out of the sky and splattering on the ground. She loosened her grip.

"Can I ask you something, Granger?"

"That depends."

"On what?" Her mouth was close to his ear, and when she spoke, it sent shivers up and down his spine.

"It depends on if the question you're planning to ask is sexual in nature."

Draco couldn't help but laugh. "It's not sexual."

"All right then, ask away."

"Do you love me, Granger?"

Hermione was so shocked by the question that she almost fell off the broom.

"Hey! Am I to take it that you'd rather commit suicide by jumping off this broom than answer my question?" he asked, pulling her back to safety.

"I... I'm just shocked that you would ask me something like that."

"Well? Do you love me?"

Hermione wanted to shout at the top of her lungs, 'no, she did not love him,' but was it really true? "I don't have to answer that."

"Oh, yes, you do!" he said, diving toward the ground. "Answer the question, or I'll slam this broom into the ground!"

Hermione's stomach was flip-flopping from the dive, and she was in a total panic. "What are you doing? Pull up! You're going to kill us both!"

"Just answer the question!"

Hermione could see the ground zooming in at an alarming rate. She thought about saying yes, but the thought of his smug face made her say the opposite. "No! I don't love you!"

Draco pulled up, just missing the ground. "Not the answer I was hoping for, but an answer, nevertheless," he said.

Hermione thought she heard a hint of disappointment in his voice. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I don't love you either, so it doesn't matter." He leaned forward, searching the sand in the darkness. "Look! There it is!"

"It's already chiming!"

Draco landed the broom, and both of them ran as fast as they could and then opened the secret door and scrambled inside just as the clock chimed twelve.

"That was close!" Draco said. "We almost didn't make it."

"Thanks to your little stunt back there!"

"Here we go! Blame me! I'm getting used to it!"

The clock stopped, and in the silence, Hermione took Draco's hand. "I wonder where we are now?"

"There's only one way to find out." He reached his hand forward and slowly opened the door.

Sunlight and sweltering heat hit them in the face. They shielded their eyes as they stepped out of the clock.

"I can't see a damn thing!" Draco said.

"I don't think you want to!" Hermione said, clearly scared. She pressed up against him and felt behind her for the clock. It was gone.

"Granger, what's wrong?" Draco asked.

Draco moved his head to the right. He stiffened, and they both screamed as a huge Tyrannosaurus Rex let out a mighty roar.

to be continued...

6

Chapter 6 of 27

Draco and Hermione run for their lives, but they can't escape their growing feelings for one another.

Draco clamped his hand over Hermione's mouth as the huge beast leaned his massive head down and sniffed them. They could see rancid, bloody strips of flesh hanging from its razor sharp teeth, and the smell was enough to make them want to retch.

The T-Rex inhaled deeply, making their hair and clothes almost fall from their bodies. It cocked its head to the side, as if debating whether or not they were food.

Hermione whimpered, and Draco pressed his hand firmly over her mouth. That's all he needed was for her to scream again! The dinosaur would devour them in one bite!

It let out a huge snort, almost blowing them over, and then raised its head. As Draco and Hermione watched, it turned and stomped off into the dense foliage as if suddenly frightened.

Hermione collapsed against Draco and struggled to remain calm. "My god! What are we going to do?" she cried. "There is no way we can survive here until that clock comes back!"

"We have no choice, Granger. We're stuck here."

"Where exactly is here, anyway?" she said, looking around at the strange plants.

Draco stroked his chin. "I do believe we're somewhere in North America during the late Cretaceous period."

"And how the heck do you know that?" she said, studying a huge, strange looking, yellow flower.

"What boy hasn't been obsessed with dinosaurs at one time or another?" he said with a faint smile. "I remember reading that fossils of the T-Rex have only been found in North America, and since said 'dino' was only alive during the middle to late Cretaceous period, I just put two and two together..."

"So you know a lot about dinosaur species? Could you identify one if it was right in front of you?"

"Yes. Why?" Draco asked, suddenly aware that it was very quiet.

"Tell me, dinosaur expert, what the hell is that?" she pointed a quivering finger to a spot over his left shoulder.

Her face was very pale, and he was loath to turn around. "Is it big?"

She nodded her head.

Draco closed his eyes, took a deep breath and slowly turned around. "Run, Granger."

Hermione, eyes wide with fear, didn't hesitate for one second. She spun around and fled into the jungle. She heard a deafening roar and felt the ground shake as the monster gave chase.

Her heart was hammering in her chest, and her lungs were burning. She vaguely wondered where Draco was. She was slowing down, unable to run much further, when his hand grabbed hers and he pulled her along.

"Run, god damn it!" he said, almost pulling her arm out of the socket.

The enormous animal was almost upon them. It lunged forward and snapped its jaws, almost catching them.

Draco managed to drag Hermione along faster. Branches slapped him in the face, and small animals scurried out of their path. Just when he thought he could go no further, they broke through the trees and stopped at the edge of a cliff.

Hermione pulled him back before he could tumble over the side. "It's still coming!" she screamed. "What are we going to do?" she asked, looking over the edge at the water and sharp rocks that lay below.

The dinosaur crashed into view and stopped, staring down its prey. Hermione automatically took a step back, sending small pebbles falling over the side of the cliff.

Draco suddenly laughed a high-pitched, amused laugh.

Hermione thought for sure that he had turned to an idiot or something. "What are you laughing at? I see nothing funny!"

He held up his wand. "Why are we running? We have wands!"

Hermione seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. She pulled out her own wand, and together, she and Draco took a few steps forward.

"I think the old P.T. should work, don't you agree?" he asked her, smirking.

She smirked back at him. "On the count of three?"

The dinosaur bolted toward them. Draco and Hermione shouted, "*Petrificus Totalis!*" and the animal fell over, making the ground quake.

They lowered their wands and walked over to the rigid animal.

Hermione ran her finger over its pebbly skin. "What kind of monster is this?"

"It's a Gorgasaurus. A fierce carnivore. The T-Rex must have sensed it coming, and that's why it left so suddenly."

"It's the most disgusting thing I've ever seen!"

"That's saying a lot, Granger! Even more disgusting than a naked Weasley? I KNOW you've seen one of those!"

"Jealous?" she said, winking at him.

"Like I'd want to see that lanky, freckly... Ew. Just the thought of it is making my balls crawl!"

"Well, if it'll make you feel any better, I never saw him naked. We always made love in the dark."

Draco frowned. "You and he made love?" he asked, trying not to let his anger show.

"Many times. In fact, sometimes Harry and Ginny would join us, and we'd have a big orgy," she said, grinning.

Draco grinned. "You had me going there for a second, Granger!" he said, relieved.

"I don't think we should be standing over the body of a petrified man-eating dinosaur discussing my sex life," she said, looking down at the animal.

"Or lack there of..."

Hermione aimed her wand in his face. "And just what do you mean by that?"

Draco held his hands up. "Whoa... I only meant that when it comes to sexual things, you need a few lessons."

"And I suppose you think you're the proper person to instruct me?"

"Haven't I already taught you a thing or two?" he said, suddenly pulling her close. He placed his lips close to hers so that they almost touched.

A fierce, thunderous roar echoed from not too far away, and Hermione jumped, smacking Draco in the bridge of his nose with her forehead.

"Ow, damn it!" he said, eyes watering.

"I don't think we should be standing out here in the open!" She glanced around fearfully.

Draco wiped his nose, checking for blood. "You're right. Let's find somewhere safe, a cave or something."

They were carefully walking through the jungle, trying to be as quiet as possible. Every once in a while, a tiny dinosaur would hop along beside them curiously.

"Aw! Isn't he cute?" Hermione said, crouching down to pet a particularly bothersome critter that had been scampering beside them for some time. It snapped at her finger and then ran off.

"Stupid little bugger!" she said, looking at her finger while Draco laughed.

"Serves you right, Granger! I told you not to touch anything!"

"Oh shut up!" she snapped. "It was cute. I didn't think it was vicious!"

Draco raised his eyebrows in amusement. "It's always the cute ones that are vicious. Take me for example..."

Hermione rolled her eyes and pushed past him. "Let's keep moving."

They came to a clearing where a herd of Einiosaurs were drinking from a stream. Further down was a duckbilled dinosaur, which Draco said was called a Corythosaurus. Its babies were squeaking for her attention, and she nuzzled them lovingly.

"Wow! Now this is more like it!" Hermione said. The scene was very peaceful, and they found themselves relaxing a bit. "Shall we sit for a while?"

Draco reached up and plucked a piece of fruit from a tree, sniffed it, took a bite and then offered it to Hermione. "Want some? It tastes sort of like a pear or something." He plopped down next to her, lounging on his side.

"Thanks," she said, taking it and biting into the fruit. "This is quite good." She froze as Draco wiped the juice from her chin with his finger.

"Delicious!" he said, sticking the finger in his mouth and sucking it dry. To his surprise, Hermione leaned in and kissed him. "Even more delicious!" he said as she pulled away. "Not that I'm complaining, but what brought that on?"

Hermione smiled. "The heat must be getting to me." She stretched her legs out in front of her and took off her shoes and socks. "It IS really hot here."

"You're not kidding." He stripped off his shirt and lay back in the grass.

"Granger?"

"What?"

"I have wanted to ask you this for a long time."

Hermione's heart jumped into her throat. "Yes?"

"Do you recall back in sixth year, when that Amortensia potion was brewing, and you said you smelled grass and parchment?"

Hermione could see where this was going, and she started to panic. "Um, I think so."

Draco rolled onto his side. "Now don't play dumb with me. I know you remember. You started to say you smelled something else, but then you stopped, clearly embarrassed."

Hermione picked at the grass. "You want to know what it was, huh?"

"You would not believe how the answer to this question has plagued my mind for all these months!"

Hermione looked over at his smirking face. "Why do you want to know so badly?"

"I just do. Now tell me."

"You'll laugh."

"I will not!"

"Yes, you will!"

"I promise I won't laugh, Granger. Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye." He looked at her, serious as a heart attack.

"You."

"Me?" he asked, confused. "You mean you smelled me?" He started to laugh, but she shot him a dirty look, and he grinned instead. "How could you know what I smelled like? We had never really been close enough to allow that to happen."

"Okay. This one time, I was headed to the Prefect bathroom to take a bath. I saw you come out, all clean and... and..." She knew she was blushing and wished she could sink into the ground and hide. "I hid around the corner until you were out of sight. I didn't want to have a run in with you."

Draco smiled slyly. "Yes? Go on."

"When I went in, I saw that you had left some things behind."

"What things?" he asked, very intrigued.

"Oh, you know--your bottle of cologne, your black shirt with the little dragon on it..."

"Did you steal my shirt, Granger?"

"No!" she said, offended. "... I just smelled it a bit, that's all!"

Now, Draco did laugh. He fell onto his back and laughed his ass off, picturing Hermione standing in the Prefects bathroom sniffing his dirty shirt. If only he would have walked in on that!

"I knew you would laugh!" She put her socks and shoes back on and started to stomp away toward the water.

He quickly got to his feet and ran after her, still laughing. "I'm sorry! I really am! It's just so damn funny!"

She wouldn't stop walking, so he jumped in front of her.

"Move."

"No."

Hermione shoved him out of the way and kept walking.

"And just where exactly do you think you're going?" he asked.

"Somewhere far away from you!"

"I wouldn't wander too far, Granger!" He desperately wanted to follow her, but thought she just might kill him if he tried. "If you're not back in twenty minutes, I'm coming after you!" he yelled to her retreating back.

He put his hands in his pockets and watched as she walked away, keeping clear of the thirsty herbivores. "Stupid girl! She's going to get herself eaten!" He looked up at the fruit tree. "Speaking of eating." He plucked a piece of fruit and sat down to wait for her to come back.

Hermione walked, mumbling to herself about how much of an asshole Draco was. She tried to convince herself that she didn't feel one speck of affection for him. "It was only a brief infatuation. After all, he is quite good looking and can be charming when he wants to be..." She left the water's edge and made her way into the jungle, intent on finding something better than fruit to eat. "I hate him. I hate him! Who am I kidding? I don't hate him!"

She was so involved with her inner monologue that she failed to notice the pack of very hungry Deinonychus that was stalking her.

7

Chapter 7 of 27

Hermione is attacked, Draco is wounded, and another secret message is revealed.

Draco was just about to bite into his third piece of fruit when he heard a blood-curdling scream. "Holy fucking hell!" he said, jumping up and taking off. He ran as fast as he could, following her screams for help.

"Granger!" he yelled. "Where the bloody fuck are you?" He crashed through the jungle, blasting plants and vines out of his way. "Hermione!"

He heard her scream off to his left and turned in that direction, ready to sprint. He took a running step forward and was confronted by a huge plant that reminded him way too much of a Venus Flytrap.

It was twice as tall as he was; the stems and leaves were dark green, shiny and were topped with a giant, blood-red flower that was opening slowly, as if yawning lazily.

As Draco watched, the plant bent forward, and snake-like vines slithered across the ground, wrapping themselves around his ankles. Just as he raised his wand, ready to blow the bloody thing to kingdom come, it emitted a cloud of yellow-tinged pollen right into his face.

"What the hell?" he said, trying to wave it away. He was suddenly very sleepy and wanted nothing more than to close his eyes. "No! Must not go to sleep..." he said, his head filling with fog. "Granger in trouble... needs me..."

The vines were now winding their way up his body and lifting him off the ground. The flower opened even wider, preparing to devour him.

Hermione screamed Draco's name, his eyes snapped open, and he looked around in horror. He struggled until his hands were free from the vines and stuck his wand into the flower. "Not today, bitch!" he said and blew it up.

He landed on his back with a sickening thud and scrambled across the ground, trying to avoid the vines that were still searching for him. "Get the hell away from me!" he screamed, setting them on fire with his wand. They made some kind of high-pitched screech and shriveled up. He kicked them with his foot, looking disgusted.

"Malfoy! Help!"

Draco turned and ran, almost falling several times. "I'm coming, Granger!" He jumped over a fallen tree, waded through a murky puddle that was up to his knees, ripped down a curtain of hanging moss and came upon a scene so terrible that he almost turned and ran, despite Hermione needing help.

Hermione was clinging desperately to a branch high up in a tree. Her feet dangled precariously close to the open jaws of a man-eating dinosaur. She pulled them up, hooking them to the branch. The animal jumped, snagging its needle-like teeth on her skirt, which ripped, sending the Deinonychus crashing into the ground. It got right back up and started to jump at her again.

"Granger! Where's your wand?" Draco shouted.

Hermione, tears streaming down her face, shouted back, "There! On the ground!" She had a large cut on her cheek, and blood was dripping onto the dinosaur's face, driving it mad with hunger. "Oh my god! Hurry!" she screamed, trying to hold on. She screamed again when a light flew from Draco's wand, hit the Deinonychus in the head and sent it flying into the bushes.

He located her wand and bent over to pick it up. "Fuck!" he said, realizing that the pack was now focused on him. They circled around him, making some strange clicking noise. There were too many of them; there was no way in hell he could stun them or kill them all.

Draco slowly stood up. "I'm going to toss your wand up to you, Granger. You better catch it; I do believe my life depends on it!" A large Deinonychus darted towards him, and Draco fell back, hitting his head on the trunk of the tree.

Hermione pulled herself up so that she was sitting on the branch. "When you're ready," she said, watching the dinosaurs close in on him.

Draco took a deep breath and, without taking his eyes off the animal in front of him, tossed her wand into the air. As soon as it left his hand, the pack attacked.

It happened so quickly. One minute he was standing, wand out, and the next he was flat on his back, wand nowhere in sight. Three of them were on top of him, biting his arms and slashing at his stomach with their large claws. He knew he was screaming, but the sound was far away. He tried to kick them off, but they were just too strong, and the more he fought, the more they slashed at him.

Hermione caught the wand and jumped down from the tree, hearing her ankle snap. Everything went black, and she struggled to stay conscious. She gripped the tree for support. Black and gold spots were dancing before her eyes, and she felt like throwing up.

She took a few shallow breaths, trying not to fall over. "I'm coming, Draco," she said, pushing off the tree and rushing forward. The ground was slick with blood, and she slipped and slid, trying to keep her balance. "No!" she screamed, aiming her wand at the hungry pack. "Get the fuck away from him!" She limped towards him but was knocked over.

Draco managed to get an arm free, and he desperately felt the ground for his wand. "Come on! Come on, damn it!" he said. "Yes!" His fingers closed on it, and he brought his hand up swiftly and stabbed the dinosaur in the eye. It let out a loud roar and fell off his chest.

Hermione rolled over. She was covered in Draco's blood, and she hastily wiped it from her eyes. As soon as she could see, she wished she couldn't. There was one of the pack crouching low, ready to jump on her, jaws open and eyes murderous. She tried to hit it with a spell, but it missed and hit the tree instead, sending splinters of bark flying through the air.

Draco screamed as one of the dinosaurs sunk its teeth into his thigh. His other leg came up automatically, and he kicked it in the head as hard as he could, over and over until it collapsed. Something clicked in his brain, sending him over the edge, and he felt a surge of immense power. "I'll kill you, you fuck!" He aimed his wand and yelled, "*Avada Kedavra!*" The Deinonychus flew backwards and lay on the ground, dead.

Hermione covered her head as the animal jumped. She could hear Draco shouting and screaming, and then she felt the dinosaur fall on top of her chest, knocking the wind out of her. She passed out.

"Granger? Granger!" Draco shouted, pulling the heavy body off her. He lifted her into his lap. "Say something!" He put his ear to her chest and listened for her heart. It was beating. "Damn it, Granger! Wake up!" He was crying and felt like he was going out of his mind. "Fucking open your eyes right now, or I'm going to..."

"To what?" she said, eyes fluttering open. "Kiss me?"

"You wish!" he said, smiling.

Hermione slowly sat up and looked around. "It seems that I owe you a life debt."

"How about we forget about the life debt, and you just let me make love to you?"

Hermione started to laugh, thinking he was just being his perverted self. "You're joking, right?"

"It's not a joke, Granger. I want to make love to you." He put his bloody hands on her cheeks.

Hermione, seeing that he was dead serious, stuttered, "I... um... well you... we..." She stopped and looked into his stormy grey eyes. "This is not the time or place to make love."

Draco glanced around. "I see your point." He suddenly leaned in and kissed her, making her head swim. "Let me know when it IS the right time and place." Suddenly his face contorted painfully, and he groaned. "Damn this hurts!" he said, clutching his stomach. He took his hand away, and it was covered in fresh blood.

Hermione scrambled out of his lap and helped him to lie down. She was hoping beyond hope that he wasn't mortally wounded. She lifted his shirt and froze.

Draco sensed her sudden fear. "How bad is it?" he asked, trying to sit up and get a look.

"Very bad," Hermione said, trying to remain calm.

"Can you fix it?"

"I'll see what I can do." Hermione took off her shirt and wiped the blood from his chest. There were three long and very deep slashes that ran diagonally from his shoulder across his chest and stomach, ending at his hip. Any deeper, and he would have been disemboweled. As soon as she had cleaned off the blood, it started to bleed again. It was pooling beneath him at an alarming rate.

"Draco, I'm going to use my wand to heal the wounds. It might hurt, I'm not too sure." He didn't answer. "Draco?" she said, gently smacking his face. He was unconscious. "Please let this work!" she said and, with a trembling hand, went to work healing.

Six hours later, Draco started to come around. He could feel someone lying next to him, warm and soft. "Granger?" he asked, reaching out for her and finding her hand.

"I'm here." She brushed the hair from his cool forehead and kissed it.

He sat up slowly, still holding her hand. "How did we get in this cave?" he inquired. "And where did this fire come from?"

"I levitated you here. There was no way I was going to stay in that jungle in the dark with god knows what lurking about!" She stood up and hobbled over to the corner. "I healed you as best as I could. Hopefully it won't leave too much of a scar."

Draco looked down at himself. "Where are my clothes?"

"I had to take them off. You had a serious bite wound on your leg that required attention." She picked up a thick log and hobbled back over to fire.

"What's wrong with your ankle?" he asked, concerned.

"I think it's broken."

"What? Come here!"

Hermione put the log down next to the fire and sat down beside him. He examined her bruised and swollen foot. "Ow!" she said loudly as he tried to turn it.

"It's not broken."

"But I heard a snap!" she said angrily. "When I jumped from the tree, I landed on it, and I distinctly heard a snap!"

"Perhaps you just landed on a stick and the snap you heard was the stick breaking in half?"

Hermione frowned. "Maybe," she said defiantly.

Draco chuckled. "You really don't like to be wrong do you, Granger?" He smiled, totally amused. "You better get used to it. As long as we're together on this little time trip, you'll find that I'm the one who's always right."

"Oh shut up! I should have left you in the jungle to die!"

"And why didn't you?" he asked, his fingers caressing her leg. "Could it be that the thought of living without me drove you to such drastic measures? After all, not everyone would heal their sworn enemy, levitate him to a safe place, lie next to him in the dark and sweetly kiss his forehead. I do believe you love me, Granger!"

"I do not!" she said, smacking his roaming fingers.

"Oh, yes, you do!" he said in a teasing voice.

"Draco?"

"Yes, my love?" he said, pulling her close.

Hermione shoved him away. "Look!"

Draco narrowed his eyes. "Look at what?"

"There!" She pointed to the log she had set down. The light from the fire was dancing around the walls, and it illuminated the piece of wood just right.

"Okay, so now do you think the messages mean something?" Draco asked.

Hermione stared in disbelief. 'in two days, tomorrow will be yesterday.' She turned and looked at Draco. "What the hell is going on?"

to be continued...

8

Chapter 8 of 27

Draco and Hermione spend some time discussing their feelings before making a mad dash through the jungle.

A/N: Thanks to my Beta, Angel Mischa! You're the best!

"Do you think it means that the clock is going to come back for us in two days?" Hermione asked, reading the message for the tenth time.

"No."

"And why not?" she asked indignantly.

"I think you're placing too much importance on the message itself. It's clear to me that the uppercase letters are what's important here. The clock came back exactly twelve hours from the time it dropped us off before. Why wouldn't it happen that way again?"

Hermione frowned at the lounging boy. "And what if you're wrong? What if we leave the safety of this cave to go gallivanting through the jungle filled with nocturnal man-eating animals and then arrive at the spot where we were dropped off, and it's not there?" she asked. "What then?"

Draco rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling. "Well, then I guess I'll just run off a cliff and kill myself!"

"Why would you do that?"

"Because I'd rather die than listen to you say 'I told you so' for the rest of eternity!"

Hermione picked up a small stone and chucked it at him. He raised his hand and caught it, not even flinching.

"You throw like a girl, Granger." He rolled over and sat up slowly. "I'm bored," he said, tossing the rock up and down. "Amuse me."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "And what exactly did you have in mind, Malfoy? As if I couldn't guess."

Draco inched closer to her. "For your information, my dirty-minded witch, I was thinking about you telling a joke... but if it's sex you want..." He grabbed her and pulled her over to him, making her skirt ride up dangerously.

Hermione struggled to get out of his clutches. "Let me go, you pervert!"

"Never." He brushed her tangled hair away from her neck and lightly kissed the soft flesh he found there. "You have nice legs, Granger," he whispered in her ear while his hand caressed her upper thigh. "What time do they open?" His fingers circled her skin lightly, making goosebumps break out all over her body.

Hermione felt him slide his hand over the flimsy material of her knickers, and she almost melted. "I shouldn't be letting him do this," she said to herself. "Oh, god, that feels so good!" Her mind was screaming at her to stop before it went too far, but her body was saying something entirely different.

"You want me, Granger. Don't you?" he asked, removing his hand and turning her so that she was straddling his lap. He rested his forehead on hers, looking into her beautiful eyes. He could feel tiny breaths from her sweet mouth and longed to kiss her delicate pink lips.

"Yes," she said softly. Her eyes closed in anticipation as she felt her heart hammering in her chest, her mind swirling with desire. "You have no idea just how much I want you." She slowly began to grind her hips, making him moan as his erection came into contact with her wet knickers. She wondered, when she was around him, why she couldn't control her hormones? Of course, she had never really been 'alone' with him until this year because Harry and Ron had always been with her. Had she always felt this way about him and just never realized it?

He slowly and sensually kissed her, their hot lips connecting with fierce passion. She sat up, unbuttoning her shirt as he slipped his hands under her skirt and rubbed her aching cunt.

Tossing her tattered shirt and bra aside, she ran her fingers through his fine hair as he trailed kisses down her throat and shuddered with pleasure as he licked her nipples.

He leaned forward until she was lying on the ground under him and pulled her soaked panties and skirt off. After giving her pussy one long and slow lick that made her almost scream out, he sat up and took off his pants, releasing his throbbing cock from its prison.

Hermione felt him lift her legs and position himself at her opening. Suddenly, panic set in, and she sat up, almost knocking him over. "Stop!" she said breathlessly. "I can't do this!"

Draco looked at her like she was crazy. "What do you mean 'you can't do this'?"

Hermione snatched up her shirt and put it on. "I'm sorry! It's just that I always wanted my first time to be special, you know? Somewhere beautiful and with someone who actually loves me." She was talking rapidly, trying not to look at him. She quickly did up the buttons and searched around for her knickers and skirt. "Not in a cave with... with... well, someone who just wants to add me to his list of conquests."

Draco stood up and shoved his clothes back on. "There you go again, Granger! Assuming you know me! Everyone bloody thinks they know how I think and feel! I'm sick of it!"

She zipped up her skirt and looked over at him. His face was flushed, and he was shaking with anger. She was shocked at his outburst. "Calm down!" she said.

"I will not calm down!" he shouted. "This is the third time you've done this! You, Granger, are nothing but a tease!"

Hermione blew a strand of bedraggled hair out of her face. "I am not!"

"Then why do you keep leading me on?" he said, backing her into a corner. "Making me think that you want me and then shoving me off? Why do you keep playing with my emotions, Granger?"

She poked him in the bare chest. "I TOLD you! I said I wanted it to be with a man who cared about me, a man who loves me! You, Draco Malfoy, are not that man!" she said, seething with anger. "You are uncaring, unfeeling, and you definitely do not have the capabilities to love anyone!"

Draco's eyes crackled in the firelight. "How dare you?" He grabbed her arm and dug his nails into her flesh. "Do you know why I asked you about that Amortensia potion?" She said nothing, but just looked at him fearfully. "It's because when I inhaled it, I smelled nothing. NOTHING!" he shook her. "Imagine it, Granger! Imagine how I felt when I realized that I loved nothing!"

Hermione's heart broke right then and there. This man standing before her, this man filled with so much anger, so much hatred, just wanted to love. "Draco, I..."

"I came back to school this year after making a promise to myself." He let her arm go. "I told myself that I would find love. I would find someone to love, someone who would love me in return. Don't I deserve that, Granger?" A sudden flash of lightning from an approaching storm lit up the entrance of the cave, making his hair glow like a halo. "Don't I deserve to be happy like everyone else?"

"Yes..." she said. "Is that why you've been... pursuing me?" She tried to choose her words carefully, so that she wouldn't upset him any more than he already was. "Because you wanted me to show you what love feels like?"

Draco smiled slightly. "What better person to teach me than the one girl whom everyone loves?"

Hermione blushed. "That's not true. People like me, but not romantically." She felt like crying and struggled to keep back her tears. "How could anyone think of me that way? Just look at me!"

Draco brushed the wild, frizzy hair from her face. "I do, and what I see is a beautiful, smart and sexy woman." He kissed her tenderly. 'A woman that one could easily fall in love with,' he thought to himself. They stared into each other's eyes until a rumble of thunder shook the cave, bringing them back to reality. "So, if you want to keep on thinking that I'm a black-hearted bastard, go right ahead. Everyone else does."

Hermione smiled at him. "I won't, and I'm sorry if I insinuated anything of the sort," she said, watching him walk over to the fire and kick dirt on it, putting out the flames.

"Apology accepted. Now, get over here and suck my cock!"

Hermione's jaw fell open in shock. "What?"

"Just kidding!" he said with a smirk. "Shall we go?"

Draco looked out of the cave cautiously, wondering if at any moment a hungry dinosaur would leap out and gobble him up. "The coast is clear," he whispered to her. "Great idea, making the entrance imperturbable. It kept all the disgusting, flesh-devouring beasties out."

"I am a genius, remember?"

"I think you've been hanging around me too much. You're getting an ego." He took her hand, laughing at her frown.

Twenty minutes later:

"How far away from the clock do you think we are?" Hermione shouted through the rain and wind.

"It can't be much further! I think it's just over this hill!"

The storm had intensified as they walked on; brilliant streaks of lightning shot through the dark sky, and deafening claps of thunder shook the ground. The rain was so heavy, they could barely see where they were going.

"What hill?" Hermione asked, squinting.

"That one!" Draco yelled, pointing toward a massive structure a short distance ahead of them.

"I don't remember any hill!" Hermione said, and then a scream erupted from her, and she clutched Draco, almost sending both of them falling to the ground.

In the darkness, a huge form of a T-Rex slowly rose up in front of them. It threw its massive head back and roared.

"I've had it with these fucking dinosaurs!" Draco said, aiming his wand at the advancing animal. *Avad...*

They both heard a heavy crash, and spinning around, they beheld another T-rex, snorting and slowly opening its jaws.

"Holy fucking hell!" Draco said in a tiny voice, barely audible over the torrential rain. "Run, Granger! That way! The clock is that way!"

Hermione started to run forward, but halted in her tracks when she realized that he meant for her to go alone. "I won't leave without you!"

"Just go! I can take care of this! It's important that you get to the clock!" he shouted in annoyance.

"No!" she shouted back and whipped out her wand. "We do this together!" She turned and pointed her wand at the carnivore behind them.

Draco smiled at her courageous stance; legs apart, head held high, wand aimed. He had never truly seen anyone so fearless... or stupid. "It's your funeral, Granger!" he said as the T-rex in front of him lunged, catching him off guard. He staggered and fell, slipping in the mud.

Hermione shot a spell from her wand, missing the dinosaur. It roared angrily, and the ground shook as it ran for her. She quickly turned, pulled Draco up and sprinted through the other T-Rex's legs. "Shit!" she said, as both now pursued them, uprooting trees and snapping their mighty jaws.

A blinding flash of lightning hit the ground in front of them, sending sparks flying and making a giant hole in their path. "Watch out!" Draco screamed as they skirted around the steaming hole, slipping in the puddles of rain and mud.

The T-Rex that was out in front made a horrific sound as its foot caught in the pit and it fell, smashing into the ground. The other ran right over it and kept going.

Draco and Hermione blasted trees and bushes out of their way, desperately trying to out-run the animal. Suddenly, the trees ended, and they sprinted out into the open. They didn't see the cliff until it was too late. The ground was so slick that stopping was not an option.

"Ahhhhh!" Hermione yelled as she slid over the cliff.

"Hermione!!!" Draco yelled and fell to his stomach, holding onto her by one hand. "Hold on!"

The T-Rex came running full force through the trees and skidded right over the edge, crashing to its death on the rocks below.

Hermione was clinging desperately to Draco's hand, crying and screaming. Her wand was on a small ledge close by. She stretched her hand toward it, her finger-tips just out of reach. "My wand!"

"I need both of your hands, Granger!" he shouted as her tiny hand began to slip through his. "Now!" He held out his other hand for her.

Hermione looked down at her wand. "I think I can reach it!" She struggled to move closer, her hand slipping out of Draco's grip even more. He took hold of her sleeve with the other hand, trying to pull her up. She heard it rip, and suddenly she felt herself drop a tiny bit.

"Never mind the fucking wand, Granger. Just grab my hand!"

"I don't want to die!" she cried. She was dangling precariously, swaying back and forth.

"I can't hold on much longer! Do what I said, or you ARE going to die!"

"I can't!"

"Yes, you can! Now do it!"

Hermione closed her eyes, pushed her feet off the wall of the cliff and reached her hand up to his.

He grabbed it and pulled her up onto her feet. "This damsel in distress thing is getting a little old, Granger," he panted.

"Tell me about it!" She rolled off him and lay on her back, the now-drizzling rain falling onto her face. After a second of silence, she heard something. A chiming sound.

"Do you hear that?" Draco asked, his eyes wide with excitement. "It's the clock!" He pulled her to her feet, and together they ran toward the sound.

"There it is!" she shouted.

They had no idea how many chimes the clock had gone through and hoped it wouldn't disappear before they got to the secret panel.

Hermione flung herself at the timepiece and opened the door. "Hurry!" she said almost hysterically.

Draco stopped at the door and stuck his middle finger up at the jungle. "Go fuck yourselves, and I'm glad you all went extinct!" He threw himself in and shut the door. Almost instantly the clock began to vibrate and make some weird whirling sound.

"I am so happy to be leaving that horrible place!" Hermione said, leaning against the wall to catch her breath.

"Yeah. Definitely not a place for a honeymoon."

The clock became silent, and they both glanced uneasily at each other.

"I'm afraid," Hermione said.

"Me too."

Draco took a deep breath, opened the door, and together they stepped out. They looked around at the beautiful scenery, and behind them the clock disappeared.

"At least this is some place civilized," Draco said, picking an olive off a tree and plopping it into his mouth. He made a sour looking face and spat it out. "Where do you think we are?" He took the olive and held it out to her. In the distance, they could see and hear people talking and laughing, and fainter still, applause and loud cheering.

Hermione took it and looked at it. "Well, judging from the olive grove we're standing in and the people dressed in classic Greek clothing and speaking Greek, I'd have to say... Greece.

to be continued...

9

Chapter 9 of 27

Draco and Hermione meet up with some very interesting people, who have major problems of their own.

"We can't go near those people dressed in filthy clothes and smelling like rotting animal shit!" Draco said.

Hermione wholeheartedly agreed. "You're going to have to fix us up. I don't have my wand anymore, remember?" Just as she spoke those words, her wand fell out of the olive tree that she was standing under and bounced off the top of her head. "Ow!"

"Well, I'll be damned!" Draco said, picking it up and handing it to her. "Now, how the bloody hell do you think that got here?" He looked up to the tree in bewilderment.

"Who cares? I'm just glad I've gotten it back!"

"But aren't you a little curious as to how it suddenly fell from a tree, when we just left it back with the dinosaurs?"

"No, I'm not. I've decided to stop wondering what the hell is going on and just have some fun. Obviously, this is happening for some reason, and it's also obvious that we're not supposed to know what that reason is yet." She waved her wand in a circle over her head, and when she was finished, she was perfectly clean, dressed in the same fashion as the women in the garden.

She was wearing a white gown made of some floaty, white material, which was tied around her waist with a thin gold rope. Around her bare upper arms, she wore gold bracelets. One depicted a snake and was coiled around her arm, and the other was a thick silver band that was encrusted with shiny rubies.

Draco thought the dress was amazing. Simple, yet beautiful. It was her hair, however, that made his heart skip a beat. It was piled on top of her head in a mass of glossy, springy curls, and a small gold headband circled her forehead.

"What do you think? Do you like it?" she asked, twirling around, the headband flashing in the sunlight.

Draco could only stare in awe at the fiery brunette. All the spit in his mouth had dried up.

Hermione smirked. "Is something wrong, Malfoy? Am I so pretty that the very sight of me has made you stupid?"

He blinked and searched his blank mind for a response. "I... um... You look amazing." His mouth was moving, but his eyes never left her hair.

"Thanks!" she said and looked him up and down. "Now, it would be nice if you cleaned yourself up." She walked toward him, her delicate sandals barely leaving an impression in the grass. "Hello?" she said, waving her hand in front of his glossy eyes. "Malfoy!"

Draco blinked slowly and shook his head. "Right! Sorry about that. I think the sun bouncing off your gold hair band was starting to hypnotize me." He lowered his eyes from her smirking face and pulled out his wand. "What am I supposed to wear, Granger?" he asked. "I see no men to use as a reference."

"I suggest you wear nothing." She raked her fingernails across his naked back and kissed his collar bone.

Draco almost threw her to the ground right then and there. He was overwhelmed with a sudden urge to fuck her good and hard. "You're teasing me again, Granger," he said in a shaky voice.

"I'm not teasing you. I'm admiring you."

"With your tongue?" he asked as she licked his earlobe. He was trying to remain calm and unturned, but it was quite difficult with her rubbing, kissing and licking on him.

"Say you don't like it," she breathed in a sexy voice.

Draco was extremely close to losing control, and the last thing he wanted was to be made a fool of by this girl again. He pulled back suddenly and took her face in one of his hands, squeezing rather hard. "What I don't like, you teasing wench, is you constantly doing things to make me want to fuck you and then backing off at the last minute. I'm tired of constantly having a bad case of blue balls! How would you like it if I dangled a book in front of you, just out of your reach, and every so often lowered it, only to

snatch it away at the last second?"

His fingers were digging into her cheeks as tears blurred her eyes, but still he did not let go. "Now, get this straight, Granger; until you know for sure that you want me to fuck you, try to keep your bloody hands... and tongue... off me!" He pushed her away and sneered at her.

Hermione was shocked to say the least. "Fine, Malfoy. I'll never touch you again!" She was on the verge of crying. After all, she had just been turned down by a guy who would stick his dick in just about anything. "I'll just wait for you over here," she said and took a seat on a stone bench, facing away from him.

Draco wasn't the least bit sorry for the way he had treated her. Her endless teasing and rejections were driving him mad! He didn't know how much longer he could take being around her. She was like walking, talking sex to him, and it was becoming harder and harder for him to keep his hands off her.

He had no idea how she felt toward him, whether she liked him as a friend or maybe something more, or perhaps she hated him and was teasing him for her sick pleasure. He didn't have a clue. All he knew was that he was falling in love with her, and until she came to him and professed that she felt the same way, he was not going to lay another finger on her... no matter what!

He clothed himself in what he thought was the appropriate attire and put on a fake smile. "So, do I look presentable?" he asked, walking over to the bench.

"I'm sure you look well dressed, as always." She didn't bother looking at him. She just sat there, arms folded, legs crossed and pouting.

"Stop acting like a spoiled child, Granger! It's not like you're in love with me or anything, is it?" He willed her to jump up and shout at the top of her lungs that indeed she did love him, but nothing of the sort happened.

Hermione thought she would rather be boiled in hot oil than admit that she was falling for him. "No. I told you before, Malfoy, I don't love you."

"Then why are you acting like this?"

"I don't know. All I know is that I hate you right now and wouldn't screw you even if you had two dicks!"

Draco's lips were pressed together so tightly that they were white. "Is that so? Well, cheer up, my cold-hearted witch; maybe you'll meet a strong, muscular, sexy Greek man willing to fuck you!"

Hermione whipped out her wand, ready to hex him to oblivion, but the sound of approaching voices halted her intentions.

"Quick! Cast the language spell!" Draco said, pulling her to her feet.

"Stop pulling on me!" She said the incantation, and they both turned to face the three people walking toward them.

"Hello there!" a man of about twenty years of age greeted them. As he came closer, Hermione could see that he was very handsome and dressed richly. The man was extremely dark-skinned with wild, curly black hair and warm brown eyes. He smiled at them, showing perfectly straight white teeth. "Are you guests of the King?" he asked Draco.

Behind the gorgeous Greek man stood two very beautiful women of about the same age as Draco and Hermione. The taller of the two had stunning black hair that cascaded in waves down her back and bright blue eyes the color of the sky. The other looked curiously at them with her big brown eyes. Her hair was the color of honey and hung over her shoulder in a braid intertwined with gold, and around her neck she wore gold medallion depicting a woman leaping over a bull.

Draco tore his eyes away from the medallion and said with an air of snobbish dignity, "Yes. We have recently arrived from Sikelia and have not been presented to the King." The ease in which this lie came to his lips surprised even him.

The black-haired woman stepped forward and spoke. "And how is dear King Kokalos? I have not seen him since I was a child!" She just about begged Hermione to tell her how the King's daughters were faring. "Our families were once very close, but a disagreement over the sacrifice caused a falling out between our Kingdoms, and I am not permitted to correspond with the Princesses any longer."

Hermione interrupted the girl's reminiscing. "Then you are the daughter of the King?"

The woman laughed, clearly embarrassed by her rudeness. "Please forgive me! I am Ariadne, Daughter of King Minos, and this is my sister, Phaedra."

The other girl came forward and gracefully stuck out her hand toward Draco. He took it, smiled at Hermione obscenely and then kissed it. Hermione noticed the man standing in front of her tense and frowned slightly. He cleared his throat, and Ariadne introduced him.

"And this strapping young man is Icarus."

Hermione almost gasped out loud. "Icarus?"

"Yes. You've heard of me?" he asked, amused.

"Yes. You are the son of Daedalus!" She blushed furiously as he took her hand and softly kissed it.

"The one and only." He kissed it again. "My father is the genius who designed the Palace here at Knossos, and he is also responsible for the hideous Labyrinth that has caused so much suffering these past years." His voice rang with contempt. "May I say that you are very beautiful, and that if I could, I would stand here for eternity just kissing your hand?" He ran his finger lightly over the smooth skin on the back of her hand.

Hermione giggled girlishly, irritating Draco and making him want to punch Icarus in his perfect teeth.

"And what is your name?" Phaedra asked, batting her eyelashes at Draco.

Draco decided to ignore Hermione and her cheesy new boyfriend. "My name?" he said, trying desperately to think of something. "My name is... is Perion."

"Perion," Phaedra said. "It's a weak name. Too weak for such a strong and handsome man such as you." She caressed the muscles in his arm while glancing from the corner of her eye to see the reaction from Icarus. He was glaring at her, and that made her extremely happy.

Icarus flashed his sexy smile at Hermione. "And what lovely name do you possess? Whatever it is, I'm sure it doesn't do you justice, for there is no name on the face of this earth that is as beautiful as you."

"My name is Arria," Hermione said. "I'm his sister."

"Arria... Simply charming." He picked a tiny pink rose and held it out to her. "The beauty of this rose pales in comparison to the beauty in your eyes."

Draco felt like throwing up, and Phaedra looked as though she was going to pull out a dagger and stab him to death with it.

Ariadne noticed that all four had some serious jealousy issues. She did not believe for one minute that these two strangers were brother and sister. They were clearly more than that. As for her sister and Icarus, she knew that deep down inside they loved each other. Their problem was that neither one wanted to be the first to admit it.

She told them often that they should stop pretending and just admit to each other their true feelings. They refused and continued on with their sick relationship, seducing others just to make one another jealous. It was all a big waste of time in Ariadne's opinion. When you have found your true love, you should never let pride stand in your way... or your father for that matter.

She had recently fallen in love with a man her father did not approve of. He raged and stormed over the relationship, even going so far as to threaten to lock her in a tower. She and Theseus were determined, however, to be together no matter what... even if they had to run away. If she was willing to risk her life for her love, then so should these people.

"You have arrived just in time. The Bull Dancing is starting soon, and I'm sure you will enjoy it immensely," Icarus said.

"Bull Dancing?" Draco asked, lifting the medallion from around Phaedra's slender neck and examining it. "I have heard of it, but have never seen it."

"Then you are in luck. It is truly an amazing spectacle! Will you join us as our special guests?" Ariadne asked.

"Wouldn't miss it," Draco said, placing the medallion back slowly, making sure his fingers brushed the top of Phaedra's breast. She smiled sweetly at him, apparently reading his mind and liking what she found there.

Hermione and Icarus saw the blatant display of lust, and neither cared for it. He linked his arm through hers and commented, "I'd watch out for her, Perion. She likes to inflict pain... if you know what I mean." He winked at Draco.

Phaedra turned on him with fierce anger. "I'd mind my own business if I were you, Icarus, or I'll have to tell Arria here all about your fantasies involving a certain brother of mine..."

Ariadne interrupted before things could get any further out of hand. "Father is expecting us; we would not want to displease him by being late."

Phaedra took Draco's hand and held it tightly in her own. "You are right, dear sister. Father will be furious if we are late. He so loves the Bull Dancers!" She just about ripped Draco's arm out of the socket as she dragged him down the path toward the Palace.

As they approached the massive structure, a faint cheering and shouting could be heard from the arena.

"What exactly is going on in there, right now?" Draco asked.

Phaedra rolled her eyes. "I believe it is the great hero, Theseus, fighting some lion or some such nonsense. If you ask me, he is a total showoff, not to mention a complete bore! All he ever talks about are his adventures and how he killed this beast or that monster... I find it hard to stifle a yawn in his presence. My dear sister, on the other hand..." She looked over her shoulder at the blushing girl, "is in love with the brave idiot."

"Hush your mouth, Phaedra!" Ariadne whispered harshly.

"Why? Everyone knows about your secret meetings in the gardens under the moonlight. Even Father knows. Why do you think he hates Theseus so? Father forbade him to go anywhere near you, and still he risks his own life... and yours... for the sake of love!" She laughed as if this was the funniest thing in the world. "I tell you, Ariadne, going against the King's wishes will only end in tragedy!"

Hermione and Draco, knowing full well that the lives of all of these people, including Theseus and the King, ended in tragedy, Draco and Hermione eyed each other in uneasiness.

"You and Theseus?" Hermione asked. "I thought he was in Athens right now?"

Ariadne suddenly started crying and ran off down the path toward the Palace.

"Was it something I said?" Hermione asked, alarmed.

Icarus stopped walking. "Don't worry, love, She is just worried about Theseus. You of course know that every year we sacrifice fourteen Athenian youths to the Minotaur?"

"Yes, and I think it's just disgusting that it happens!" Hermione said. "It should be stopped."

"Well, most of us agree, and Theseus is prepared to do just that."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked. "What is he going to do?" She tried to sound like she didn't already know the answer.

"Theseus has volunteered to be one of the sacrifices."

"What!" Draco said. "Has the man become unhinged?"

"He is a hero, who is determined to kill the Minotaur and rescue the other children. If he succeeds, Athens will be free from the annual Tribute, and Crete will finally be rid of the curse that has plagued her for years!" Icarus was evidently a fanatic and believed that Theseus was some sort of god.

"But what about Ariadne?" Hermione asked. "Won't King Minos be upset with Theseus?"

Phaedra snorted. "His wrath will be uncontainable, especially when he finds out that his daughters played a major part in the destruction of the monster."

"Why are you helping?" Draco asked. "It seems that you don't care much for this Theseus."

Phaedra turned her blazing eyes on Draco. "Well, I do not care about him; I do care about my sister. I wish her to be happy, and if being with Theseus makes her content, then I will do everything in my power to make sure they can be together... forever!"

Draco was at a loss of what to say to her, knowing that Ariadne and Theseus did not stay together forever, so he turned to Hermione instead. "Can I talk to you alone?"

They walked up the path, around the corner and out of sight. Draco leaned up against the massive wall of the Palace and picked a rock out of his sandal. They heard a loud roar from the lion, and then cheering from the crowd.

"You do know the story, don't you?" Hermione asked him.

He tossed the pebble into the fountain, making a small splash. "Yes, and they're all doomed!"

Hermione wasn't so sure about that. "Perhaps they are, and perhaps they're not."

"What are you talking about, Granger? You bloody well know how it all turns out!"

Hermione paced in front of him, her hands behind her back, her head down, thinking. "The story we know is from Mythology."

"No shit!"

"Would you just listen?" She glared at him and then continued, "Now, there is almost always a bit of truth to Mythology, but we can't know for sure what is the truth and

what is embellishment in this story. For all we know, Theseus doesn't abandon Ariadne for her sister. Phaedra never falls in love with her stepson and kills herself. Icarus might never try his father's less-than-perfect plan of escape, and the King never takes that fateful bath where he ends up boiled to death." She looked at him and smiled slightly. "Maybe they all end up living happily forever."

Draco laughed. "Yeah, right, Granger. Perhaps next Easter, I'll wear a pink frilly dress and skip around the Castle grounds singing 'A Tisket a Tasket!'"

"I'd pay to see that!" she said, picturing it in her head.

"It will never happen. Now, the question is, do we just pretend we know nothing about their futures and play along, or do we tell them and change history?" He smirked at her. "Tempting isn't it?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "We can't tell them! Who are we to change the future?"

"I was joking, Granger!" He pushed off the wall and walked toward her.

"Good! Because I think telling them would do more harm than good!"

"You know what I think?" He took her hands in his and pulled her close. "I think that even if we did tell them about the horrors that lie in their future, it wouldn't matter. They would do it anyway. Why? Because it's meant to be, Granger, and no matter what you do... no matter how hard you try to run from it, you can't escape your destiny."

Their faces were inching closer, as if drawn by some magnetic force. Their lips were almost touching.

"Are you my destiny, Draco?" she asked as she caressed his cheek.

Draco was losing control. He wanted to kiss her. Kiss her soft, perfect lips.

"What do you suppose they are discussing?" Phaedra asked curiously.

"I'm sure I don't know."

"There is something strange about them, don't you think?"

Icarus had to agree with her about that. "They say they are brother and sister, and yet one gets the feeling that there is something more to their relationship."

"That is just disturbing, Icarus."

"They've been gone for too long. We are going to be late for the Bull Dancers!" Icarus said, craning his neck to see if they were on their way back.

"Let's just go and find them." She and Icarus walked down the path and turned the corner, catching Draco and Hermione in a very compromising position.

"What is going on?" Phaedra said.

One of Draco's hands was on Hermione's ass, and the other was tangled in her hair. They were kissing each other, passionately.

Draco quickly pushed her away, almost knocking her to the ground. "We weren't doing anything!"

The two stunned people were not convinced. "Are you sure there is nothing between the two of you? Because you WERE doing something... something that brothers and sisters don't normally do," Phaedra said. "I have two brothers, and I know these things."

"There is nothing between us," Draco said quickly. "She means nothing to me." He acted like the very thought of it was grotesque. "In fact, I find her revolting."

Phaedra thought she saw hurt and sadness in Arria's eyes. She had seen that same look staring back at her from her bedroom mirror many times. "Is this true, Arria?"

Hermione wanted nothing more than to kick Draco in the balls and call him a bastard, but agreed with him instead. "It's true. He means nothing to me. Never has, never will." Her voice was shaky, and tears were welling in her eyes. She turned and silently walked through the entrance to the Palace.

Phaedra and Icarus looked at Draco, who was standing there defiantly. "What?" he asked them.

"Nothing," Phaedra said quietly, and she along with Icarus followed Hermione.

Draco stood next to the bubbling fountain, amongst the flowers, as the sun shined brightly and wished for the first time in his life that he was dead.

to be continued...

10

Chapter 10 of 27

Draco and Hermione find another secret message.

Draco took a deep breath and followed them through the door. It was very dark, even though the hall was lined with lit torches. The air held a stench of blood and dirty animals, and he had to will himself not to vomit.

"Hurry up, Perion!" Icarus said, waiting for him at the bottom of a huge flight of stairs.

They all looked up as an old man came running frantically down the stone steps. "Where have you been? The King is getting impatient!" He reached out for Icarus and shook him by the arm. "You must hurry!"

Icarus sighed and motioned toward Draco and Hermione. "This is Arria and Perion. They are here on the orders of King Kokalos."

The man turned his watery brown eyes on the two strangers. "King Kokalos?" He let go of Icarus and bowed. "King Minos will be very pleased! It has been many years since we last had contact with your King!" He stood up and addressed Draco. "Were you sent to witness the Tribute?"

Draco cleared his throat and said in a haughty tone, "No. We are here to negotiate."

The old man looked at him strangely. "Negotiate? Negotiate what?"

"Our King wishes to put an end to this terrible Tribute, and he is willing to negotiate for the lives of the children who are to be sacrificed." Draco glanced at Hermione, who was impressed despite her current hatred for him. "He wishes for our countries to once again be friendly toward one another, but in order for this to happen, he must kill the Minotaur, release the children and promise never again to incur the wrath of Poseidon!"

Icarus laughed out loud at the man's shocked face. He slapped him on the back, making him lose his balance and almost to almost fall over. "Perion, this is my father, Daedalus."

Draco and Hermione stared at the old man in wonder. This was a man who was famous in mythology, renowned for his intelligence and great inventions. They were looking at a living legend!

"It is a pleasure to meet you," Hermione said.

Draco took the man's hand and shook it. "So, you are the great Daedalus!"

"You have heard of me?" the old man asked.

"Of course! Who hasn't heard of you?" Icarus said. "You are the builder of the cursed cow in which the Queen hid herself, so that she could mate with the sacred white bull. You are the reason she conceived the Minotaur, and you are also the reason that helpless innocent children are slaughtered and eaten!"

"But, son!" Daedalus cried. "I had no choice!"

Icarus glared at the man in hatred. "Don't say you had no choice! You could have told her no!" He was screaming at the poor man, who was cowering up against the wall.

"But she was the Queen! I could not refuse! Every moment of the day, I regret what I did!"

Draco interrupted. "Did you say eaten? The children are eaten?"

Daedalus and his son stopped arguing and looked at him.

Phaedra pulled Icarus away from his father and spoke to Draco in a calm but hard voice. "Yes, eaten. The children are brutally slaughtered by the beast, and then they're chopped up, cooked and fed to the bulls."

Hermione wanted to scream in disgust. "That is... that is... We have to stop this!"

"That is the plan," Ariadne said, walking toward them with a very handsome, muscular man, who was wiping the blood from his hands. "Are you willing to help us?" she asked Draco and Hermione.

"You cannot stop this thing!" Daedalus said. "It is the wish of the gods that this takes place!"

"Are you going to tell on us, dear father?" Icarus asked. He smiled maliciously at the old man, hatred evident on his face.

Daedalus loved his son with all his heart. It was a shame that this Tribute had come between them and had caused their once close relationship to crumble. If helping him rid the world of a monstrous beast was what it was going to take to get his son back, then he would most certainly do his part. "No, son, I will not tell. I will help you any way that I can!"

"We will meet in secret, tonight, in the olive grove," Theseus said. "We will devise a plan to bring about the destruction of this monster!" He slammed his fist into the stone wall angrily. His knuckles were bleeding, but he didn't seem to notice.

Hermione and Draco were quite taken aback by this hero's outburst and drew closer together. Phaedra just rolled her eyes, and Icarus just about peed in his pants, he was so excited.

"My lady!" a woman shouted from down the corridor. "They are just about to start the bull dancing!" She ran up to Phaedra and ushered her forward. "You still need to get ready!"

"Get ready for what?" Draco asked, puzzled. "Where is she going?" He watched Phaedra hurry down the corridor, disappearing through a door.

"Why, didn't she tell you?" Icarus questioned him. "She is a bull dancer. Perhaps the best in all the land. The King is very proud of her." Apparently he was proud of her as well, even though he tried hard to hide it.

They all heard very loud cheering, and then all was quiet. Ariadne motioned for all of them to ascend the stairs. "Quickly!" she said. "The King is waiting!"

Draco looked at Hermione and shrugged his shoulders. "Shall we?"

"I guess..." She was a little frightened by the thought of meeting King Minos. "I'm interested to see exactly what a bull dancer does."

They followed Ariadne and came out onto a balcony. The sun was very bright, and for a moment they were all blinded. The King greeted them and told them to be seated. The event was about to start, and apparently he didn't have time to be bothered with introductions.

"Holy fucking shit!" Draco said under his breath.

"What?" Hermione asked, alarmed. "What is it?"

Draco pointed out into the arena where a gigantic bull was standing, snorting and looking murderous. Phaedra and another man came tumbling out of the door, doing flips and smiling at the crowd. She was wearing some sort of red one-piece outfit that hugged her every curve. It shimmered in the sunlight and made her look like she was on fire. The man was very slim and tall, but muscular. He wore his curly black hair tied in a red ribbon and was bare from the chest up.

The crowd roared with excitement, and the King was standing to get a better view. He was of medium height, had long, wispy, grey hair and blue eyes like his daughter, Ariadne. He was robed regally and had numerous rings on his long, thin fingers. "Isn't she beautiful?" he queried. "She has the grace of her mother!"

Phaedra stopped tumbling, and the crowd became very quiet in anticipation. The man that was with her slowly and calmly walked up behind the bull, which was totally focused on Phaedra and didn't notice that it was being stalked. He reached out and smacked it hard on the ass, making it jump and run toward her at full speed.

"Oh my god!" Hermione said, covering her face.

Draco's heart was pounding in his chest as he watched the massive animal charge toward her. She was standing very still, her eyes narrowed. He gasped out loud with

the rest of the crowd when she grasped the bull by its horns, swung herself over its head, did a flip and landed on her feet behind it.

"That was bloody awesome!" he said in awe.

"What happened? What did I miss?" Hermione asked, uncovering her face and looking around. "Oh my god! What is she doing? She's going to get killed! I can't look!"

"Would you just watch?" he snapped, annoyed. "It's amazing!"

Hermione watched as the male bull dancer picked Phaedra up and lifted her onto his shoulders where she stood with perfect balance. The bull turned around and charged. It was snorting and foaming at the mouth in anger. A moment before the animal reached them, the man tossed Phaedra into the air, where she did three somersaults and landed on the back of the bull... on her feet. The other bull dancer cartwheeled out of the way as she rode the huge beast around the arena.

The spectators were on their feet, screaming and cheering. The bull altered its course and ran for the other dancer full speed. He turned around backwards and waited for it to be almost upon him. Suddenly, he did a back flip, his feet pushing off of the bull's head. He landed in a standing position in front of Phaedra. They smiled at one another and then both flipped off its back in opposite directions. They then bowed to the amazed crowd. The bull kept on running until a handler came out, calmed it down and led it back through the door to the bull pen. It was confused and exhausted.

"That was fucking hot!" Draco said, watching Phaedra's ass as she exited the arena. He was getting a raging hard-on just thinking about what she looked like under that skin-tight outfit.

Hermione saw Icarus notice where Draco was looking, and he turned bright red with fury and stepped over to converse with the King. She slapped Draco in the arm. "Wipe the drool from your chin. You look like a simpleton!"

"You're just jealous that your body looks no where near as fine as hers!"

"It does too!" she said. "You know it does!"

He raised his eyebrow in a mocking manner. "How would I know? I've only seen parts of your naked body, never the whole thing at once, have I?" He brushed his fingertips over her bare arm. "Perhaps later, you could prove to me that you look as good as she does."

Hermione pursed her lips, trying to control the urge to call him every name in the book. "Would you just shut up? We don't want King Minos to overhear us, do we?"

"What do I care if he overhears? It's not like we're stuck here for eternity." He pulled out his wand. "And besides, if he wants to start something, I'll just wave my wand and *POOF!* he'll become a fucking ostrich!"

"An ostrich?" Hermione said, smiling.

"Yeah, well, couldn't think of anything else..."

"May I present the Ruler of Crete, King Minos," Icarus said.

Draco and Hermione bowed and then introduced themselves.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, your majesty. I am Arria." The King took her hand and brushed his lips across it.

"It is an honour to meet such a beautiful woman. I have been told that you bring news of King Kokalos?" He turned to Draco.

"Yes, your Majesty. I am Perion, the Ambassador for the King of Sikelia. He wishes for us to discuss..."

"Not now, my boy! We have a celebration to attend! And then tonight... we will witness the Tribute!"

He smiled as Phaedra appeared, accompanied by the male bull dancer. "Ah, my dear daughter! That was your most brilliant performance yet!" He kissed both her cheeks. "And you, Akakios! You amaze me more every time I see you perform!" He embraced the youth lovingly. "Are you staying for the Tribute?"

Akakios' smile faded from his face. "I'm afraid not, your Majesty. I have pressing business in Athens." In reality, he had no such business. He just wanted to leave this cursed island as fast as possible. The whole Tribute thing was disgusting to him, and he did not wish to see innocent children locked in a maze to wander around until ripped apart by the Minotaur. "Perhaps next year I will be able to stay." He knew that if his friends succeeded, there would be no Tribute next year.

"What a shame! It will be one for the ages this year! What with this arrogant hero running through the Labyrinth, trying to be noble..." He laughed in the direction of Theseus. "I cannot wait to see him torn to pieces! Then, and only then, will my daughter finally be free from his clutches!"

Theseus started to lunge toward Minos, but was stayed by Ariadne. "Please, my dear Theseus, stay calm. Soon, he will see just how much of a noble hero you really are." She kissed his flushed cheek, making the King frown.

"Shall we give our guests a tour of the Palace?" King Minos said to Daedalus, a fake smile plastered on his face. "Come, beautiful Arria and Perion the great negotiator! Wait until you see my wonderful Palace!" He motioned all of them toward the door and all followed, except for Ariadne and Theseus.

"Are you not coming?" Phaedra asked her sister.

"No, dear sister. I wish to be alone with my love."

Phaedra smiled at her. "I hope that some day I will find a love as deep and as pure as yours."

"You have, my sister. You are just too stubborn to see it."

Phaedra laughed and then went down the steps with the rest of the party.

Akakios bid his farewell to Minos, embraced Icarus and Daedalus, and then leaned in to kiss Phaedra. "Good luck to you. May you succeed with your plan," he whispered in her ear. He bowed to Draco and Hermione. "It was a pleasure to meet you," he said and then walked outside and disappeared down the path.

"First, I will show you the bull pen. It is magnificent!" He led them through a corridor that stunk like a zoo in the heat of the summer. Hermione put her hand over her nose and mouth, and Draco curled his lip in displeasure.

"Is this what Weasley's house smells like, Granger?" he asked her. "I bet it does!"

Hermione shot him a look of pure hate and walked faster, catching up with Icarus, who gave her a dazzling smile and took her arm. She looked over her shoulder at Draco and smirked.

"I really hate that asshole!" Draco said under his breath.

"They seem to be getting rather close in such a short period of time, don't you agree?" Phaedra asked.

Draco only raised his eyebrow. He watched furiously as Icarus said something amusing, and Hermione giggled like a school girl.

"I have a proposition for you, Perion."

Draco looked down at her, extremely interested in what she had to say. "I'm listening..."

"First off, let's cut the crap. You love her, she loves you, but for some reason, neither one of you will take the first step. I don't know what your background is, but I have a feeling that in the past things between the two of you have not been very pleasant."

"You can say that again!" Draco said sarcastically. "We were enemies. We loathed and hated each other, but now we are forced to work together, and it seems that beneath all that hate, there is a tiny bit of passion that has turned to love."

Phaedra nodded her head knowingly. "It is the same with Icarus and me. Since we were children, we have had this love-hate relationship. We fight, we make up, we make love, we fight again... It is a vicious circle because neither one of us has the nerve to admit to the other our true feelings." She looked sad for a fleeting moment but smiled when she looked up at him. "It has become a game. He tries to make me jealous by sleeping with other women... and men. I try to make him jealous by sleeping with his friends. The whole reason we do this is to make the other so angry that they will admit how much they love the other."

"And how's that working for you?" Draco said with a smart ass smirk.

"Up until now, it has not worked, but this time it will be different. I can tell he is worried that you will win my heart. He has never had this look before. I think I can anger him to the point that he will profess his love for me."

Draco rolled his eyes. "Why don't you be the bigger person and just tell him that you love him?"

Phaedra grinned. "I will never tell him for the same reason you refuse to tell her. We hate to lose!"

Draco had to admit she was right. Winning was everything. If he gave in and told Hermione that he was falling in love with her, he would be weak and a loser. "So... what's your plan?"

They came to a fence and beheld about one hundred bulls wandering around the enclosure. Minos looked very proud as he talked about them. "There is no other nation with more bulls than us. We are the..."

Draco tuned him out and instead leaned on the fence next to Hermione. "He's full of bullshit, isn't he?" he said with a laugh.

"Lower your voice," she whispered. "This IS rather boring..." she stifled a yawn with the back of her hand.

"I can make it more exciting," he proposed.

"How?"

"A joke."

Hermione snorted. "A joke? Okay. Go on then... let me hear it."

"What do you call a masturbating bull?"

Hermione thought for a second. "Hmmm. I haven't the slightest idea."

"Beef strokinoff!" He laughed silently, amused at his wittiness.

"That is THE worst joke I've ever heard!" she said, smiling.

"That it is, but at least you're having fun now!"

"True!"

They made their faces look serious as Minos turned around and led them back inside. They walked for what seemed like forever, down dark corridors and numerous flights of stairs while the King babbled on and on about the gardens and his crops until they finally reached the Palace. "And now, I will show you what my good friend, Daedalus has built..." They followed him onto a terrace and he spread his arms wide. "Behold! The great Labyrinth!" A loud, inhuman roar rose up and echoed through the massive hedges.

"Holy shit!" Draco breathed.

"And that, my dear friends, was the Minotaur." The King pointed to a building in the very middle of the maze. "We keep him locked up in there until his time comes. Then he is free to stalk his victims."

"Where are the children kept?" Hermione asked angrily. "Are they chained up also?"

"They are kept in a wing of the Palace, which is called the Bull Chamber." Minos said. "They are well fed and well-taken care of." He waved his hand in annoyance. "Why worry yourselves about them? Soon, they will be dead."

Phaedra's face turned a bright shade of scarlet, and Icarus was literally shaking with anger. Draco and Hermione could not believe what a heartless bastard this man was. They looked at each other and silently vowed to stop this madness.

"Your Majesty, it is almost time for the celebration meal to be served," Daedalus said. "Should we not proceed to the Hall?"

"Ah yes! I'm in the mood for roasted meat and red wine!" he said happily. "Let us go now! I will leave it to my daughter Phaedra to show you to your rooms. You will eat with us tonight?" he asked Draco.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world!" He smiled hugely at the King, but his voice dripped with contempt. "Perhaps we can discuss the matters I was sent here to resolve?"

Minos, who had no intention of discussing anything with this boy, lied through his teeth. "Of course! Of course!" He bid them all good evening and made his exit, Daedalus following behind.

"Your father is..." Draco searched for the right word to describe Minos.

"A heartless child killer?" Phaedra finished.

"Yeah, that too," Draco smirked.

"Ever since my mother killed herself, he has been a cruel and bitter man. While she was alive, he hated her for her illicit desires. And after... he realized it was his own fault that she mated with the bull. He should have sacrificed it to Poseidon as he was supposed to, and none of this would be happening!"

Hermione laid a tender hand on Phaedra's shoulder. "That is all in the past. We must think about the present. There is a lot to plan before the Tribute tonight. Do not let your feelings for your father cloud your mind. You must concentrate on the task at hand!"

"She's right," Icarus said. "Now, I suggest we take your guests to their rooms, so that they may get ready for tonight." He reached out for her hand, but turned at the last moment and grasped Hermione's instead. "The rooms in the Palace are very beautiful, lush and inviting... like your lips."

Draco wanted to bum-rush the romantic retard, sending him over the terrace where he would plummet to his death. He looked at Phaedra, who to his surprise was smiling. As Icarus led Hermione back through the door, Draco whispered to the princess. "I see nothing funny about this!"

Phaedra told him to calm down. "Everything will be fine. Before the nights end, the Minotaur will be dead, the curse lifted, and we will have the pleasure of hearing them profess their love to us!"

"Are you certain this plan of yours is going to work?"

"Trust me," she cooed.

"I should have told you before, but I have trust issues..."

Icarus and Phaedra led them through the magnificent rooms of the Palace, only stopping if Draco or Hermione had a question about a certain piece of art work or pottery. The walls were painted in bright colors, and mosaics and frescos of huge proportions covered at least one wall in every room. The floors were made of something resembling marble and were so shiny you could see your reflection in them.

"This..." Phaedra said, opening a huge wooden door with a large snake knocker. "Is the Sanctuary of the Snake Goddess..."

Draco and Hermione entered it cautiously, not knowing what to expect. In the middle of the dark room stood a life-size statue of a woman. Her enormous breasts were exposed, and in each hand she held a snake. Light from the torches danced on the surface, making it seem as though she was alive. It was hideous and alluring all at the same time.

"You worship this...?" Draco asked, raising his eyebrow and looking at them like they were crazy.

"She is our Mother Goddess. We worship her... and many others."

"And to what god do you show your loyalty and allegiance?" Icarus asked, clearly offended.

"Well, I have allegiance to only one god, and that happens to be the all-powerful god of magic and lust. His name is Draco."

Hermione almost laughed out loud. "Tell them about this 'all-powerful' god!"

"Well, he is strong, handsome and well dressed. His style is impeccable, his hair well coiffed. He has all the riches in the world and a way with the ladies..."

Icarus smiled. "I should love to be like this god- Draco. He seems perfect."

Hermione did laugh this time. "Although he may possess some of those qualities, he can also be cruel, obstinate, cowardly, conceited, and his morals are questionable at times!" She waited for a response from him, her hand on her hip, daring him to deny what she said.

Draco glared at her. "Is that what you really think?"

She had no time to answer; Icarus took her hand once again and almost dragged her from the room. He had no idea what just happened, but he knew it was bad.

They walked in silence up the Grand Staircase until they reached a room that was in the east wing, overlooking the gardens.

"This will be your room for the length of your visit. I hope you like it. It is one of my favorites." Phaedra opened the door and they all stepped inside. Immediately, their eyes were drawn to the huge fresco adorning the far wall behind the bed. It was an ocean scene complete with leaping dolphins, sharks and whales.

It's the most beautiful thing I've ever laid eyes on!" Hermione said, walking across the room to get a closer look.

Draco started to follow her, but something caught his attention from the corner of his eye. It was a mirror, or at least he thought it was. It wasn't glass, but perhaps they hadn't discovered how to make a proper mirror yet. This in itself wasn't important, but what was etched across the top was.

He hurried over to her. "Granger. There is something you need to see."

She looked at him curiously. "What is it?"

"The mirror! Look at the mirror!" He sounded so excited that she just had to see what he was going on about. She walked over to the wall, and her jaw dropped. "It's another message!" she cried.

"What are you talking about?" Phaedra asked. "What's this about a message?"

"Excuse us for a moment," Draco said apologetically. "We need to discuss something. He took Hermione by her elbow and pulled her out onto the terrace.

Icarus and Phaedra were staring at their guests in bewilderment. Phaedra walked over to the mirror and read it aloud to Icarus. "a great deal of what you see, dePends on what you are looking for. I've always found it curious that one letter was larger than the others. I wonder who carved it and why?"

"Maybe our visitors will be able to shed some light on it..." Icarus said. "They seem to know something about it."

To be continued...

sacrifice.

Hermione and Draco stopped dancing for joy and noticed Icarus and Phaedra staring at them.

"What are we going to tell them?" Hermione asked. "We can't tell them the truth; we have to make something up, fast!"

Phaedra and Icarus strolled out onto the terrace. In the distance, the roar of the Minotaur rose up, causing Hermione to jump.

"Excuse us, but would you mind telling us what in the name of Olympus are you so happy about?" Phaedra inquired, her eyes traveling over the gardens and the maze to the structure that housed the man-bull.

Hermione wrung her hands nervously, trying to come up with a reason they were acting so happy about the mirror. "Well... um... er... you see."

Draco saved her. "We have seen other messages like this one in our travels, and it made us very excited to see another."

"What do you mean, you have seen other messages like this one?" Icarus asked. "Where?"

Hermione finally found her voice. "In three other places we have seen messages that contained a sentence with only one letter being capitalized. We have concluded that these letters together must spell out another message."

"But where have you seen these other messages?"

"I'm sorry, but as of right now, we cannot tell you," Draco said.

"Why not?" Icarus demanded.

"Please, Icarus! If our guests say they cannot tell us, then they must have a good reason. People are allowed to have secrets."

Icarus looked very angry and suspicious. "Only people who have something to hide keep secrets. I have no secrets!"

Phaedra laughed. "Oh, really? How about the fact that your father knows nothing about your secret, lust-filled nights with the stable boys?"

"How dare you!" he spat. "Well, does your father know that you like to frequent the bull pen where you love to 'STROKE the beasts lovingly'?" He smiled wickedly at her. "You are more like your mother than he knows!"

Hermione and Draco looked at one another. It was strange seeing two people acting just like them; it was like looking in a mirror. Speaking of mirrors...

"Pardon my interruption, but I was wondering if either one of you know anything about the mirror? Where it came from, who made it?" Hermione asked.

The arguing couple gave each other one last death glare and gave up the battle.

"All I know is what my mother told me when I was a child," Phaedra answered. "She said that a wise man visited the Palace and gave this mirror to her as a gift. She was told that it should be hung in a spot where it would not be missed."

"Did she ever describe this wise man to you?" Draco asked curiously. He was already very sure of whom it was, but needed proof.

Phaedra fiddled with her medallion nervously. "She was told never to tell anyone who he was, or a terrible fate would befall her."

"Well? Did she tell anyone?" Draco asked impatiently. "Did she tell you?"

"Yes, she told me! And look what happened to her!" Phaedra shouted. "I will never repeat what she said! I do not want my life to end in tragedy!"

Hermione wanted to shout at the girl that regardless of what she said, her life was going to end in tragedy anyway, so she might as well tell them. Instead, she asked, "You do not have to tell us his name; we just want to know what this man looked like. Can you tell us that much?"

Phaedra wiped the tears from her cheeks. "She said he had long, reddish-colored hair and a very long beard. His nose was long and crooked, like it had been broken..."

Draco slammed his hand down on the railing. "I knew it! I knew it was him!"

Hermione turned away from Draco and his angry ranting and addressed Icarus and Phaedra. "Would you mind if Perion and I had some time alone?"

Phaedra reluctantly agreed. "I guess so. Perion?"

Draco looked up. "Yes?"

"Your room is right next door. Make yourself at home." She turned to leave. "The feast is in an hour. I will send someone to bring you to the Hall."

"Thank you kindly," Hermione said. She waited for Icarus to shut the door and then whirled around. "Dumbledore!"

"What does he think he's doing messing around with us like this?" Draco yelled. "Who does he think he is?"

Hermione could only guess. "I think this is some sort of plan. I think he means for us to be... friends?"

Draco laughed in disbelief. "Friends? I think he could have just invited us to a tea party, instead of sending us gallivanting through time and putting our lives in danger!"

"I agree! I don't know what he was thinking..." She leaned up against the wall, watching the birds soar through the darkening sky. "There has to be something more."

Draco smirked at her suddenly. "Maybe he doesn't want us to become friends. Maybe he wants us to fall in love..." He made kissing noises in her direction.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Fat chance of that ever happening!"

"Ah, Granger! You hurt my feelings!" He took a few quick steps and pulled her to him, crushing her up against his broad chest. "You don't think we could fall in love?" He kissed her neck softly, his fingers digging into the tender flesh of her arms.

Hermione's head fell back, allowing him access to her lips. When they touched his, she almost melted into his arms. How could this feel so nice? So right? How could she be falling in love with this man? It was insane that Malfoy of all people made her feel this way. It had to be a mistake. She was not meant to be with this arrogant bastard of a man. She deserved better. "Malfoy, stop..." she said, pushing him away.

Draco released her reluctantly. "What's wrong?"

"This," she said, motioning to Draco and then back to herself. "This is what's wrong. This can't happen."

"Why?" Draco asked, trying to kiss her again. He almost fell over as she pushed him away again.

"I can't be with you, Draco. This cannot happen! I have waited and waited to find my true love, and it ends up being you? I refuse to believe it!"

"Are you saying that you love me, but that I'm not good enough for you?" His face turned an ugly shade of purple, and his grey eyes swirled with anger. "That's just cruel, Granger. You accuse me of being the heartless one, but you are a thousand times worse!"

He stalked off the balcony, through the room and opened the door. He paused in the doorway and said sadly, "You might be able to pretend that you don't love me, but I will never be able to forget the love I feel for you." He closed the door and left her standing there, stunned and heartbroken.

There was a knock at his door, and Draco managed to call out for them to enter. The room was pitch black, and he was lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling. He didn't want to go to the feast. In fact, all he wanted to do was leave this accursed place and go home to his mother.

"Feeling sorry for yourself?"

"Phaedra?" Draco asked, sitting up. "I thought you were sending someone to fetch me? Why did you come here yourself?"

She lit the torches on the walls and then sat down on the bed next to him. "I've heard that you and Arria have had a little spat." She placed her finger over Draco's lips, seeing that he was about to ask how she knew. "I know everything that goes on around here."

Draco threw himself back onto the bed and put his arm over his eyes. "So what? You know we had an argument, big deal."

"I know that she said she loves you and that she also said she refused to be with you."

"Have you come here to torture me? You women are all the same!"

"I have not come here to torture you; I have come here to help you."

"How?" he asked, uncovering his eyes and looking at her curiously.

"The plan? Remember?" she asked, stroking his smooth face with the back of her fingers. "It is a perfect way to get back at her, to show her that what she said does not matter to you."

"I don't know..."

"It will work, Perion." She straddled him and leaned in close, so close that their noses touched. "I will help you, you will help me, and in the process, we will have some fun of our own." She attacked his mouth, kissing him in a very passionate and seductive manner.

Draco's mind swirled. Here was a beautiful woman basically offering free sex, and he was thinking about saying no. She ground herself slowly into his growing erection, making him almost moan out loud.

"Say you will help me," she purred into his ear.

"I will help you," he managed to croak as her hands roamed lower and lower.

"Good," she said, slowly lifting herself from his flushed and hot body. "Then shall we go to the feast?"

Icarus knocked cautiously on Hermione's door. "Arria? Are you ready?"

Hermione opened the door and asked him to come inside. "Are you here to take me to the feast?" she asked with a slight smile.

"Actually, more than that. Will you allow me to be your escort this evening?" He pulled out a yellow flower from behind his back. "May I?" he asked and gently put the beautiful flower in her hair. "It looks glorious!"

Hermione tried to look happy, but she was just too depressed to make it look real. Suddenly, she just broke down crying. "I'm so sorry!" she wailed.

Icarus embraced her. "Shh. It's all right. Tell me what's wrong. Maybe I can help."

Hermione choked back her tears and said in hitching breaths, "It's Dra... Perion! I think I've ruined everything!"

"Here, sit down and tell me what happened." He walked her to the bed and then sat down next to her.

"I don't know where to start."

"Start at the beginning."

"Well, I gather you don't believe we're brother and sister?"

"I have that much figured out," Icarus said with a small laugh.

Hermione laughed back. "We're poor actors, aren't we?"

"It's hard to pretend you're not in love."

"You think I love Perion?" Hermione asked. "Is it that obvious?"

"Is that what the problem is? Does he not return your love?"

Hermione sniffed and wiped her swollen eyes. "What happened was that I told him I loved him, but that I would never be with him because he's not good enough for me. I think I really hurt him. He was so angry! And then just before he left, he told me that he loved me... He looked so... so sad!" She started to cry again. "He's never going to forgive me! I've ruined everything!"

Icarus rubbed her back and tried to soothe her. "If he loves you like he says he does, then he will forgive you. Does this mean that you have changed your mind and that you do think he's good enough for you?"

"You just don't understand! We have been enemies for so long! We've hated each other with a passion! How can I forget all the cruel things he's done to me and just let myself love him?" She stood up and paced the floor, becoming angrier with each step. "I always pictured myself with someone kind and gentle, not an attempted murderer who goes out of his way to torture people with unkind words and struts around like he's God Almighty!"

Icarus was shocked. "He's an attempted murderer?"

Hermione stopped pacing. "Last year he was forced into a mission by this evil bastard of a man. He was told that he had to murder this certain innocent man or Perion's family would die. Perion tried half-heartedly all year to accomplish his mission and in the process almost killed two friends of mine!"

"Did he succeed in this mission? Did he kill this man?"

Hermione frowned. "No. When it came time, Perion could not do it, and so someone else did it for him."

Icarus stood and walked over to her, placing his hand on her shoulder. "It seems to me that Perion is guilty of nothing more than making your childhood an unpleasant one. He proved to you and to himself that he is not capable of killing an innocent man. Men change as they get older, Arria. Perion seems to be willing to leave his past behind and make a future with you. I say you are lucky to have a man as courageous and noble as he."

Hermione let Icarus' words sink in. He was right. Draco was different, but they all were. Had she screwed up and lost her one and only chance at happiness? She looked up at Icarus. "He will never forgive me. He is a very proud man, and I'm afraid I'm going to have to find some other way to make him want me again."

Icarus smiled slyly at her. "I think I know just the way. Will you let me help you?"

"At this point, I'm willing to try anything!"

Draco was shocked out of his mind when he walked into the feast and saw that almost every woman there had their breast exposed. "What the hell?" His eyes popped out of his head as a richly dressed woman with giant melons for tits came strolling over to him and held out her hand.

"Hello. I am Huda."

Draco couldn't take his eyes off her mocha-colored breasts with the huge nipples. "I..."

Phaedra laughed at his apparent shock. "Forgive him. He is not used to our customs." She kissed the woman on the cheek. "His name is Perion, and he is from the land of King Kokalos." She took off her robe, and there she stood, displaying her much smaller, but still perky breasts.

Huda smiled at the dumbstruck man in front of her. "Yes, I see where this might come as a surprise to our guests." She picked up Draco's limp hand and shook it. "It is nice to meet you, Perion."

Draco wanted so badly to just reach out and slap her boobs like bongo drums. "Yesss... pleasure to meet you." His hand came up, and just as he was about to give her left one a good thump, Hermione entered with Icarus.

"What?" he managed to choke out. "She can't walk around like that!" He snatched Phaedra's robe from her hands and rushed over to Hermione. "What do you think you're doing?" he almost screamed. His stormy, grey eyes lingered on her bare bosom before snapping out of it and throwing the robe over her.

"I am simply following the Cretan custom of dress. Do you have a problem with that?" she snapped.

Draco was fuming. "I will not allow you to walk around shaking your bare tits for every man to see!"

Hermione smiled sweetly at him. "One would think you are jealous of the other men ogling my goodies."

Draco glared at her. "I am not jealous. I simply don't want you to catch cold," he said through clenched teeth.

Hermione smirked and threw off the robe. "Nonsense! I won't catch cold!" She jiggled her breasts a little on purpose, watching his face turn red with anger and want. "Now, kindly step aside, Perion. I have a lot of men to introduce myself to."

Draco watched with building anger as she was led by Icarus over to a group of foreign men, who licked their lips and stared lustfully at her bare chest. She looked over at him and winked wickedly. Draco huffed and stalked back over to Phaedra. "How dare she? How can she walk around all exposed like that? She always acts so prim and proper; I can't believe she would do this!"

Phaedra chuckled. "Can't you see what she's doing?"

"Yeah! She's leaning into that man way too closely! Look! Her nipples are grazing his fingers! I'm going to..." He reached under his dress clothes and clutched his wand, not caring if these people were going to witness him using magic.

Phaedra grabbed him as he took a step toward Hermione. "You are not going anywhere! It seems that my sly lover, Icarus, and your Arria have come up with a little plan of their own."

"They have?" Draco asked, watching Icarus slid his hand down Hermione's back, resting it on her ass.

"Of course! They are trying to make us jealous! Can you not see it?" She laughed like it was the most absurd thing in the world. "Icarus has tried this many times. It always ends with us arguing and then making wild love until the sun comes up."

Draco turned to her. "If it always ends up like that, then why even bother with all the jealousy shit?"

"Because," Phaedra said, taking Draco's hand and placing it on her bare breast, "the thrill of the game makes the fucking that much better."

Draco smirked. "Well, if it's a game they want, then bring it on!" He rolled her stiff nipple in between his fingers, making a tiny moan of pleasure escape from her lips. He glanced over at Hermione from the corner of his eye to make sure she was watching before he leaned in and slipped Phaedra's nipple into his mouth and sucked hard.

"Look at what he's doing! He doesn't even care that your hand is on my ass or that these perverted men are staring at my tits!" Hermione watched angrily as Draco suckled Phaedra and then kissed her passionately. "I knew it! He doesn't care! He's decided to move on already... to forget about me!"

Icarus knew Phaedra better than anyone, and he wasn't fooled for a minute. Although another man feeling up his woman WAS difficult to stomach, he knew that she was only playing. He knew she loved only him... At least he hoped. She seemed way into this Perion. Perhaps she had grown tired of it all and decided to end the games and move on. "I do believe that dear Phaedra has talked Perion into a game of 'make your lover jealous.'"

"How can you be so sure?" Hermione asked. "It looks to me like they're enjoying themselves."

"Oh, I'm sure they are. That's part of the rules."

"You two are sick. Do you know that?" Hermione said. "And I refuse to play this game of yours any longer!" She turned to stalk off, but ran smack into Draco, who was behind her.

"Having fun, my love?" He sneered at her, his eyes dancing with amusement. He snaked his arm around Phaedra's tiny waist, and she responded by licking his neck.

Hermione decided right then and there that she would win this little game. "Not as much fun as I'm going to have later tonight when I rip off Icarus' clothes and fuck him so hard that his father will feel it!" She smacked Icarus on the ass, smirked at Draco, and then together they walked off, laughing.

King Minos entered, everyone bowed, and beautiful music began to play. He welcomed everyone to the Tribute Feast, said he was starving and took his seat at the head of the table that ran the length of the Hall.

Ariadne came in alone and took a seat next to Minos. Daedalus sat on his other side, looking agitated. He and Ariadne kept glancing at each other nervously.

Draco and Phaedra took seats next to Daedalus and Hermione, and Icarus seated himself right across from them. All of the other guests then sat down, and the meal commenced.

"Tell me, dear daughter, where is your brave hero?" Minos asked Ariadne while a servant placed an array of cheeses and fruit in front of him. "Is he not brave enough to eat with me?" The King laughed and bit into a fig.

Ariadne frowned, and those that were present could tell she was trying desperately to hold her tongue. "He has decided to join the children, who are eating what they think is their last meal."

The King stopped eating in mid-chew. "Does my daughter put so much faith in her lover? Does she really believe that Theseus will succeed?"

Ariadne squared her shoulders and looked her father straight in the eyes. "Yes, father, I have total faith that he can and will put an end to this curse, and then maybe you will let us marry."

The King grinned. Cheese was stuck between his teeth, and Hermione wished she had some floss on her to give to him. She was so into the drama playing out before her that she literally jumped when she felt a hand slowly lift her skirt and warm fingers circling on her naked thigh. She quickly looked at Icarus, who smiled slightly and raised his eyebrows. He leaned in close to her and blew lightly into her ear, making goosebumps erupt all over her flush body.

The King was saying something about how no man was good enough for his daughters and that if any man dared lay a finger on either one of them, they would suffer the consequences. Draco was hearing nothing but a loud buzzing noise in his head because he was watching Hermione's face. He knew where Icarus' fingers were and that he was working her pussy under the table... She looked like she was in heaven. Draco wanted to throw up just thinking about another man touching her in places that were only meant for him. He saw her shudder slightly and hitch in a breath, her fingers grasping the edge of the table as an orgasm flooded through her body.

Icarus smiled wickedly at them, and Phaedra's cool exterior almost cracked when she saw him slip his hand from under the table and lick his fingers slowly, as if savoring every drop.

Draco glared at Hermione, and she just gave him a Malfoy-esque smirk. She reached for her glass of wine and sipped it, never taking her eyes from Draco's. Her red lips parted, and she ran her tongue slowly and seductively across them. She was so good at being a fucking tease!

Phaedra and Draco endured the rest of the meal, watching the people they loved flirt and feel each other up under the table. When the King announced that the Feast was over and suggested that everyone retire to their quarters to ready themselves for the Tribute, Phaedra and Draco just about ran from the Hall.

"Wait! Phaedra! I need to speak with you!" Ariadne rushed over to them, and they were soon joined by Hermione and Icarus, much to Draco's dismay. "We need to discuss the plans; I will send a message to each of you of where we are to meet."

"Have you given any thought to what exactly it is we are going to do?" Icarus asked.

"Your father has given me something that is sure to help Theseus in the maze, but we still need to go over a few details." She kissed her sister on the cheek. "I will send for you all soon."

The four of them stood there, two of them smiling, two of them frowning. Hermione cleared her throat, trying to get Draco's attention, but he just stared at the floor. "That was a VERY INTERESTING dinner, wasn't it, Perion?"

Draco did not want to look at Hermione; he didn't know if he could ever look at her again. He grabbed Phaedra by the arm and rushed her out of the Hall, Hermione and Icarus' laughter ringing in their ears. "I never knew that girl had it in her to play dirty like that!" he said as they walked at a brisk pace. "I wish I could get back at her, make her feel what I felt in there, having to watch her be pleased by another man!"

"It seems as though plan A has been a disaster! It's time to 'play dirty' as you say." Her eyes glinted deviously in the torch light. "Come to my room, and together we will bring them to their knees!"

"What exactly do you have in mind? You wicked, wicked girl," Draco asked as they ascended the Grand Stair Case.

"Revenge... and a lot of sex..." She led a curious and very willing Draco to her room.

"That was brilliant! Did you see their faces when they thought you were getting me off under the table?" Hermione's face was bright red from laughter.

"And you!" Icarus said. "Faking an orgasm like that!" He swiped at his tears of mirth. "I thought Phaedra was going to jump across the table and stab me when I licked my fingers clean!"

"We were so close to winning!" Hermione said. "If only King Minos hadn't called an end to the Feast!"

Icarus stopped laughing. "Oh, now I wouldn't count Phaedra out yet. She has a very devious mind, and she hates to lose. I have a sinking suspicion that she is already planning her revenge." They came to the massive staircase, and he turned to Hermione. "Would you like to come to my room?"

"I... well..."

"Just to talk... nothing more!"

She breathed a sigh of relief. "All right then!"

As soon as Phaedra heard a knock at the door, she ripped it open. Standing there was a boy of about twelve with kinky black hair and small black eyes that reminded Draco of raisins. He handed her a note, and instead of dismissing the boy, she invited him inside. He hesitated for only a second before crossing the threshold.

Draco watched as Phaedra opened the note and read it quickly. She tossed it to Draco, who saw it simply said, "Nymph Fountain, one hour."

Phaedra approached the lad. "Have you delivered a message to Icarus yet, Krisos?"

Krisos shook his head. "Not yet, Princess Phaedra. I was told to come to you first."

Phaedra smiled at the boy and then turned to Draco. "It is as I hoped!" She went to a small table and wrote her own note. Luckily, she was skilled in forging her sister's handwriting. "Give me that note, Krisos, and take this to Icarus instead." She handed the folded message to the confused boy, who knew better than to ask questions. He handed her the real note, and she threw it into the fireplace where it was soon reduced to ashes. "If he asks, you are to say that the note is from Princess Ariadne. Do you

understand? No matter how hard he questions you. You tell him Ariadne sent it."

The raisin-eyed boy nodded. "I understand." He bowed and left, closing the door behind him.

Phaedra whirled around and said, "Shall we get naked?"

Hermione and Icarus were standing on his balcony when Krisos knocked. "It must be the message we have been waiting for!" He opened the door, and the first thing out of his mouth was a question. "Is this from Ariadne?" He plucked the note from the boy's long, thin fingers.

"Yes, sir. The Princess sent for me and told me to deliver this to you. I came right away!"

Icarus unfolded it and read it. "You are not lying to me, Krisos, are you? This is not from Phaedra, is it?" He examined the writing in the torch light.

"Sir, I would never lie to you. You have helped me out of many difficult situations. I consider you a friend, and a friend never lies." Actually, the boy was used to telling fibs. Phaedra paid him richly for his services, and with so much practice lately, he had become a very cool liar indeed!

Icarus studied him for the slightest hint of guilt, but saw nothing except a smooth, unreadable face. "Very well, Krisos. You may go." He shut the door behind the boy and handed the letter to Hermione.

"Phaedra's in twenty minutes," she read out loud. "First, I need to stop at my room to put on a robe. I'm not very comfortable walking around like this." She pointed to her bare chest and frowned. "Do the men on this island walk around with permanent erections from looking at women's bare breasts all day?"

"You better believe we do!" he said, leading her from the room.

As they approached the dark corridor to Phaedra's room, they could hear sounds coming from her slightly opened door.

"What the..." Icarus said, holding out his arm to stop Hermione from going any further. "I don't believe her!"

Hermione was thoroughly confused by his sudden anger. "What is it? What's going on?" Her head snapped toward the room as Phaedra cried out. She was moaning Perion's name, telling him to fuck her harder.

"I think we should just go back to my room." He tried to turn her around, but she slid out of his grip and headed toward the noise. Icarus slapped the wall with his palm in frustration and went after her. "You do not want to see. Believe me!"

Hermione glared at him. "Yes, I do, and don't try to stop me!" She was shaking with anticipation. There was a weird sick feeling in her stomach as she reached the door and peeked in. Phaedra was on her hands and knees in the middle of her bed, her hair was in tangled curls and her eyes were closed in ecstasy. Hermione took a very deep breath and slowly let her teary eyes travel to where Draco was. He was behind her, holding her ass tightly and pounding his cock into her relentlessly. He looked like he was enjoying every thrust.

Icarus said quietly, "Arria. Please come away from the door." He placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. She turned around and pushed him out of the way.

Hermione had never been so angry or humiliated in all her life. Here, she thought Draco loved her... yeah, right! He loved her so much that he didn't even think twice before fucking some Cretan whore! She shoved Icarus out of the way and ran down the corridor, barely noticing that Minos was coming toward her the other way.

"My dear girl! Where are you off to so quickly? Are you in a hurry to get a good seat for the Tribute? Never fear! You shall sit with me as my special guest! You and the Negotiator. I fear he still wants to speak with me..."

Hermione was breathing so hard that her nostrils were flaring, and if this stupid man didn't shut up soon, she was going to pull out her wand and blast him to pieces!

Minos trailed off in thought. "Ah yes! Have you seen my daughter, Phaedra? I want to tell her once more how proud I am of her bull dancing."

"Yes, King Minos. As a matter of fact, I just came from her room. She's alone, preparing for the Tribute."

Minos thanked Hermione and continued to walk toward Phaedra's room. He passed a shocked Icarus on the way, and the young man bowed his greeting and then rushed to catch up with her.

"My god! What have you done?" he said angrily.

"Nothing. He was looking for Phaedra, and I told him she was in her room." Hermione grinned. "Won't the King be surprised to see she's not alone?"

Icarus grabbed her arm angrily. "You stupid girl! Don't you know what you have done?"

Hermione opened her mouth to snap at him just as Minos screamed obscenities and called for the guards.

"You have sent him to his death!" Icarus said.

Hermione, realizing that she had gone too far, fell against the cold stone wall in anguish. "I can fix this! I'll just tell the King..."

"Tell him what! There is nothing you could ever say that will fix this!"

"I have to try! I can't let this happen!" She sprinted back down the hall, just as a naked Draco was being pulled from the room, pleading for his life. His eyes locked with hers as the guards dragged him past her. She wanted to tell him that she was sorry, that she didn't mean for the game to go this far, but nothing came from her mouth.

Phaedra and Minos were in her room, screaming at one another when Hermione ran in to beg for Draco's life. "Please! You have to release him!"

The King turned his fearsome eyes on her. "You! You told me she was alone!"

"I know... I know I did! Please forgive me! I was just very angry, seeing them together, and I wanted revenge!"

"Well, now he will pay for your pettiness. How dare he touch my daughter?" Minos stalked out to the terrace and looked out at the Labyrinth.

Hermione followed him, glancing at Phaedra, who was throwing clothes on to cover her nakedness. "What do you mean 'pay'?"

"He will join the brave hero, Theseus, tonight in the maze. Let us test his power and strength against the mighty Minotaur!"

"No!" Phaedra and Hermione cried at the same time.

Theseus was in shock when Draco was thrown in the door of the Sanctuary where he awaited his fate. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "And why are you clothed in wool as I am?"

"I'm clothed in wool, you fucking twit, because I have been forced to take part in this fucking Tribute as a fucking punishment!"

"There is no need to scream at me, Perion!" Theseus said. "Tell me what has happened!"

Draco explained everything to him. "And so here I am... a sacrificial lamb. I'm even dressed in this fucking hot ass wool like a damn sheep being led to the slaughter!" He scratched his sweaty back with his wand, which he had managed to smuggle on his person, but had not had the chance to use yet. "I will not just stand there and let that freaky man-bull rip me apart..."

Theseus smiled at Draco. "Then I suggest you and I work together."

Draco looked the man over. He was very tall with huge muscles. He wasn't very smart, but what the hell... "I think with your strength and my brains, we can survive this." They shook hands to seal the deal. "Where are the children?" Draco asked, looking around the bull-decorated Sanctuary.

"They have been set free... until next year." A mighty roar echoed through the room as the Minotaur was set free. "It has begun."

The King forced Hermione to sit with him and watch. He wanted her to see Draco's death and to report it back to Kokalos. "You can tell Kokalos what happens when he sends his servants to ravish my daughters!" Men were walking the perimeter of the maze, lighting hundreds of torches. Soon the night was lit up, and all were able to see.

Ariadne held tightly onto Hermione's hand, trying to comfort the distraught girl. "It will be fine. You will see. Daedalus has made sure that Theseus will know his way out of the maze. All they have to do is kill the Minotaur and get out."

Hermione wanted to slap the sappy girl in the head. Who was she kidding? Was this woman so delusional that she actually believed everything would turn out all right? "Where is your sister?" Hermione asked. She hadn't seen her since they took Draco away.

"Father has forbidden her to attend. She is locked in her room... or so he thinks." She winked at Hermione.

Before Hermione could respond, the heavy, golden door to the Minotaur's cage was lifted, and he roared angrily before charging out. She didn't know what she expected the beast to look like, but it was way worse than anything she could have imagined. The crowd screamed and applauded as Theseus and Draco were lead into the Labyrinth, blind-folded. Hermione was glad to see that Draco was holding his wand.

Predator and prey were on opposite ends of the sprawling spiral. The Minotaur sniffed the air and headed toward the middle.

"What the bloody fuck is that?" Draco asked as Theseus pulled out a ball of red string. "Don't you think the King will notice that there is a fuck load of bright, red string running through the damn maze? Give that here!"

"What are you doing?" Theseus asked as Draco tapped the ball with his wand, making the string change color to blend in with the shrubbery. "How did you do that?"

"Don't ask," Draco said, tossing the string back. "After we kill the bull-thingy, I'll turn the string back so that we can find our way out."

Theseus was looking at Draco with huge, awe-struck eyes.

"Don't look at me like that! Get moving! You dim-witted fool!" He shoved him forward, and together they made their way through numerous confusing paths, most of them ending in dead ends. Once in a while, the Minotaur would roar, each time sounding closer and closer.

"Is it always this boring?" Hermione asked. "I mean, I'm still frightened for the men, but does it always take this long?"

"Usually there are screaming, confused children running around. They are caught very quickly." There was a tremor in her voice as she struggled not to cry. "These are two strong, able men. It will last much longer."

Hermione watched as Draco and Theseus made their way through the Labyrinth, inching closer and closer to their fate. There were times when the Minotaur was close and the spectators would lean forward in anticipation, only to be disappointed when it took a wrong turn.

Phaedra heard the key turn the lock in her door, and Daedalus rushed in. "You must hurry! We have no time to waste! The ship will be here!"

She quickly followed him out of the Palace and down to the water. "It is not here yet!" she said frantically.

"It will come! I need you to stay here and wait. Do not let the ship leave without your sister!"

Phaedra stood in the dark, listening to the cheering in the arena, wondering what was happening.

Draco looked up at the crowd as they starting cheering, and they screaming all of a sudden. He knew that sound must mean that the monster was near. "We should..." he started to say to Theseus as the Minotaur crashed through the hedges to their right.

"Holy fucking shit!" Draco couldn't manage to get out of the way, and was knocked to the ground. He fell hard on his back, and his head bounced off the ground. Opening his eyes, all he saw was darkness, and for a fleeting second, he thought he was dead. That was until he could smell the fetid, rotten breath of the Minotaur in his face and feel the heavy weight of its body crushing down on him.

It was the most hideous and grotesque moment of his life. Draco struggled to bring his wand up, but the beast was slashing at him with its horns, causing him to scream out in pain. In the far distance, he could hear the spectators screaming in anticipation.

Hermione jumped to her feet as the Minotaur tried to disembowel Draco with its sharp horns. "My God!" she said, clutching her heart. "He's going to die and it's all my fault!" She turned to run from the arena, but was halted by two guards standing in the doorway.

"You, my dear girl, are not going anywhere! Now sit down and witness the death of your precious Perion!" King Minos said in a commanding and extremely angry voice. "I cannot wait for my monster to rip him apart and then move onward to the great hero of Athens!"

Ariadne gently pulled Hermione back to her seat. "Do not fear! Look! Even now the tables have turned!"

Hermione saw to her relief that Theseus was beating the shit out of the Minotaur and trying to pull him off of Draco. She got to her feet and screamed along with the crowd.

Theseus took his strong arms and hammered and beat the beast in the head until it became so angered that it lifted itself from Draco's bloody body and stood, snorting and glaring at Theseus with glowing red eyes. Theseus took three staggering steps backwards and prepared himself to battle. "Come on, you freak!" he yelled. "You, killer of helpless children!"

Draco rolled himself to a sitting position and wiped the blood and bull snot from his face. He quickly realized that he was now free to use his wand. He unsteadily got to his feet and screamed at Theseus, "Throw him!" Draco aimed his wand.

The Minotaur, covered in Draco's blood and foaming at the mouth, charged at Theseus. The Hero bent over slightly and lifted the confused monster into the air over his head. He let out a triumphant yell and then threw the Minotaur into the air.

Draco prayed to whatever god was out there that he didn't miss.

Hermione acted quickly when she saw what Draco was about to do. She knew by the way everyone, including Minos, was reacting that all hell was about to break loose. This was just what she needed to escape. The clock was going to appear very soon, and she had very limited time to get herself and Draco to their destination.

Minos was in total shock as he watched Theseus toss the Minotaur into the air like it was nothing, and he was even more shocked when a bright green light hit it in the back and the beast fell to the ground, dead. All the spectators in the arena were shouting and going wild, but the King just stood there.

When the Minotaur's body landed with a sickening thud on the ground beside him, Draco reacted quickly. He reversed the color spell on the string, returning it back to its bright red. "Let's go! Now!" He and Theseus ran through the maze, following the string, and quickly found the exit. He could think of nothing but getting to that damn clock before it left without him.

The King finally came to his senses and yelled out a command to his guards. "Kill them!" Ariadne and Hermione looked at each other with huge, frightened eyes.

Hermione knew that it was now or never. She pulled out her wand, told Ariadne to get down and blasted a huge hole in the wall of the Palace. Rubble and dust flew into the air, and Hermione took hold of Ariadne's hand. She dragged her toward the door, firing off random shots over her shoulder.

Out in the corridors, it was complete and total chaos. People were running and screaming, trampling over each other. "Which way is it to the olive grove? The one where we first met you," Hermione asked, shaking the stunned girl. "Tell me!"

"Down those stairs, through the door and up the path!" Ariadne managed to say, coughing from all the dust in the air. She fell against the wall as Hermione fired yet another spell that shook the ground, and the ceiling started to crumble.

"Thanks! I suggest you get out of here before you die!" Hermione said, running toward the stairs. She knew that Draco would be waiting in the grove for the clock, and she kept running toward it as fast as she could.

"Princess!" Daedalus said, "It is not safe here! You must come with me! I have arranged passage on a ship for you and Theseus!" He pushed her out of the way just as part of the ceiling collapsed. "He is already on his way. He will meet us there!"

They walked quickly toward the water, hiding every time a guard ran past. Finally they made it; the ship was already setting sail. She quickly kissed her sister, embraced Daedalus and turned to her love, who was waiting for her.

Phaedra watched her sister sail away, knowing that she would probably never see her again. The tears streamed down her face, and a comforting hand was suddenly on her shoulder. She thought it was Daedalus, but when she turned around, she saw that it was Icarus. She collapsed into his arms, sobbing. "I'm so sorry! Sorry for everything!"

Icarus kissed the top of her disheveled head. "I'm sorry too. Sorry that I never had the courage before this to tell you that I love you."

Phaedra stopped crying and looked up into his face. "You love me?"

"With all my heart."

"I love you too," she said and kissed him tenderly on the lips.

Hermione was out of breath and close to fainting when she heard the clock make its first chime. "Damn!" she said, clutching the ache in her side. Rounding the corner, she saw Draco standing in the dark, his pale hair gleaming, his eyes lowered to the ground. She approached him cautiously. "I see we made it in time."

Draco looked up at her, his face contorted with hatred and anger. "Don't you fucking talk to me, Granger!" He opened the secret door and stepped in.

Hermione wasn't sure she actually wanted to be stuck in a small confined space with him, seeing as how he wanted to kill her right now. The clock struck 10, and she decided she should get in; after all, she had to confront him about what had happened sooner or later. After shutting the door, she turned to him to speak.

"Just shut the fuck up," he warned. "I am so sick of being stuck with you! I'm sick of time traveling, I'm sick of almost dying, and I'M SICK OF THIS FUCKING CLOCK!" He kicked the wall as hard as he could, and the clock suddenly came to a stop. He didn't move to open the door.

"Aren't we going out?" Hermione asked in a tiny, almost frightened voice.

Draco glared at her. "No. We're not. Let's just see what happens if we refuse to get out!"

Hermione's heart jumped into her throat as the clock began to shake violently and the air was filled with a bright white light. "Open it!" she screamed at him, blindly groping for the door. A loud, shrill noise rose up, making them cover their ears.

Finally, Draco could take no more, and he opened the door, both of them falling out and landing on the soft, wet ground. The clock disappeared right in front of their eyes with a pop, and they were left in silence.

Light rain was falling from the dark sky, and as Hermione looked around, she noticed they were in a graveyard. Tomb stones and mausoleums rose from the darkness, illuminated by the lights from a nearby Manor house that sat on the hill.

Draco slowly got to his feet and stood, as if paralyzed, staring at the house. "It can't be!" he said and took off running through the cemetery toward the house.

to be continued...

12

Chapter 12 of 27

Hermione gets the shock of her life!

"Malfoy! Come back here!" Hermione shouted. She slipped in the mud and managed to grab hold of a headstone shaped like an angel to keep herself from falling. "Wait!"

Draco could not believe where he was! Of all the luck! He heard Hermione shouting, but didn't care; all he wanted to do was reach the door. He sprinted through the tall, wrought iron gates that were opened wide as if inviting him and then ran as fast as he could up the flagstone path.

As soon as his feet hit the front porch, he knew something wasn't right. "What the hell..." He slowly reached his fingers out to stroke the door knocker, and then it fell limply to his side. His brow furrowed in confusion as he looked around at his surroundings. He was staring intently at the sprawling front lawn with its ghostly white marble statues and fountains when Hermione finally caught up.

She sat down on the front steps, trying to take deep breaths. She was sweaty, hot and tired to the point of exhaustion. "Do you know where we are?" she asked, looking up at him. He didn't answer, but continued examining everything with a confused look on his face. "Malfoy!"

He glanced at her briefly and then turned to feel the knocker again. "Weird!" he said under his breath.

"Do you know who lives here?" she asked, wanting to shake him.

"I thought I did," he said.

"What do you mean?" She stood up, clutching the stitch in her side. "Do you or don't you?"

"I was so sure..." he trailed off.

Hermione had enough of his annoying mysterious attitude. She took the knocker in her hand and pounded it twice on the heavy oak door.

Draco pushed her roughly out of the way. "Why did you do that?" he said, panicking.

"What the bloody hell is wrong with you?" Hermione asked, concerned, as he started to shake, his eyes huge with fright.

Draco whirled around to flee down the steps just as the door opened. He stopped in his tracks, his hand on the railing, his heart beating rapidly.

"You must be the Healers my grandfather said would be coming," an attractive woman said from the shadows. "Please, come in." She eyed Hermione's outfit curiously as she walked past and into the house. "Are you coming in?" she asked Draco, who was still frozen on the steps.

He took a huge breath, gathered his courage and turned to face her. She looked at him strangely, as if recognizing him. He, on the other hand, didn't know her at all, which relieved him!

"That's an interesting wardrobe choice," the woman said, amused. She tossed her blond hair over her shoulder and grinned at him, her green eyes sparkling.

"What? Oh." Draco looked down at his blood-stained wool garment. "Um... we just came from a costume party." He quickly used his wand to dress himself in proper Healer attire, and Hermione did likewise.

"Is this your house?" Draco asked her, studying a portrait of a very old man and woman that was hanging on the wall in the foyer.

"It will be."

"What do you mean, 'will be'?" Hermione asked, stepping forward beside Draco and looking at the painting. She was shocked because this was obviously a wizard's house and here was an unmoving Muggle painting hanging on the wall in the front hall.

"This Manor has been in our family for generations. My grandfather, who is very ill, is the present owner. I am the oldest grandchild, not to mention his favorite, and he has told me that I will inherit all of this when he passes away." There was the unmistakable sound of sorrow in her voice. "I'm afraid that will be soon. He has taken a turn for the worse, and he knows he doesn't have long to live."

Draco stared at the loving couple in the picture. There was something very familiar about them, but he couldn't put his finger on it. "What did you say your grandfather's name was?"

"I didn't," the woman said with a smirk.

"Well?" Draco asked, dragging his eyes away from the portrait. "Are you going to tell us?"

The woman laughed, "I'm afraid I can't tell you his name."

"Why not?" Hermione asked, intrigued.

"Because he told me that under no circumstances was I to tell you his name," she said. "Now, I must insist that you come with me. He said he wanted to see you as soon as you arrived."

Hermione touched the woman on the arm. "You said he was expecting us. How can that be? Does he know us?"

"My grandfather has always been a mysterious man. He never volunteers information. He told me that you would be coming... described the time and what you would look like."

Draco frowned. "He gives you elusive and strange instructions, and you just follow them without question?"

They came to a door and stopped. "I love my grandfather, and I trust him with all my heart. If he says to do something, I do it because I know he has his reasons. It is not my place to question him, but it is my duty as a loving granddaughter to make his final days as peaceful as possible."

She opened the door slowly and peeked her head inside. "They are here, Grandfather."

"Send them in," a raspy voice said from the dark room.

The granddaughter handed Hermione the lamp and ushered them inside. After shutting the door behind them, they were left in silence.

"I have been expecting you, Draco," the old man said.

They both looked down at the shrunken man laying in a huge four-poster bed with the red velvet hangings and said nothing. They were absolutely amazed that this man was actually alive. He was more wrinkled than a prune, and his hair was so gossamer and wispy that it looked like cobwebs floating in the air. His skin was so thin that every vein and blood vessel was visible, and his eyes were so faded that it was impossible to know what color they were.

He smiled at Draco, and to their astonishment, they saw that he still had teeth. "I have waited for this moment almost my whole life!" he chuckled softly. "You are just as I remember! Handsome, smart and so full of yourself!"

Draco jumped as the man's bony cold fingers grabbed his arm and dug in. "Do not think you are going to remain that good looking your entire life! Old age will creep up on you and bite you in the ass when you least expect it!" He let go of Draco's arm and turned his attention to Hermione, who was holding back the urge to run out of the room. "And you," he said sadly. "Hermione."

Hermione glanced at Draco, who just shrugged his shoulders at her. "Yes?" she said timidly.

"You are even more beautiful than I remember! Those tender caring eyes, that wild hair, those soft inviting lips." He started to sob. "Oh, why? Why did you have to leave? Come back, I'm so alone, so frightened!" He was becoming hysterical, and Hermione rushed towards him, sat on the bed and took him in her arms.

"Shh! It'll be all right," she said in a soothing voice, as if talking to a child. He cried as she held him, and Hermione found herself tearing up as well. Why was she so emotional? What was it about this dying man that felt so familiar to her, so strangely comforting?"

Draco stood at the foot of the bed, watching Hermione rock the man as he cried her name over and over. There was something building up inside of him, some weird feeling of *deja vu*. He knew this man, knew him very well, and the understanding of what was happening suddenly came crashing down upon him. "I need to get out of here!" he said and fled from the room.

He slammed the door behind him and ran down the hall to the bathroom that he knew was the third door on the right. He reached the toilet just before the dinner he had eaten in Crete came spewing from his mouth. He retched some more, his head spinning, the feeling of inertia overwhelming him.

"Are you all right?" Hermione said from the other side of the door.

Draco leaned up against the wall, trying to catch his breath. His throat was burning from the puke, and his body was covered in a layer of cold sweat. He struggled to get to his feet and grabbed hold of the sink with trembling hands. "I'm fine, Granger. Just a little sick." He turned on the cold water and splashed his face.

"I'll wait out here in the hall for you," she said, very concerned. "Let me know if you need me."

"Fine," he managed to say. Gripping the edge of the blue marble with both hands, he stared at his reflection in the mirror. He was extremely pale, but his cheeks were splotched with bright dots of pink. He suddenly closed his eyes and silently cried tears of anguish. Of all the places in the fucking world, why did they have to come here?

"Draco?" Hermione knocked softly on the door.

He opened it a second later and then stepped out into the hall. It was clear to Hermione that he had been crying. His eyes were swollen and he looked... well... horrible! "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah. Why wouldn't it be?" He refused to look her in the face and stared instead at the white carpet under his feet. He felt Hermione's fingers on his arm, and he shrank from her touch. "How is the old man?" he asked her, just to say something. He hoped the man was dead and that he would never have to go back into that room again.

Hermione slowly let her hand fall back to her side. "He's sleeping." She was very concerned about Draco's mental state. He seemed detached, nervous and not at all like himself. "The granddaughter has prepared a small meal for us, and she said that we are to stay the night."

"I don't want to spend the night here!" Draco just about screeched. "I'd rather... die." He said the last word painfully and willed himself not to rip out all his hair and run screaming from the house like a frigging lunatic.

"Draco, what is wrong with you?" Hermione asked. "If you know something about who this man is and why we're here, tell me!"

He looked hard at her. "I have no idea who that man is, and I definitely have no fucking clue why we're here." He hoped his face didn't betray him. He knew exactly who that shrunken, dying, heartbroken man was down the hall, and he had more than a slight inkling of why they were in this house.

The granddaughter came out of the room and walked silently up the hall towards them. "I wish I knew how you got him to sleep like that," she said to Hermione. "Usually he just sits there in his bed, alternating between crying for my dead grandmother and talking to someone named Dumbledore, who is not there. He rarely sleeps."

Hermione glanced at Draco, who was showing no emotion whatsoever, but was staring at the wall.

"Shall we go to the dining room?" She lifted the lamp and bid them to follow her.

Hermione noticed that Draco was walking like a zombie. It was like he wasn't seeing anything, but his feet were dragging him in the right direction.

"By the way, you never told us your name," he suddenly said.

She looked over her shoulder at him and smiled. "Forgive my manners! I'm terribly sorry! My name is Amethyst Amee for short."

"What's your last name?" he questioned rather rudely.

The woman narrowed her eyes. "I'm not allowed to tell you what it is."

"Of course you're not!" Draco said sarcastically. "That would make too much sense!"

"Draco! You're being rude!" Hermione said, appalled.

"And this woman and her grandfather are not?" he said. "We didn't choose to come here. We were forced! They obviously know that and are purposely keeping information from us!"

"Still! You shouldn't be so damn rude! We are guests in this house!"

Draco laughed. "Guests! Let me tell you something, Granger. This is m..."

The woman shot Draco a shrewd look that immediately stopped him from finishing his sentence and took a seat at the long dining room table. "Please, just sit and eat. I will try to answer as many of your questions as I can without going against my grandfather's wishes."

Draco and Hermione took seats next to each other, and both unfolded their napkins and placed them on their laps. Three house-elves came through the door at the back of the richly furnished room and sat steaming tureens of food in front of them.

"Would Miss care for some roasted chicken with rosemary?" said a high-pitched voice at Hermione's elbow.

"Um... sure," she said. "Thank you kindly."

After their plates were filled with samples of all the scrumptious dishes and the elves left them, Hermione opened her mouth to tell Amee about S.P.E.W. and the plight of the house-elves.

"I know what you are going to say, and before you ramble on about how poorly elves are treated, I just want to tell you that all ten of the house-elves in this Manor are paid for their services, and they receive paid vacation and sick time when they need it."

Hermione's jaw just about dropped onto her plate, and her fork was frozen in her hand in midair. "They are?"

"Yes. My grandmother insisted on it. I wasn't born yet, but my mother told me that they got in many heated arguments about the elves." Amee laughed lightly. "Dear Grandfather raged and raged, saying it was not proper to pay them and give them clean clothes, nor treat them like pets. My grandmother was one tough cookie! She never

backed down when she truly believed in a cause!" She sipped her wine and then continued. "He loved her so much that he would do anything to make her happy. He would try to act all angry and pretend that he was the boss, but we all knew that all she had to do was give him a loving look and he would give in completely."

Draco snorted laughter and took a bite of his mashed potatoes.

"Something funny?" Amee inquired.

"He sounds like a pussy whipped fool, and she sounds like an Amazon with balls of steel!"

She smirked at him, reminding him so much of himself that he choked on his peas. "That description is spot on!" she gave him a wink and added, "After all, you WOULD know, wouldn't you?" She smiled at Draco over the top of her wine glass, and he smiled back.

Hermione looked at them, confused. Clearly they both knew something she didn't, and she was going to find out what the hell it was. "I have a question."

Draco and Amee stopped looking at each other and turned their attention to Hermione.

"Why did your grandfather tell you that we were Healers?"

"Because, dear girl, in the future, you both ARE Healers."

Hermione didn't bat an eye at this stunning information. "So, you're telling me that this is the future, and you and your grandfather knew we were coming? You know about the clock and the time traveling?"

"Yes."

"But how and why? This makes no sense to me at all!" She threw her fork down on the table in frustration. "Unless we meet you sometime in our real future and tell you that we would be visiting you..."

Draco wanted so desperately to tell her what was going on, but for some reason, he knew that he wasn't supposed to. She was smart; maybe she would figure it out all by herself! "Let's just finish our meal and..."

"Don't tell me what to do! And don't think for one second I haven't figured out that you know what's going on here!"

Draco frowned at her. "I told you before, I have no fucking clue what this is all about!"

Hermione stood and threw her napkin down on the table. "As if I would believe anything you said! You are a lying piece of shit bastard!" She picked up her wine and threw it in his face.

He stood up and grabbed her so fast that his chair fell over, and she screamed in fright. "I might be a liar!" He was so close to her face that she could see the droplets of wine on his eyelashes. "But you are a heartless bitch, who likes to fuck with people's emotions!"

Amee sipped her wine as if watching an interesting television program. This was all so surreal to her. After all, her grandfather had told her about this row when she was a tiny child.

Hermione clenched her teeth angrily. "Get you damn hands off of me now, Malfoy, or I will make you sorry you ever laid eyes me!"

He dug his fingers deeper into her arms. "I already am!"

She did the only thing she could. She kicked him in the shin as hard as she could. He released her and screamed in pain. She turned to run, but he caught her by her hair and pulled her back.

"Ow! Let go!" she said desperately. "You're hurting me!"

"Good!" Draco said. "You deserve it!" He pulled her so close that she was crushed up against him, her ass pressed into his groin, his hands still tangled in her hair. "You have no idea just how much you hurt me back in Crete, Granger," he said in her ear.

Hermione struggled through the pain in her scalp and managed to turn herself around to face him. "I hurt you?" she looked at him incredulously. "I'm not the one who was having sex with someone else!" She glared hatefully at him. "That was you!"

Draco twisted her hair harder, making her yelp. "I only did that because you were letting that horny freak get you off under the table!"

Hermione laughed despite the searing pain from her head. "That wasn't real!" She laughed harder.

"What!" he said, releasing her hair and stepping back. "It wasn't real?"

Hermione rubbed her head in agony. "It was all fake... the fingering under the table, the orgasm..."

For a moment, Draco was sure that his head was going to explode. "I can't believe this!" he shouted at her. "I fucked that stupid whore for nothing!" He picked up his plate from the table and threw it against the wall where it shattered and pelted them with mashed potatoes and peas. "You are such a devious bitch. You know that?"

Hermione ducked when the plate went flying. "I'm sorry! I didn't think it would go as far as it did!"

"Sorry? Sorry! You almost got me killed back there, Granger! You vengeful bint!"

"Well, as of right now, I wish that Minotaur would have killed your stupid ass, and then I wouldn't have to put up with you any more! I hate you!"

"Well, the feeling's mutual!"

Amethyst sat with wide, disbelieving eyes, listening to their row. It was beyond her comprehension that these two people, who obviously loved each other, would act like this. If she didn't know better, she would think these two people hated one another, that... Her thoughts were interrupted by a distressed Hermione fleeing from the room, crying.

Draco picked up his chair and sat down. He took a clean, unbroken plate and filled it with more food. "Maybe now I can eat in peace!"

Amethyst watched him disgustedly. "Aren't you going after her?"

"No. Why should I?" he asked, buttering a roll.

"Because that's what you're supposed to do," she said thoughtfully. "You go after her and..."

"And what?" he asked curiously. "Beg her to forgive me?" He laughed at the absurdity of it.

"No. You don't beg her for forgiveness... yet. You overhear her talking to my grandfather."

The last bite of Draco's roll was stuck in his throat, and he swallowed hard, trying to get it down. "What is it that I overhear?" he asked, chugging his wine.

"I don't know. All I know is that you go after her."

He looked at her, rolled his eyes and got up from the table. "Fine! I'll do what I'm supposed to do! Merlin knows I wouldn't want to fuck with the future!"

Hermione ran past the old man's door, and she heard him call to her. Stopping in her tracks, she hesitantly went into the room. "Yes?" she asked softly, sniffing and wiping her eyes so he wouldn't know she had been crying.

"Come and sit with me. Tell me what's wrong." He patted the edge of his bed with a gnarled hand.

Hermione crossed the hard wood floor and sat on the very edge of his down-turned comforter.

"You've been crying," he said, trying to sit up.

"No, I haven't," she quickly said.

He smirked at her, his bushy white eyebrow raised.

"Okay. I have been crying," she admitted and laughed lightly. "He is just so infuriating sometimes!"

"By 'he', you would mean Draco?"

"Yes." She turned slightly and looked at the man. "Sometimes I just want to wrap my hands around his neck and squeeze it until those grey eyes of his pop right out of his head and that forked tongue of his lolls out of his foul mouth."

He chuckled silently. "You always did have a way with words!"

Hermione sighed, "Will you please tell me who you are and how it is that we know each other?"

He stopped laughing abruptly and frowned. "I'm sorry, but I can't tell you. It is up to Draco to tell you, and rest assured my darling, He will tell you... when he has to." He patted her arm tenderly. "He loves you."

"Oh, yeah? Well, he certainly has a strange way of showing it! Calling me a heartless bitch, not to mention screwing another girl!"

"You have to understand that Draco has never had to deal with these feeling before. He is innocent when it comes to love. Do you know how hard it was for him to break down that wall he has built up his entire life and let you in?" He closed his faded and yellowed eyes and lay back on the pillow. "You need to help him, guide him in the ways of the heart, not tease him... promise him love and then snatch it away... That is more cruel and destructive to him than you can possibly imagine. He tries to act as though nothing matters to him, but on the inside, he is full of regret for his past, and fear of a loveless future torments his very soul."

"You speak of him like you know him very intimately."

The old man smiled. "I know him perhaps better than he knows himself right now."

Hermione looked around the room, noticing pictures moving on the walls. "Are these pictures of your family?" she asked, getting up to get a closer look at the portraits.

He opened his eyes and watched her cross the room. "Those are my children." He saw her pick up the gold-framed picture from the table next to the door.

Hermione saw three small girls waving from a tree house. They were wearing dress-up clothes and holding tea cups. The one girl in the middle looked oddly familiar to her. Maybe it was the hair, or perhaps the shape of the face. "They're very beautiful."

"Do you want to know their names?" he asked her.

Hermione nodded. She couldn't take her eyes away from the girls as they giggled and sipped their tea. She was feeling rather strange, sad or something. She wanted desperately to reach through the picture and pull the girls through and hold them, kiss their chubby pink cheeks. The feeling was so overwhelming that her heart was pounding, and she wanted to scream.

"Jade, Ruby and..."

"Emerald," Hermione finished, her voice trembling. She whirled around, clutching the frame to her chest. "How? How do I know these girls?" she squeaked, on the verge of borderline hysterical. "Tell me!"

The old man, tears welling up and spilling down his wrinkled face, said, "Do you love him?"

Hermione was startled for a second. "Love whom?"

"Draco."

Hermione stomped her foot in frustration like a child. "What? I could care less about him right now! I want to know about these children! How do I know them?"

"Do you love him?" the old man shouted. "Answer me!"

"Yes! For God's sake! I love him! I love him!" she said, falling to the floor. "Please! Tell me, who are these girls?"

"They are our daughters," Draco said from the doorway. "Yours and mine."

Hermione looked up at Draco. "What did you say?"

"I said that the children in that photo belong to us." He held out his hand to offer her help getting up.

She glanced down at the tea-sipping, happy girls, and everything hit her at once. "But... that means... he said that these were his daughters..." She clamored to her feet, ignoring Draco's outstretched hand. "This isn't happening!" Her eyes darted from the smirking old man in the bed to the cool and aloof young one who was leaning on the wall.

"Oh, I assure you, my dear wife, that it is," the old man said.

"This is my future, our future," Draco tried to explain. "What I mean is, that dying person in the bed is me. That woman, Amethyst, is our granddaughter, and those precious girls in that picture are our daughters. This is our home, the place where we lived together and raised our children together..."

Hermione's eyes were so huge that they threatened to pop right out of their sockets. "No..." she said in a shaky voice. "Amea said her grandmother was dead. If that was... is me... then I'm..." She clutched her head and screamed in anguish. "No!" She swayed on her feet, and Draco rushed forward to catch her just as she fainted dead away.

"I was hoping that this time around, you wouldn't be so damn forward with her about the truth! Why did you have to tell her like that?"

Draco frowned at his old self. "Well, you could have warned me that she wouldn't take the news very well! After all, I'm not the one who knows what happens before it happens... yet." He lifted her into his arms and left the room.

"My goodness! What's wrong?" Amea asked, helping Draco set Hermione's limp body on the leather sofa in the Library.

"She fainted when I told her that we ended up married and having children."

Amethyst sighed. "Well, what did you expect? For her to scream for joy and jump into your arms?"

"I don't know what I expected." He knelt down next to her and smoothed the curls from her forehead. "I think the realization that she is dead is what put her over the edge."

"Well, duh!"

"How old are you? Five?" He smiled at her. "Duh?"

He looked down at Hermione, who was still out. "What about her? What happened?"

"It happened about fifteen years ago. It was so sudden, and my grand... you, tried to get here on time, but..."

Hermione moaned and slowly opened her eyes. "I was dreaming," she said, sitting up. "There was this man. He had very dark hair and piercing, grey eyes. He offered me a glass of my favorite red wine..."

Amethyst stood up very suddenly. "I think I should show you to your room."

Draco raised his eyebrow curiously at Amea. She just shook her head slightly and mouthed the words 'not now' to him. "I think she's right. We should get you to bed."

Hermione felt so weak, so drained that she just let Draco carry her up the stairs like a sleeping infant. "He was acting very strangely, but I trusted him," Hermione whispered.

Draco saw Amethyst cringe as she walked in front of him with her wand lit. Clearly something was wrong. "This is my old room!" he said, walking through the door.

"I was told to bring both of you here for the night."

Draco looked at her with his eyebrow arched wickedly. "I really am a dirty old man, aren't I?" He put Hermione down on his bed and covered her up. "What time is it, anyway?"

"It's only nine o'clock."

"We've only been here for three hours?" he said incredulously. "It seems like an eternity!" He kissed Hermione on the cheek, and then he and Amethyst left the room quietly. "Now, will you tell me about how she died and if those dreams are somehow connected?"

"I think grandfather should be the one to explain everything to you." She led him once more into the old man's room where he was wide awake, as if expecting him.

"Knew I was coming?" Draco said with a slight smile. The old man chuckled as Draco pulled up a chair next to the bed.

"You bet your ass I did." His laughter turned into a deep cough, and the old man turned a bright shade of red as he tried to catch his breath.

"Are you all right?" Draco asked, pouring a glass of water from the pitcher on the bedside table and offering it to him.

"What do you think?" He took a small sip and then lay back on his pillows. "I'm dying, and it's about bloody time too!"

"You want to die?" Draco could never imagine himself not wanting to live... but here he was...

"I have wished for death every day for some fifteen years. Ever since my wife was taken from me." Tears trickled from the corners of his eyes. "It was my fault! All my damn fault! I thought I had time to get here!"

Draco expected a crying jag like earlier, but was surprised when no such thing happened. The old man looked him dead in the face and said harshly, "Listen and listen well. You have one chance to save her, and you better not screw it up this time. Her life depends on it!"

Amethyst sat in a comfy chair next to Hermione's bed; a photo album and a file containing the family history were sitting in her lap. She really didn't want to discuss the past, but she was certain that her grandmother was going to ask.

"Draco?" Hermione asked, sitting up slowly, her eyes adjusting to the light. She noticed Amethyst sitting next to her and smiled. "I see it wasn't a dream. You're really here. It's so strange to be sitting in a room with my own granddaughter."

"Imagine how I feel! I've seen portraits and photos of you just as you are now, and to see you with my own eyes... it's unbelievable!" She looked Hermione over. "The photos don't do you justice; you are much more beautiful in real life!"

"What's that you have there?" Hermione asked, red-faced from such a wonderful compliment.

Amethyst handed her the file. "This is our history. The family tree and other important documents."

Hermione opened the black leather cover with the name Malfoy printed on the front in huge gold lettering and took out a yellowed piece of parchment. "This is the family tree?"

It started with Draco and herself and progressed from there. "Your mother, Jade, married a man named Raiden Potter?" Hermione asked in shock. "Is he the son of..."

"Your good friend Harry?" Amethyst said, nodding her head. "And that's not all. Harry was married to another good friend of yours, Ginny Weasley."

"Does Draco know this?" Hermione said with a light laugh. "Because I'm sure he would throw a fit if he knew a daughter of his married a Potter!"

"Actually, Grandfather Malfoy and Grandfather Potter were the best of friends. He was very sad when he passed away last year."

"Harry is dead?" Hermione asked, startled. "What about Ron and Ginny?"

"This might come as a shock to you, but Ron married the little sister of his sister-in-law, Fleur."

"Ron married Gabrielle?" Hermione almost fainted again. "But she's so much younger than he is!"

"I guess age doesn't matter because they've been married for something like 60 years and have had three children and twelve grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren."

Hermione's eyes boggled. "I never would have thought... but you say they are still alive?"

"He's barely alive, and she still runs around like she's twenty-years old or something. He tries to keep up with her, chasing after her in his wheelchair, trying to pinch her rear end and such! They are so much fun to be around! Grandfather still has them over for tea every Sunday afternoon. Of course, they share relatives, so they sometimes stop over as well..."

"What relatives?"

"Your youngest daughter, my Aunt Emerald, married their son, Jack." She took the paper from Hermione's hand. "See here? They had two daughters, Juliette and Angelica, who married and had children of their own."

"So," Hermione said, trying to figure this all out. It was all very confusing. "Their children are my grandchildren and THEIR children are my great-grandchildren?" She took the family tree back and looked at it once more. "Ruby married a Longbottom?" She cried in astonishment. "I KNOW Draco wasn't happy about that!"

Amethyst chuckled. "You could say he wasn't very pleased with her choice. He was a lot like his father... forgetful and nervous, but also a lot like his mother, Luna."

"Neville and Luna?" Hermione thought about this for a second. "Well, I hope that their son...what is his name? Ah, yes, Sebastian. I hope he had all of their good traits as well? Loyalty and courage?"

"He was a very kind man, and their children, my cousins, are some of the most wonderful people you could ever meet!"

"So, Ruby and Sebastian had three daughters? Katey, Melanie and Tessa?"

"Katey is married and has a baby on the way. She has asked Grandfather if she could name her baby Hermione, after you."

"That is so... I'm going to cry!" Hermione said, choking back her tears.

"I wish that they all could be here right now to meet you. None of the great-grandchildren have ever met you. And Angelica and Tessa were just little when you...when you passed away."

Reality came rushing back to Hermione. "That's right. I'm dead! It's so weird!" She looked down at the parchment again. "Wait. There is another name here. It looks as though someone tried to erase it or something." Hermione stood up and held the paper close to the lamp. "It's connected to your mother's name, but not to her husband's." She looked up at Amethyst, who was wringing her hands in her lap. "Are you going to tell me who this is?"

"So, you see, young Draco, you have to remember! Do not let anger stand in your way! Get here before it's too late!"

Draco got out of his chair and went to the window. Pulling back the heavy, dust-filled curtain, he looked out at the moon-drenched grounds. "Why? Why would he do something like that?" He turned and questioned the old man. "And what if I can't get here in time? What if I'm not supposed to stop it?"

"I know that right now you believe in fate and destiny. You believe that the future cannot be changed because everything happens for a reason. I'm telling you that you might be wrong."

"Might be?" Draco said. "Nothing is for sure, is that what you're saying?" He walked to the door, having heard enough from his delusional dying self. "You know what I think? I believe that even if I do manage to get here in time and stop it from happening, she is going to die some other way! She is supposed to die, and nothing I do will prevent it!"

"But don't you want to try? Aren't you curious as to whether you can change the future and have her by your side for a few more years or even days?" He pounded the mattress in frustration. "You have to save her!" he screamed. "Or you will regret it for the rest of your life!"

Draco turned to leave when he noticed that the old man's face was turning purple and he was clutching his chest. "Oh my God!" He rushed across the room and threw himself on the man.

"Something," he said in Draco's ear.

"What? What did you say?" He leaned in further.

"Something will happen tonight that will change your life forever." His breath hitched, and he grabbed hold of the front of Draco's robes. "Something both wonderful and awful." He pulled Draco closer and whispered in his ear.

As Draco concentrated on what he was being told, a look of total surprise spread across his face. "What are you not telling me?" When he received no answer, he lifted his head and noticed that the man's body was becoming rigid. He jumped back when the old man started to convulse and foam at the mouth. "No!"

His eyes rolled back in his head, he hitched his last breath and fell back on the pillow, dead. Draco stared at his peaceful face for a second and then threw himself on top of him, pounding on his chest and screaming.

Amethyst stood and paced the floor, wondering how to begin. "When I was about five, my mother had an affair with this man, who we later learned was deeply immersed in the Dark Arts. She began to stay away from home weeks at a time, and needless to say, she wanted nothing to do with me or my father. One night, after she had been gone for about two weeks, she came back and announced to us that she was pregnant."

Hermione listened with growing horror. She was shocked that any child of hers would do something like that! "How dreadful! What did your father do?"

Amethyst stopped pacing and said, "He killed himself."

"What!" Hermione shouted. "Oh my God!"

"I came to stay with you and grandfather, and I've been here ever since." She started pacing again. "One night, during a fierce thunderstorm, my mother showed up here. She was in labor and crying in fear, babbling about some ceremony and that her baby was in danger."

"I was told to go to my room, and there I listened to her screaming in pain as she gave birth to my brother." She walked over and pulled a heavily creased paper from the file and handed it to Hermione.

It was his birth certificate. "She named him Jasper?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, she named him, and then she died."

"She died?" Images of the smiling girl with the blond hair and grey eyes sipping tea and wearing a giant hat and white gloves flashed through her mind. How could a darling little girl that belonged to her end up immersed in the Dark Arts and die so tragically?

"What happened to the baby?" Hermione asked, pulling out a picture from the file. "Did he stay here with you?" She looked carefully at the photo. "Is this him?"

Amethyst glanced over. There was a hard look on her face, almost resembling hatred. "Yes. Hard to believe that a tiny baby like that caused the death of three people that I loved the most in this world." She glared at the back of the photo. "He was a murdering freak, and I'm glad he's dead."

Hermione studied the picture of the newborn. He was wailing in her arms, his fists clenched, his black fine hair sticking up. "A murderer?" Hermione said. "Who did he..."

They both jumped as Draco's screams echoed through the house. Hermione threw the file on the bed, and they both rushed out of the bedroom and ran down the stairs.

She flew into the room and stopped in her tracks. Draco was on top of the old man, beating on his chest, crying and screaming. He was begging the man not to die; he was saying it over and over. "Draco..." she said softly.

He stopped, his hand balled into a fist, ready to strike the man's chest again, and looked at her.

Hermione had never seen anyone so pitiful in her life. The look of pure and utter anguish on his face broke her heart into a million tiny pieces. "Draco, stop. He's gone," she said tenderly.

Amethyst was standing in the doorway, silently crying.

Hermione stepped towards him and reached out her hand. Draco angrily knocked it away and started to hit the old man again. "You can't die, you bastard! You have to tell me what you meant!"

Hermione and Amethyst looked at each other. Neither one knew what to do. Clearly Draco had flipped his lid, and trying to help him was going to be dangerous. Hermione tried once again, more forcefully this time, to pull him off. To her surprise, Draco stopped, pushed her out of the way and fled from the room.

"Should I go after him?" Hermione asked.

"I know for a fact that you are supposed to." Amethyst ran to her grandfather's bed and fell on top of him, crying. After a few seconds, she noticed that Hermione hadn't moved. "Why are you still standing there?" she asked her. "Grandfather told me that you run after him! Now go!"

Hermione shut the bedroom door quietly and went in search of Draco, wondering what she could possibly say to him that would make him feel better.

He tore through the house, knocking things over, punching the walls and smashing mirrors. The house-elves ran in every direction, trying to repair the damage. Finally, he entered his old bedroom, slamming the door so hard that the windows shook. He sat down on the edge of the bed with his head cradled in his hands and sobbed.

Hermione stopped outside the door and pressed her ear to the wood, listening. She thought she could hear him and wasn't sure if she should intrude. After all, Draco didn't seem like the type to want to be consoled. Then again, did she really know what he would want? He was almost a stranger to her. Sure, she had known him for years, but she really didn't know him at all. It was strange that she was in love with this man and knew next to nothing about him...something simple, such as his favorite color.

She raised her hand and paused, ready to knock. What if he told her to go away or worse...what if he asked her to come in? What do you say to someone who just saw himself die? "Stop being a bloody coward and just knock!" she said to herself.

"Come in, Granger," he said, hearing her tap lightly on the door.

She opened it slowly and cautiously stepped in. "Do you want to talk?" she asked, closing the door quietly. "I'll understand if you want to be alone. Just tell me if you want me to leave..."

He said nothing, just kept his head in his hands and stared at the floor.

She took a few steps, and when he didn't tell her to go away, she took a few more until she was standing in front of him. "I..."

Draco reached up and gently pulled her down next to him. He sighed and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. "Why, Granger? Why did we have to come here?" he asked, still looking at the floor. "How could Dumbledore do this to me? To us? How could he think I'd want to see myself... see myself die like that?"

Hermione took him into her arms as he began to cry. "Shh... it's going to be all right." It was so painful to see him like this, and she found herself crying as well.

He put his face into her neck, his tears falling onto her hair. "Oh God! It was so horrible!"

Hermione embraced him harder. He lifted his face, and she kissed him tenderly on the lips. It was slow at first, but soon it became more frantic and passionate. She felt herself falling back onto the mattress, and she knew this time she wouldn't stop him. She loved him, wanted him inside of her.

Draco slowly took off her clothes, his hands gently rubbing and caressing her hot, smooth skin. "I love you," he whispered into her ear as his fingers slid into her, making her shiver. He kissed her lightly on the mouth, the neck, and when he dipped his tongue in her bellybutton, she grabbed his hair and moaned, grinding herself into his plunging fingers.

"Mmm... I love you too." Her breath hitched, and she arched her back as he licked his way down her stomach. He removed his dripping fingers and sat up slightly to remove his own clothing. She watched him, loving the sight of his lean, muscular, naked body above her.

He felt her hand close over his cock and pull him towards her. She slowly and seductively slid it into her hot, wet mouth, her teeth scraping it just enough to cause pleasure that bordered on pain.

Hermione swirled her tongue around the tip and then kissed it before releasing it. "I want you, Draco," she breathed and pulled him down until they were lying skin to skin, staring into each other's eyes. "Make love to me."

Draco reached down and spread her legs apart. He ran one long finger over her clit, causing her to gasp and dig her fingernails painfully into his back. "Are you sure this is what you want, Hermione?" he asked, kissing her again.

Hermione could barely breathe, let alone speak, so she lifted her hips invitingly instead. As he slid into her, she closed her eyes and said to him, "This is what it feels like to love, Draco."

Amethyst came to the bedroom door and paused. She knew the time had come for them to leave, and although she wanted desperately to hold onto to them, she knew it had to be this way. "Draco? Hermione?" she said, knocking quietly. When there was no answer, she turned the handle and peaked inside. It was dark, except for the shaft of moonlight that fell across the bed, illuminating the couple who were lying in each other arms.

She crossed the room and shook Hermione awake. "Shh," she said, putting a finger to her mouth.

"What time is it?" Hermione asked sleepily. She tried to get out from under Draco's arm, but had no luck.

"It's almost 5:30 in the morning."

Draco opened his bloodshot eyes and yawned. "Did you say 5:30?"

"Yes. The clock will be here in half an hour. I have notified the family of Grandfather's passing, and they will be arriving any time. I don't think you should be here when they arrive." She turned around, embarrassed as the naked couple got out of the bed and began to get dressed. "The house-elves have prepared breakfast for you in the dining room. I'll go with you, but I have something to give you."

Draco and Hermione followed her to the dining room and sat down. Neither one was very hungry. He had buttered a piece of toast, and she ate a rasher of bacon. Both sipped a hot cup of tea, loaded with sugar.

"You said you had something to give us?" Draco asked curiously.

Amethyst went to the china cabinet, pulled open a drawer and took out a package. It was wrapped in wrinkled, brown paper and had twine tied around it. "Grandfather said for me to give this to you."

Draco took it and unwrapped it. Under the paper was a box, and when he removed the lid, Hermione looked confused.

"I don't get it," she said, lifting a strange looking garment from the box. It was a long coat that was half yellow and half red.

"If you think that's weird..." Draco said. "Look at this." He handed her a small wooden instrument that resembled a fife or a flute.

Hermione turned it over in her hand and set it down on the table. "Look, there's a letter and...is that a pocket watch?" She took the heavy gold watch from the tissue paper it was wrapped in and examined it. "It's engraved." She showed it to him.

"A man with one watch knows what time it is. A man with two is never sure." Draco read this, mentally adding the capital letter 'E' to the previous clues. "I still don't know what it spells!" he said, holding the pocket watch up to his ear. "It works."

"It belonged to great-grandfather Malfoy, your father. You had it engraved with this message a few years ago," Amethyst said.

"How nice of me," Draco said sarcastically. "I couldn't have told myself what the bloody message was?"

"Maybe the letter tells us something," Hermione said, unfolding it. "All it says is that he left you this watch as a clue and he's sorry he couldn't tell you the whole message." Hermione smirked at him and he frowned, not finding it funny. "He says that you are to take the coat and the instrument with you into the clock because you are going to need them. He also says that you must not eat the sauerkraut." Hermione looked at Draco, who wore a perplexed expression, identical to her own.

"Excuse me, Miss Potter, but you asked me to inform you when the guests were arriving," a small house-elf said from the door.

"Shit!" Amethyst said. "You must hurry! No one is to see you!"

Draco packed up the gifts, and the three of them hurried through the house and out the front door. Hermione hugged and kissed Amethyst, who was crying.

"Don't worry! I'll see you very soon!" Hermione said, trying not to break down.

Draco kissed the woman on the cheek. "My favorite grandchild, huh? We'll just see about that!" Once they arrived in the graveyard, they heard the unmistakable sound of a clock chime.

They waved tearful goodbyes, and Hermione and Draco made their way silently through the Malfoy family cemetery, neither one wishing to speak. In the distance, they heard children laughing and grown-ups calling hellos to one another.

"That's our family back there, Draco," Hermione said, turning and walking backwards, trying to catch a glimpse.

He smiled at her and took her hand. Together they entered the giant clock, thinking that the next place they visit wouldn't be so bad, now that they knew what the future held for them.

They stepped out of the clock and looked around. The view was breathtaking!

"Of course the damn clock would let us off on the top of a fucking mountain!" Draco complained. He glanced around at the dark woods behind them. His heart jumped slightly as he thought he saw someone moving among the trees. He watched with narrowed, suspicious eyes, but saw nothing further. He switched the package from his older self into his other hand.

"It's not a mountain, stop exaggerating!" Hermione laughed. "Look! There's a path going down the hill that leads to the village, let's go." She took his hand and pulled.

"Not so fast, my impatient one! We have no idea where we are, and you just want us to go traipsing into town? I thought you were intelligent?" he scoffed. His back was to the woods, and he felt as though they were being watched.

"And what is that supposed to mean?"

"Only that this place might be dangerous. I think we should go another way, sneak into the village and check things out first. We wait and watch for a bit, and then when it's all clear, we go in." He smirked, obviously proud of his plan.

"Case the joint?" Hermione said with a small laugh.

"What?" Draco asked. "Are you trying to confuse me with Muggle talk?"

"Not at all, Sundance Kid."

"Who?"

"Nothing!" Hermione said, chuckling at the lost expression on Draco's face. "Come on! We'll go another way!" They entered the thick forest, Hermione leading, and Draco constantly looking over his shoulder.

"Shh! Did you hear something?" Draco asked a little later. He grabbed Hermione's arm, and they both crouched low to the ground.

"I don't hea..."

"Listen!" Draco whispered. A twig snapped and then another. "We're being followed." The footsteps were getting closer, and they could hear someone muttering to themselves.

Hermione's faced paled, and her fearful eyes darted around, looking for an escape. "This way!" she said. They crawled through some brush, over a fallen tree and ran down the hill towards the village.

They were breathing very hard when they reached the bottom. "That was close!" Draco said. "I don't know who that was, but they weren't very nice."

"I know. It was like this weird feeling of evil was almost suffocating me or something."

Draco and Hermione looked back at the forest. "I'm not looking forward to going back in there," Hermione said.

"Don't worry! I'll protect you."

"I'm sure," Hermione said sarcastically. "You were just as scared as I was back there! You big baby! Whaaa! I want my mummy!" Hermione ran as Draco chased her down the path, vowing to catch her and make her pay for her remark.

Soon, they were standing in front of a huge wooden sign that read: Stadt von Hameln. On top sat the hugest cat they had ever seen, cleaning its whiskers, its tail swinging lazily in the sunshine.

"Hi, kitty!" Hermione said, stepping towards the feline. "What the hell..." She slipped on something, and Draco caught her before she fell to the ground.

"It's a half-eaten rat," Draco said, picking up a stick and prodding the bloody, headless body. "I hate rats!"

"Nasty cat!" Hermione said, wiping her shoe in the grass.

"Look! Someone's coming out of that house. Let's go ask them a few questions. Maybe we can figure out where we are and what the hell we're doing here." Draco and Hermione walked up to the man, who was getting water from a well, and stood there, waiting for him to speak first.

Draco cleared his throat when the man paid them no mind. "Um..."

The man spun around, his hand pulling out a dagger from his belt. He looked at them and then smiled, showing all of his two teeth. "Guten Tag!" he said, putting his dagger away.

Draco stepped forward and held out his hand. "Guten Tag! Mein Name ist Draco und sie ist Hermione."

Hermione pulled him down so that she could whisper to him. "You know German?"

"Selbstverständlich Kann ich Deutsch!" he replied. "Of course I do!"

Hermione was impressed. "How lucky for us!"

Draco addressed the man once more to ask them if he knew of a place where they could rest. The man told Draco of a place down the road.

Draco thanked him, "Ich bedanke mich vielmals guter Mann!"

The toothless man thanked him back, "Dein willkommen, guter Mann!" He then said something that made Draco look a little frightened.

Hermione could tell that the man had upset Draco. "What did he say?"

"He said to watch out for the rats." He handed her the package containing the coat and the flute. "Can you carry this for a while?" He pulled out his wand and aimed it in front of them. "Stay close."

They traveled down the dirt road, around the bend and entered the main part of town. "Holy shit balls!" Draco screeched as two huge rats ran across his feet and into the bushes on the other side of the street. He clung to Hermione like a fearful child. His hands gripping her robes, almost ripping them from her body.

As they watched, a screaming woman ran past them, a rat attached to her dress, another in her hair, which was a tangled mess and hanging in her face. The woman ran blindly headfirst into a wooden post and collapsed on the ground.

Hermione looked on in shock as a few people came out of the tavern and dragged the poor woman inside. A few seconds later, the door opened, and someone threw the rats into the street where they lay dead. She suddenly became aware of Draco shaking beside her. His mouth was open in silent horror, and his eyes were the size of saucers.

"I hate fucking rats!" he said, voice barely a whisper.

"Then I think you're in the wrong place," Hermione said. "Let's just get to the inn, and then we can try to figure things out."

Hermione walked down the middle of the dusty road, dodging rats and listening to Draco moan in fright every time one came too near his shoes. There was absolutely no one out in the open, and the only sound for miles were the squeaking of the vermin and distant screams of disgust behind the closed doors.

"This must be the place," Draco said, reading the sign. "Go around and look into the window."

"Why?"

"So we can change the way we're dressed so that we won't look retarded!" He gave her a small push, and she shot him a filthy look. "Go on!" He watched her disappear around the side of the building and then sat down on the steps. "God damn rats! Why did it have to be rats?" He jumped out of his skin as one leapt from the water barrel next to him and landed on his shoulder. He screamed like a woman, picked it up and threw it as hard as he could into the flower garden.

"What the hell are you screaming about?" Hermione asked, running around the corner.

"There was a fucking rat on my shoulder! It was like a mutant freak rat; all fat and huge with red eyes and sharp teeth!" He rubbed his hands on Hermione's robes, his face a mask of pure disgust. He shivered and danced in place. "God, it was nasty!"

Hermione watched him in amusement. "Come on! Let's get changed! And while we're at it, I would like to know what is being said around here, so I'm going to do the language spell again."

Draco smirked at her. "But I was having so much fun being smarter than you!" He kissed her cheek playfully. She just rolled her eyes and smiled.

They changed into proper peasant attire, and after Hermione was sure the language spell had worked, they opened the door to the inn and stepped inside.

"Make sure the door is shut behind you!" A short portly man said, rushing towards them. "I don't need any more rats getting in here!" He checked the door, and when he was satisfied that no rat could get in, he gave them a smile and asked them if they needed a room.

"Yes. We are passing through and could use a room for the day," Hermione said, looking around at the empty inn.

"Well, you're in luck! All of our rooms are free! After all, who would come to this pest-infested town to visit right now?"

"How long have the rats been here?" Draco asked as they followed the man to their room.

"It feels like forever, but I suppose it's been about a month now." He walked them inside their sparsely furnished room. "My wife, Hilda, will serve you a meal in the dining room if you like."

"Oh yes! That would be wonderful... uh..." Draco lifted his eyebrow. "I'm sorry. I don't know your name."

"Please forgive me. All these rats have gotten me flustered! I spend at least three hours a day smashing the little buggers with a broom and making sure to plug up every hole in this inn so they won't get inside!" He held out his hand. "My name is Hans."

"I'm Draco, and this is my... wife, Hermione."

"Pleased to meet you. How long will you be staying?" Hans went over to the window and looked out. "Filthy, disgusting creatures! Get away from there!" he shouted, his fist shaking in the air.

"Um... just for the day. We have to move on in a few hours," Draco said.

"Damn rats are trying to chew a hole through the wood!" Hans said. "My wife will have your meal prepared and ready in about an hour. The dining room is just down the hall, next to the kitchen." He bowed to them and then shut the door.

Draco and Hermione could hear him run down the hall muttering about stinking, no-good rats, and then they were shocked to see him out the window, chasing and beating the rodents with a broom.

"So, I'm your wife, huh?" Hermione asked with a smirk. "When did this happen?"

Draco tore his eyes away from the sight of Hans stomping a rat to a bloody pulp. "Well, I figured since we know for a fact that we end up married, why not just act like we are right now? Is there a problem, Hermione Malfoy?" He said her name slowly, pulling her towards him and seizing her lips passionately. "I like the sound of that, don't you?"

Hermione pretended to think for a moment. "Actually, I think I'd rather keep my maiden name. There is so much negativity attached to the name Malfoy..."

Draco took a step back. "You can't be serious!"

"Why should I take your name? Why don't you take mine?" Hermione beamed. "Draco Granger... sounds perfect!"

"I... you can't..." he sputtered angrily. "There is NO WAY I'm going to be Draco Granger!" He squared his shoulders and looked defiantly at her. "Never."

Hermione laughed hysterically. "I was only joking, you moron!"

Draco breathed a sigh of relief. "I knew you were joking all along, Granger. I mean, why would you even consider keeping your name?"

Her face suddenly became serious again. "Oh, I was serious about that part! I was joking about you taking my name, but I really intend on keeping the name Granger..."

"What!" he shouted. "I forbid you to keep your name! What would people say? 'Draco is pussy whipped! Draco lets his wife run all over him! What a pity! He used to be a man!' I can't let that happen. I WON'T let that happen!"

"Draco, I was joking again."

He stopped in mid-rant and looked at her, frowning. "From now on, you are not allowed to 'joke around'. You must be serious at all times."

"Malfoy, if you're going to be my husband, you will have to loosen up and have some fun." She grabbed the waist band of his pants and pulled him close. "You do like to have fun, don't you?" She slowly slid her hand inside and grasped his growing erection.

"Fun is my middle name, Mrs. Malfoy," he said, laying her down on the straw mattress.

Meanwhile, in the tavern, a man sat in the corner. He was dressed all in black, including the hooded cape he was wearing to hide his face. He sat, drinking beer and glaring at the patrons, who were discussing the reason why their town was plagued by rats. He knew exactly why the rodents had suddenly appeared; he was the one, who

had brought them here.

Everyone in the town of Hameln was under the impression that he was a stranger amongst them. This was not so. He had been born here, many years ago. He had lived with his wife and two children in a house that had long been burnt to the ground with them inside.

He had been out in the fields behind their home, brewing a potion, when he heard them screaming. He was a wizard, and his wife a witch, and unknown to them, they had been seen teaching their son and daughter to fly on a broom. They thought the dark of night would be a safe cover, and that no one would see them.

Of course, the man who had seen them made haste to the town, where he quickly informed the Mayor of the bizarre things he had witnessed. The next day, while he was out in the fields, he saw smoke and heard screaming. He would never forget that sound as long as he lived... his children screaming for him...

He rushed towards the burning house as fast as he could, feeling like he was getting nowhere, but it was too late; the house was an inferno, and they were dead.

Later, after he had buried what remained of them, he disguised himself and went into town. To his horror, he heard the men laughing and congratulating each other for killing the witches. From that moment, he vowed to get his revenge on the town and its murdering inhabitants. He would take their children, just like they took his.

Everything was going according to his plan, until he saw the man and woman appear from nowhere with wands in their hands. He wasn't sure who they were, but he knew they were magical.

He was determined to find out who they were and make sure that they did not interfere with his plans. He would even kill them if he had to.

15

Chapter 15 of 27

Hermione is kidnapped, and Draco is forced to do the unthinkable to save her.

Additional disclaimer: Parts of this chapter are taken from "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" by Robert Browning.

A/N: Just want to give a big thanks to my Beta, Angel Mischa *kiss kiss*.

Draco was lying on the bed, moaning. The inn keeper's wife had made them a huge meal of sauerkraut, and even though Hermione warned him that he had told himself not to eat it, he went ahead and did it anyway.

"How can one person puke so much?" Hermione asked, covering him up with another blanket. No sooner had she done it, then he threw the blankets off and retched all over the floor.

"Maybe next time you'll listen to yourself!" she said.

"When have I ever..." he started to say when suddenly the door was blasted open and everything went dark.

When Draco came to, he was locked in some sort of dungeon room and a very tall, hooded man was standing in the corner looking intently at him.

"Who... who are you?" Draco managed to ask.

"I am Sebastain Naught and you, my new friend, are going to help me."

"Help you?" Draco laughed. "Help you do what?"

Sebastain walked slowly towards him, taking his hood from his head. "You are going to help me kill the children of this town."

"What?" Draco asked in disbelief. "Kill the children?" He laughed like this was the most absurd thing he'd ever heard. "Sorry to tell you this, but the only person I plan on killing is YOU... you insane fuck! Now, untie me right now and give me back my wand and my wife!" He started to shake the chair violently and actually succeeded in getting one of his arms loose. "If you so much as lay one fucking finger on her, I'll not only kill you, but I'll do it slowly!" He managed to get his other arm free before the pain hit him.

Sebastian was not expecting this man to fight so violently, and it was a few seconds before he came to his senses. *Crucio!* he shouted, aiming his wand at his prisoner.

Draco, his feet still tied to the chair, screamed as the chair toppled over and he hit the ground. The pain slowly dissipated. As he laid there, his cheek pressed to the cold floor, his chest heaving for air, he realized he was in deep shit.

"Now, Mr. Malfoy, will you do what I ask?" Sebastian crouched down and pulled Draco's head up by his sweat-drenched hair. "Or will you allow her to die?"

Draco, every nerve in his body still on fire from the Cruciatus Curse, smiled at the wizard. "How do I know you haven't already killed her?"

"You don't."

"And I'm just suppose to take your word for it, am I?" Draco said sarcastically. Sebastian's boot connected with the side of his head, and he saw stars. "Beating the shit out of me is definitely not the way to win my trust!" His hand came up from under him, and he wiped the blood from his forehead. He flipped the chair over with his bound legs and sat up. His feet were asleep and every muscle in his body hurt. He smirked up at the black-haired wizard and said defiantly, "I will never kill anybody for you, ever."

Sebastian had completely underestimated this man. He thought he would simply kidnap his woman and force him to do his dirty work. "Then she will die!" he said, grabbing Draco's arm violently and forcing the chair back to its upright position.

He crossed his arms and looked at the crazy wizard. "She would never want me to kill a child just so that she could live. She would rather die. I would rather die!"

Sebastian grinned at him, "Then perhaps I can sway you another way. What if I said I would let her live, but kill the child that now rests in her womb unless you do what I

say?"

Draco's jaw dropped. "But... how did you? She doesn't even know!"

"I didn't know. You just told me." His laughter rang through the bare room, echoing off the walls.

Draco's face contorted with anger, and he totally lost his mind. "Don't you fucking dare hurt my child!" He flailed and screamed like a crazy man. "I'll kill you. You twisted fucking bastard!" He got his feet free from the rope and lunged towards his kidnapper.

Sebastian's heavy fist slammed into Draco's mouth, splitting his lip and sending blood flying. Draco staggered sideways and fell against the wall. "I suggest you calm down before I have to really hurt you!"

"Why are you doing this?" Draco asked, spitting blood onto the floor. A rat ran over and licked at it. Draco's stomach threatened to heave as he watched its tiny tongue lap up the red liquid.

"Revenge, my dear boy. The people of this lovely little town took it upon themselves to set my house on fire!"

Draco tested his balance and pushed off the wall. "That's it? They burned your fucking house down, and now you want to kill their young? Must have been one hell of a house!" Draco's laughter rang through the cold room, and he suddenly felt like his old sarcastic self again. "Were the pots and pans made of gold? Did you cover yourself every night with silk sheets? Did you have hired help to wipe the shit from your ass? Or did your wife do that for you..."

Sebastian's fist came from nowhere and connected with the side of Draco's head, sending him sprawling to the ground. "How dare you speak about my wife like that!" He stood over Draco, who was dazed and bloodied, and aimed his wand into his face. "My wife was in that house when they set it on fire!" He kicked Draco in the ribs. "They didn't even care that my children were in that house! All they cared about was killing more witches!"

Sudden comprehension dawned on Draco. He pushed the wand from his face and struggled to get to his feet. Blood was pouring down his face, and he was sure he had a few broken ribs. "Are you telling me that these people burned your wife and children alive?" He struggled to take a deep breath. "And now you want to get revenge by killing their kids?"

Sebastian lowered his wand. "I still hear their screams! I can't get it out of my head. I tried to save them, but it was too late!" He cried out in anguish and crumpled to the floor. "I could see them through the window, the smoke and fire engulfing them, their clothing and hair going up in flames. Their faces twisted in pain as they were burnt to cinders!" He covered his face with his giant, rough hands and wept for his lost family.

Draco, who had never really seen a man cry before, had no idea what to do. He went to the heartbroken wizard and took a seat next to him on the cold hard floor. He said nothing, but waited patiently for the man to speak.

"I had to watch and wait for the fire to burn down; it was too hot for me to enter, although I wish I had plunged into the flames and died along with my family!" Sebastian sat up, his back against the wall. The tears streamed down his face. "I had to sift through the ashes to find them." He looked over at Draco, a hard glint in his eye. "I found the body of my five-year-old son first. He was nothing but a charred black thing, lying there on his left side with his withered black arms over his head." He sobbed as he described picking his body up, carrying it through the rubble and placing it gently in the grass.

Draco was shaking as he listened to the wretched man. How awful it must have been to witness the horrible death of his family and be too helpless to save them.

"After I put Frederick on the grass, I went back..." Sebastian, his eyes now free of tears as anger replaced sadness, stared at the wall across the room. "Not far from where my son was, I found them. My wife was lying on her side, my three-year-old daughter in her arms; their faces were pressed together..."

Here, Draco began to tear up, and try as he might to hold back the tears, they fell anyway. He could never imagine having to do what this man had done. His child wasn't even born yet, and he felt an overwhelming love for him or her, wanting to protect the baby from all harm. What if this had happened to Hermione and to his child? Would he not want revenge, the same as Sebastian did?

"I will help you, Sebastian." Draco helped the surprised man to his feet. "I will bring the children to you, but I won't kill them. This is your revenge, not mine." Draco held out his hand and demanded, "Now give me my wand and tell me where I can find Hermione."

Sebastian grinned at Draco's audacity and then laughed, "I will do no such thing! Do you take me for a fool, Mr. Malfoy?" He walked to the door, opened it, grabbed a package from the floor and tossed it to Draco. "Put this on. As soon as you have brought the children to me, I will give you what you want." He smiled as Draco glared hatefully at him. "I said put it on! Or do we have to go back to violence?"

Draco took the red and yellow coat out of the package and put it on; he put the flute up to his mouth and played a note. Immediately, every rat in the room stopped moving and stood like statues, looking at Draco.

He slowly lowered the instrument, and the rats began to scurry around the room again. He put the flute into the pocket of the colorful coat, noticing that there seemed to be something else in there already. His fingertips felt it, and he realized it was a piece of paper. Not wanting to alert Sebastian, he decided to wait until he was alone to read it.

"The town meeting is going to start soon. I need to clean you up, so they won't suspect anything." Sebastian waved his wand and the blood disappeared, but the bruises and the broken ribs remained. "I can heal those cuts on your head and your fat lip, but I'm afraid that there is nothing I can do for the other injuries. You'll have to deal with it."

Draco frowned. "Well, that's just fucking peachy! I can't even get a decent breath, and you want me to prance all over town, not just once, but twice?" Every time he moved, it felt like splinters of glass were shredding his insides. "There is nothing you can do? Some fucking wizard you are!"

Sebastian conjured a tin cup from thin air and handed it to Draco. "Drink this; it should help with the pain, at least for a little while."

It was smoking, appeared to be the color of dog shit and smelled like it might just taste that way as well. "What the bloody hell is it?" He sniffed it and his insides lurched. "I can't drink this. It smells wretched!"

"You will drink it even if I have to force it down your throat. We have no time to waste, now hurry up!"

Draco plugged his nose and gulped it down. "That was bloody awful!" he said, clutching his stomach. It might have tasted like liquid shit, but it actually dulled the pain quite a bit.

"Are you ready, Mr. Malfoy?" Sebastian asked.

"Let's get this over with," Draco said and followed Sebastian from the room, rubbing the awful taste from his tongue with the sleeve of the coat.

"Listen, Mayor! Something has to be done! I shall go bankrupt within the week if this pest problem isn't taken care of!"

"I agree! How can I sell my cheese when the damn rats have been in the vats and eaten holes all through it and left rat hairs everywhere? Who wants to eat hairy cheese?"

"My baby was bitten this morning! Look!" A woman held up her screaming, red-faced infant and showed everyone the rat bite on the baby's chubby arm. "It was right there in the cradle with her! Why, it probably would have eaten her alive if I hadn't gotten there in time!"

"Why that's nothing!" a portly man with a huge wart on the end of his nose shouted. "The rodents have eaten all my grain! How the hell am I suppose to plant new crops this year? My family and I are going to starve this winter, along with everyone else in this godforsaken town if you don't do something!"

The town hall erupted with angry shouts and curses, and the Mayor struggled to maintain order. "Good people of Hameln!" The Mayor stood and eventually the noise died down. "I have to admit that we're at a loss. The council and I haven't the slightest idea of what to do."

"Then we are all doomed!" the wart-man yelled.

"To think we pay these empty-headed morons to run our town!" another shouted.

"Good people, does anyone here have a solution to our problem? We are open to suggestions!" a man on the council pleaded.

Everyone stopped shouting and started to rack their brains. It was silent for about an hour before the Mayor spoke again. "Well? Has anyone come up with a way to rid ourselves of this plague?"

The room was still dead with silence, and everyone eyed each other uneasily.

The Mayor slowly sat down and put his head in his hands. "If only there was someone... someone who knew how to get rid of these damn rats! I would be willing to pay them any amount of guilders they wanted!"

There was a light tap on the door, and everyone jumped, looking around at the floor and peering into the dark corners.

"Was that a rat?" the Mayor asked, jumping to his feet and holding his heart. "Please tell me that no rodent has made its way inside!"

The tapping sound came again, louder this time, and everyone turned towards the door. The Mayor, with his brows knitted together in curiosity, shouted, "Come in!"

The door gave a loud squeak on its rusted hinges as it swung open. Draco stepped over the threshold with an arrogant smirk plastered on his face. He gave the good townsfolk a huge exaggerated bow and then skipped down the aisle towards the Council table.

Every eye in the place followed his progression. None had ever seen such a flamboyantly dressed individual before. His colorful coat swirled around his ankles as he pranced past them, grinning and winking.

He stopped at the table, bowed low to the ground and then said, "Did I hear someone say guilders?"

"And who, pray tell, are you?" the Mayor asked. "Besides a weirdo, that is."

Draco laughed lightly; after all, he was sure he did look like a weirdo of the highest degree. "Why, I am the answer to your prayers! I'm the Pied Piper."

"God has sent us a fool with a serious lack of fashion sense and a stupid name to help us with our infestation?" the Mayor and the council members laughed. "That is the most ludicrous thing I've ever heard!"

"Nevertheless," Draco said, hopping onto the table and crossing his legs. "I am here, I am qualified and I'm your only hope!" He batted his eyelashes lovingly at the Mayor.

"Qualified? What qualifications do you have?" a council member inquired.

Draco pulled out his flute and twirled it around his fingers. "It so happens, my ugly friend, that by means of a secret charm, I was able last June to free a village in Tartary from a plague of swarming gnats, and just this past month, in Asia, I rid a town of monstrous vampire bats!" Draco leaned in towards the Mayor, nose to nose, a serious look now on his face. "And for a thousand guilders, I can surely get rid of all these nasty rats."

The Mayor, very desperate to please his citizens, agreed. "A thousand? If you get rid of every last one of these pests, I'll give you fifty thousand!"

A huge grin spread slowly across Draco's face. "It's a deal then!" He pulled the Mayor's face in, he kissed him loudly on the mouth, winked at the council members and then jumped from the table. "Follow me!" he said and skipped out the door.

The entire meeting hall filed out after him and stood in the street, wondering what in the world this strange man was going to do. As they watched, Draco twirled the flute in his fingers again, threw it up into the air, caught it and put it up to his lips.

He played three notes and then paused, listening. The crowd stood still, waiting in anticipation. The sound started out low and then it grew louder and louder, and the people's eyes grew larger and larger with fear.

"What is it?" the Mayor asked.

"I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea!" someone answered.

"Look!"

Everyone turned their heads and saw, to their horror, a flood of rats pouring down the street. They tumbled out of the houses, they emerged from the forests and the fields, they all raced towards the Piper and then... they stopped. Draco's heart was beating fast, and he was moments away from screaming. There were just so many of them! They were all staring at him with their black beady eyes, their nasty worm-like tails twitching. Some of them were even up on their hind legs waiting, frozen like statues.

The citizens all backed up, tripping over one another to get away. Some fainted, some screamed, and some just stared open mouthed in awe. The rats filled the entire road from front to back, from side to side. It was a terrifying sight to behold.

Draco knew he had to do this whether he wanted to or not, Hermione's life depended on it. He took a deep breath and summoned all the courage he had. Slowly, he turned to them, smiled and then started to play a merry tune. He skipped and danced down the street, the flood of rodents following him willingly. When he reached the end of the main road, he turned and headed towards the River Weser.

The Mayor, the council and the entire town of Hameln followed. By the time they reached the banks of the river, the rats were almost entirely gone; all of them having plunged into the water like lemmings and drowned. Bloating corpses floated on the surface of the water, and as the people watched, the last of the rodents stopped treading and sunk to the bottom.

A glorious cry rose up from the crowd, someone lifted Draco up, and they all carried him back through the town, praising him and congratulating him on a job well done. They rang the bells in celebration, and some even spoke of erecting a monument in the Square in his honor!

"Go and check every nook and cranny!" the Mayor shouted happily. "Make sure that no rat has escaped!" He was all smiles and grins... until...

Draco pushed through the crowd and came to a halt in front of the Mayor. He smirked at him and thrust out his hand. He hoped with all his heart that this part of the damn story was correct and that the Mayor would refuse to pay him. If not, he was in deep shit and would have to think of some other way to get the children to the mountain. "I believe you owe me fifty thousand guilders?"

The Mayor's face fell, and he suddenly looked grim. "Come now, dear Piper! That's a hefty sum to give a stranger. I was just joking! How about I give you half that?"

"What?" Draco shouted. "We agreed on fifty, and I will take no less than that! I'm not a person to be trifled with. We had a deal!" Draco glared at him. "I don't work for free!"

The Mayor and the Council now stood tall and defiant. "How about if we pay you nothing!" the Mayor said with a smile. "After all, the rats are dead and gone, they can't come back." The council members laughed, as did some of the people in the crowd. "Now, go away, you freak!"

It was Draco's turn to smile and laugh. "If you won't pay me with guilders, then I'll get my payment another way!" He pushed through the crowd, the Mayor shouting obscenities at him.

"Do your worst you cocky bastard!"

"I will," Draco said and pulled the flute out once more. "You fat, cheap, piece of shit!" he added under his breath. Draco looked around at the people, his face twisted with pretend anger. "And now, you greedy people of Hameln, it's time to pay the Piper!"

They were laughing, and some were glancing around fearfully, knowing that something bad was about to happen. They watched as the Piper closed his eyes and played three soft, sweet notes that seemed to float through the air.

Again there was a noise that started off soft and then became louder. This time, however, it wasn't the squeaking of rats they heard, but the merry laughter and clapping hands of the town's small children. They watched with utmost horror as all the tiny ones followed Draco, who was still playing his magical song, dancing and frolicking in the street.

Men and woman rushed out into the street to fetch their children as they danced by, but were thrown to the ground as if pushed by an invisible force. No one could stop the Piper and his parade.

The first thought the Mayor had was that the Piper was going to turn down the road towards the river and drown the helpless tots like he did the rats, but instead, he went another direction: towards Koppelberg Hill. "Follow them!" he shouted.

Hermione tried for the hundredth time to loosen the ropes that were binding her to the tree. Her hands were numb from lack of blood flow, and her shoulders were aching painfully. A twig snapped, and she jerked her head up, listening. Sebastian walked into view, his hood over his head. He came over to her and checked to see that the rope was still secure. "Untie me," Hermione pleaded. "Please. My arms are hurting and I can't breathe."

Sebastian frowned at her. "You know I can't do that."

"I won't go anywhere, I promise!"

"You can promise all you want, but I'm still not going to untie you. Anyway, your Draco should be here soon with the children."

Hermione was shocked. "You lie! Draco would never bring those children here to die!"

"Apparently, you don't know him as well as you think. He was more than willing to bring them here," Sebastian laughed.

"You must have told him you were going to kill me."

"I did, but that's not what made him agree to help me." Sebastian took down his hood. The breeze ruffled his black hair. "When I told him I was going to kill you, he said to go right ahead and do it. He seemed to think that you would rather die than to carry around the guilt of being the reason he committed murder."

Hermione was pleased. "He was right," she said with a smile. "But then how did you get him to do what you wanted?"

Sebastian's eyes twinkled in the orange glow of the setting sun, making them look sinister. "It was easy. I told him that I would kill the baby that you are now carrying if he didn't bring the children to this hill."

"What did you just say?" Hermione could feel her heart thumping in her chest, and for some reason, there were black and gold dots swimming in her vision.

"That's right! You don't know about the baby, do you?" Sebastian grinned at her. "It seems that your precious Draco likes to keep secrets from you."

Hermione was angrier than she had ever been in her life. How dare he keep something like that from her! What else wasn't he telling her?

"I've been thinking," Sebastian said, walking over to her. He put his hand under her chin and lifted her head so that he could look into her face. "You are a very beautiful woman, and very intelligent. You deserve better than him. He keeps things from you, makes you angry and sometimes sad... he is not at all what you need." He caressed her cheek, his fingers loving the feel of her soft skin.

Hermione, being who she was, couldn't keep her mouth shut. "Surely you don't think I would abandon him to be with you, do you?" she laughed in his face. "He may be an ass sometimes, but he is a thousand times better than you! YOU FUCKING CHILD MURDERER!" she spat in his face.

Sebastian stood there, her spittle sliding down his face, anger crackling in his eyes like lightning. "You just signed his death warrant," he said through clenched teeth. "After I kill him, you WILL be mine." He aimed his wand and bellowed, "*Crucio!*"

Draco was halfway up the hill when he heard her scream. He quit playing and listened to her painful cries echoing through the air. He started to run to where he thought the sound was coming from, but stopped when he noticed all the children staring at him like zombies. He had to get them to the top of the hill.

He had to, or that fucking insane poor excuse for a wizard was going to kill Hermione. He put the flute back up to his lips, trying to keep his hands steady- they were shaking very badly- and he began to play again. This time he walked quickly, not caring about anything but getting to the top as fast as he could.

Hermione finally fainted, her head lolled forward onto her chest, and she just hung there, tied to the tree while Sebastian laughed crazily.

He turned suddenly, hearing the faint sound of the flute and something else... something like thunder. He sprinted through the trees and stopped dead in his tracks. Something was appearing out of thin air in the same exact spot where his prisoner and her man had appeared earlier that day. The air cracked with blue and violet light as it became clearer. He tore his eyes away from the amazing sight when he saw Draco and children.

Draco paused on the edge of the clearing and swore under his breath. He had totally lost track of time and had completely forgotten about the damn clock! He needed to get Hermione to the clock before it vanished again, leaving them stranded in this hell for all eternity! He walked forward to the front of the solid clock as the children silently stayed behind in wait, as if under a spell.

He put the flute in his pocket, his fingers brushing that paper again. He took it out, opened it and read it: if you look back too much, you will soon be headed that way. p.s. duck! Draco's head snapped up just in time to see Sebastian aim his wand and fire a spell at him. He ducked and fell sideways to the ground. The green light from the spell hit the clock just as it chimed one. Draco was blinded by a bright white light that flew from the time piece and enveloped the entire hill top. The clock chimed again.

Hermione opened her eyes. As the world came back into focus, she noticed something lying on the ground just out of her reach. It was her wand *Accio wand!* she said happily. It flew into her hand, she then yelled, "*Reducto!*" at the ropes on her legs and arms. Free at last, she ran towards the clearing, arriving just in time to see Sebastian casting the Killing Curse in Draco's direction.

She ran forward and shouted, *"Incendio!"* Sebastian's cloak immediately caught fire, and he whirled around, trying to get the flames out. His motion fanned the flames, and he went up in an inferno, screaming in agony. Hermione thankfully was blinded by a white light and didn't see him being burned to death. She could hear the clock chiming again, and she rushed forward, calling for Draco. Halfway across the clearing, a hand grabbed her and pulled her blindly at a racing speed through the white light.

"Come on, Granger! It only has one more chime!" he said. "We're here! Quickly, feel for the door!"

Her hands slid frantically over the polished wood, trying to find the opening as the clock began to chime for the last time. "Here! I found it!" She opened the door, and they scrambled inside, plunging into the darkened interior. He quickly shut the door, and they held onto each other for dear life as the clock disappeared.

As the light cleared in the sky, the Mayor and the people of Hameln stood in complete horror at the sight before them. The children were gone! Not one of them was to be found- the clearing was completely empty, except for the crispy body of Sebastian and a huge hole in the ground where the clock had been.

"Are you all right?" Draco asked, kissing Hermione all over her face. "Did he hurt you? I heard you screaming.

"I'm fine... and so is the baby that you didn't bother to inform me about!" she snapped.

Draco stiffened in her arms. "He told you then?"

"How dare you let me walk around pregnant and not tell me! What else are you keeping from me?"

"Nothing! I swear!" Draco tried to pull her close, but she shoved him away.

"I don't believe you!"

He sighed, wondering if he should tell her about the whole having to save her in the future thing. Maybe it was the right thing to do. He really didn't want to keep anything from her ever again. He was just about to let her know when the clock stopped moving and became silent.

They looked at one another, neither one wanting to open the door.

"We should get out. Remember what happened the last time we refused to leave?" Draco said. He said a silent prayer that wherever they were, it was somewhere where they could rest... he needed a vacation! "Ready?" She nodded, her eyes wide with fear. He opened it and together they stepped out into the sunlight.

Sand was under their feet, and their backs faced the ocean. Palm trees surrounded tall buildings that could possibly be hotels of some kind. The clock disappeared from behind them with a swoosh of hot air just as a man walked down the beach, opened a lounge chair and propped an umbrella into the sand. Hermione watched as he took off his robe. She noticed he was wearing a swimsuit from the 1930's or 40's.

"Where do you think we are?" Draco asked, looking around at the pleasant surroundings. He had prayed for a vacation, and it certainly looked as if his prayers had been answered!

"I don't know where we are, Malfoy, but I do recognize that man over there." Hermione started forward towards the man, who was now reading a book. Draco ran to keep up with her.

Hermione stopped in front of the lounging man, casting a shadow over him. He looked up, a smile on his face, a bright twinkle in his blue eyes. "Hello, Professor Dumbledore," she said.

to be continued...

16

Chapter 16 of 27

What will Dumbledore have to say for himself? Will he give Draco and Hermione any answers?

"Hello. I've been expecting you!" Dumbledore said, reaching out his hand in greeting. "You must be Hermione."

Hermione put her hand in his, and he firmly shook it. "Yes, but how..."

Dumbledore let go of her and stood up. "And you must be Mr. Malfoy!" He didn't shake Draco's hand, but just stood there and smiled brightly at him. "It's so nice to finally meet you both! When I came to myself and told me that you would be showing up... Well, of course, I was just so excited!"

Draco glanced over at Hermione and circled his finger in the air next to his temple, which was the the universal sign for crazy. Hermione frowned at him. Sure, it was strange to be standing here on a beach, listening to a young version of a man that recently plunged to his death from a tower, and hearing him talking about getting a visit from himself... Strange, but not crazy.

"Excuse me, Professor, but could you please tell us what the bloody hell is going on? Where are we? Why are you torturing us this way, what gives you the right to mess with our very lives like you do, and last but not least, where are you going?" Draco asked as Dumbledore folded up his chair and started up the beach towards the hotel.

"Aren't you coming?" he asked the two bewildered people standing in the hot sun. "We have many things to discuss and no time to waste." He paused, reached into his pocket, took out something shiny and gold and turned to Draco. "I believe you lost this?"

Draco walked up to him and took the pocket watch that he had gotten from the future. "How?" was all he managed to say.

"I'll explain it... Well, some of it anyway, over a nice breakfast." He took hold of Draco's arm and leaned in close. "Please try not to lose it. It might come in handy sometime in the future when you fear all is lost," he winked at him and then motioned for them to follow.

"What did he say?" Hermione asked.

"Nothing important."

"Oh, of course not!" Hermione huffed. "When are you going to learn to trust me and not keep secrets from me?"

Draco stuffed the watch into the pocket of the colorful coat he was still wearing. "Listen, Granger. Dumbledore whispered it to me. If he wanted you to hear it, he would have said it out loud. For once in your life, just mind your own business. Hard to do, I know..."

She shot him a dirty look and walked faster. She absolutely hated being in the dark about anything. How was she supposed to be prepared for anything when she knew nothing? She looked back over her shoulder at him, and he smirked and gave her a little wave. "God, I hate him sometimes! How we ever ended up married is beyond me!"

They bypassed the hotel and took another winding path, instead. After walking for some time, they came to a private beach. Dumbledore led them to a little, white cottage, complete with a fragrant garden full of beautiful purple and red flowers with bright green, tropical foliage.

Dumbledore held out a key. "I've taken the liberty of procuring you living quarters for your short stay here. Go on inside, clean up, take a rest... Do whatever comes naturally..." He winked at them suggestively. "I'm staying at the cottage just down the beach. Come and see me when you're ready, and we'll have a nice long talk over some breakfast.

Hermione took the key, and together they watched their former Headmaster stroll down the beach. He was whistling 'I'm a Little Tea Pot' and picking up sea shells and attractive little rocks.

"He has got to be the strangest person I've ever had the displeasure of meeting," Draco said, rolling his eyes.

"He is a bit eccentric, but that's what I love about him!" Hermione put the key in the lock, turned it and opened the door. They toured the cottage, which consisted of sparsely decorated living room, a small kitchen, a bedroom and a bathroom. Not the Taj Mahal, but it was cozy. "Look, Draco, a bed!" Hermione threw herself onto the soft mattress and fluffy pillows.

Draco opened the door to the bathroom and pulled the light switch. He gasped, "Look, Hermione! A bathtub! Wanna join me?" He started to peel off his clothes. He looked back at her. She was staring at the ceiling, her arms crossed over her chest, looking upset. "You're not still angry about me not telling you what Dumbledore said, are you?" He threw his coat and shirt onto the floor and crawled on top of her.

"Of course I'm still angry! How are we supposed to trust each other if we constantly keep secrets from one another?"

Draco smoothed back her hair from her forehead. "If it bothers you that much, I'll tell you." He kissed her gently on the lips. "He told me not to lose the watch ever again."

Hermione waited. "That's it?" she said. "I don't believe you. There has to be more to it than that!"

"There isn't. That's what he said. I have no idea why... He is nutters, after all." He leaned down to kiss her again. "I promise that I'm keeping nothing from you."

She grasped his head with both her hands and looked into his smoke colored eyes. "You're telling me the truth, Draco, right? You're not lying, are you?" She searched his face, looking for a glimmer of a lie. "I know that when we were in the future, your old self must have told you many things."

A jolt went through Draco's body. He wanted so badly to tell her that she was going to be murdered. What if he did tell her, would it change anything? Would she be able to stop it from happening? The thing was, he only knew that a man they knew was going to kill her. They did not know who he was or the exact day it would happen. He had the rest of their lives to tell her. Maybe he should wait and see if he could figure it all out before he told her...

"Draco?" Hermione said, concerned. "Are you all right?"

"Huh?" He looked down at her, distracted, slightly acknowledging her presence. "I'm fine." He filed away his thoughts to dwell upon later and smiled at her. "All I told myself was that on that very night, we were going to make love and that you were going to get pregnant." Draco's smile faltered a bit.

"Is something wrong?"

Draco sighed. "It's just something I said right before I died. I said that you getting pregnant was both wonderful and awful. I have no idea what I meant." He rolled over and clutched a pillow to his chest. "I was trying to get it out of... him... me, whatever, when I died."

Hermione turned over onto her side. "While you were in the room talking with yourself, I was having a very informative conversation with our granddaughter."

The corner of Draco's mouth twitched. "Our granddaughter. It still seems so weird, doesn't it?" He tossed the pillow to the end of the bed and sat up. His hand was shaking as he reached out and lifted her shirt up to expose her smooth, tan stomach. "Our baby is in here," he said, running his fingertips gently over her skin. He laid his head on her so that his ear was pressed against her bellybutton. "Hello in there. This is your daddy."

Hermione giggled, her hand playing with a strand of Draco's pale hair. "I don't think she can hear you yet."

Draco paused and listened. "Yes, she can, and she answered back. She said 'I love you mummy and daddy. I promise to be a good little girl and never give you any grief.'"

Hermione's heart skipped a beat. Draco had no idea what would happen to his first-born daughter and that she would get involved with the Dark Arts, abandon her family and break his heart. She did not want to ruin the moment by telling him. It could wait until later. "She's half yours, so therefore it's a given that she won't be a good girl."

Draco kissed Hermione's tummy. "She'll be my little angel."

"An angel with devil horns and a crooked halo!" Hermione laughed.

Draco pulled her up and hugged her tightly. "I love you, Granger."

Hermione smiled into his shoulder. "I know. Now, how about we take that bath?"

The water was very warm and soothing. Hermione slid into the tub, the bubbles popping, and leaned her back against Draco's chest. The floral fragrance lingered in the mist and steam, making it feel like they were in paradise. Draco picked up the sponge, dipped it into the water and lathered it up.

Hermione closed her eyes as the soapy sponge slid over her breasts, rubbing a little harder on her nipples. She could feel Draco's erection growing against her back, and it sent shivers of anticipation through her.

With his free hand, he caressed her face, his fingertip tracing the line of her open lips. She took his finger into her mouth and slowly sucked it as he swirled the sponge lower and lower. He rubbed his rock hard cock against her wet back and moaned into her ear, "Lift your ass out of the water, I want to see myself get you off," he said, his voice quivering with lust.

Hermione grasped the edge of the tub with both of her hands and lifted herself up. Draco dropped the sponge and slipped two of his finger slowly inside of her. She grasped the edge of the tub even harder, moaning as she rocked her hips.

Draco pumped harder, slipping a third finger inside of her as she started to come. He stopped, his fingers jammed all the way in as she screamed out, her body shaking uncontrollably. He sucked the tender skin on her neck, his fingers slipping from her.

She turned around, kissing him desperately and passionately as he thrust into her, making the water in the bathtub slosh over the side and onto the tile floor. She moved

hard against him, moaning every time her clit came in contact with him.

He grabbed her by the hips and rammed his cock into her as another orgasm flooded through her body. Slipping a finger into her ass, he exploded inside of her as she groaned in pleasure.

Resting forehead to forehead, they held each other, eyes closed, breathing heavily.

"I love you," Hermione said, capturing his lips in a heated kiss.

Draco smiled into her lips. "I know. Now, how about we go and see Dumbledore?"

As they approached Dumbledore's cottage, they saw him sitting on the porch steps. He was whittling a tiny horse from a block of wood.

"I told you he was nutters," Draco said, lifting an eyebrow. Hermione elbowed him in the ribs.

"Hello, Professor!" Hermione said and waved.

Dumbledore looked up, and his face lit up in a welcoming grin. "Did you have a nice rest?" he asked and winked.

"Er... um...yes. It was just what we needed." Draco said, taking a seat next to him on the step. "What's that you're doing?"

"It's a present."

Hermione sat down on his other side. "A present? For whom?"

Dumbledore finished the tiny ear, blew the wood dust from it and handed it to her. "It's for your baby."

"Thank you." Hermione turned the horse over and over in her hand, studying every detail. Finally, she looked up at him. "Is it that obvious?" she asked him. "That I'm pregnant, I mean."

Dumbledore patted her on the arm. "No. In fact, if I hadn't told myself, I would have never guessed."

Draco rolled his eyes. "I am so confused! Why is all of this happening?" He got up and started to pace, kicking up sand. He stopped and looked straight at Dumbledore. "Why are you doing this?"

Dumbledore took off his glasses, cleaned them and then put them back on. "Because, Mr. Malfoy, I can."

"What the hell kind of answer is that?" Draco was becoming furious. Who did this man think he was? God? "You have no idea what we've been through! I was almost forced to rape her, we were chased by fucking dinosaurs, she almost plunged over a cliff, I narrowly escaped death by a Minotaur." Draco's face was contorted with anger. "I had to see myself die, for Merlin sakes! Not to mention prancing about in a hideous coat playing a flute while leading rats to their watery grave." He ignored Hermione's hand gestures telling him to shut up. "God only knows what happened to those children I lured away just so that I could save Hermione from that freak of a wizard! I just want to know why!"

"If you would just calm down, Mr. Malfoy, I'll tell you what I can."

17

Chapter 17 of 27

Dumbledore asks Draco and Hermione to tell him about the secret messages. Draco goes on a little shopping trip, and a terrible accident happens!

Draco and Hermione followed Dumbledore inside and beheld a table filled with a scrumptious assortment of fruit, pastries, bacon, sausages and eggs. Draco pounced on the table like a ravenous dog, heaping a large amount of food onto his plate. He sat down and crammed an entire cheese Danish into his mouth.

Hermione took a seat and quickly decided to just eat some fruit. The smell of the scrambled eggs was nauseating, and the meat looked repulsive. It was so hot in the cottage, despite the salty breeze that wafted through the open windows. She bit into a piece of pineapple and immediately her stomach lurched. Putting it back onto her plate, she addressed Dumbledore. "Are you going to tell us what this is all about?"

Dumbledore poured himself a cup of tea, added some sugar and a dollop of milk. He stirred it with a tiny spoon, the metal clanging the sides of the ceramic mug. He sipped it, saying nothing.

"Well?" Draco said, snapping a sausage in half with his teeth. "Hello! Answers?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Ah, yes, I had almost forgotten!"

Draco's jaw dropped, and he gave Hermione that look again, the one that said that this man was one flying buttress short of a cathedral.

"About two years ago, I was visited by myself, and we had a nice long talk."

"Were you shocked?" Hermione asked.

"About talking with my future self? No. I was more shocked by the fact that my beard was so long. I had never considered growing it that long before." He smiled and then ran his fingers through the auburn beard. "Do you think it's becoming?"

"We don't give a shit whether you grow your armpit hair down to your ass with dreadlocks. We just want to know why you're doing this!" Draco said, rolling his eyes in exasperation.

Dumbledore turned to Hermione, who was red faced due to Draco's rudeness. "Are you sure this is the man you want to spend the rest of your life with? He seems rather angry..."

Draco stood and glared at Dumbledore. "I have every right to be angry!"

"Draco! Please, just calm down." Hermione grabbed his arm and tried to pull him back into his seat. He ignored her and stayed standing, gripping the edge of the table.

"Mr. Malfoy, I totally agree with you. If I were in your shoes, I would be reacting the very same way."

"If you can sympathize with our situation, and you know how we feel about you fucking with our lives, then why the hell do you go ahead and do it anyway?"

Hermione pulled his arm more fiercely and finally succeeded in getting Draco to sit down. "He does have a point, Professor. Here we are, telling you right now that we don't appreciate the little time travel trip you've sent us on, yet for some reason, in the future, you still go ahead and do it. Why?"

Dumbledore sighed. He looked very somber. "I'm sorry, but I have no explanation as to why I'm doing this to you." He raised his hand as Draco started to protest. "Please Mr. Malfoy, let me tell you everything I know."

"Which I'm guessing isn't much, right?" Draco said sarcastically.

Hermione shot him a look of disgust, and Draco just looked at her innocently, mouthing the word 'what?' She turned back to Dumbledore. "Please, excuse his rudeness. He doesn't know when to shut up and listen."

"I do too!"

"Apparently, you don't, because you are still talking!" Draco snapped his mouth shut angrily, and Hermione smiled at him sweetly. "Professor, just start at the beginning."

Dumbledore sipped his tea again. "Like I said, about two years ago, I paid myself a visit. This would have been the summer of 1936."

"So this is 1938?" Hermione interrupted, her face shocked. "The summer of 1938?"

Dumbledore's eyebrows came together over his crooked nose. "Does this year have some significance for you?"

Hermione knew this was the very summer that Dumbledore went to the orphanage to tell Tom Riddle he was a wizard. Should she tell him everything? Let him know that the boy was going to grow up to affect the lives of everyone in the room, not to mention cause the deaths of hundreds of innocent people, including himself? Would it change anything? What if it did? What if she could, at this very moment, change history for the better?

"Hermione?" Draco asked, concerned. The way she was staring off into space, her eyes wide, and her vacant expression was scaring him. "Hey! Are you all right?" He snapped his fingers in front of her face.

She blinked and looked around. "Huh?"

"Are you all right?" Draco asked again, handing her a glass of ice water. "Drink this."

She took the glass and sipped the cool liquid, still debating whether to tell Dumbledore about Voldemort. "Thanks. Sorry about that," she said, handing the glass back to Draco.

"Did you have something to tell me, dear?" Dumbledore asked.

"I..." Hermione panicked. "Yes. I mean no!" She suddenly had to pee. "Where's the loo?" Dumbledore pointed down the hall. She excused herself and hastily made her way inside, shutting the door quickly.

Draco and Dumbledore eyed each other over the table.

"So, Mr. Malfoy. I hear that you are a Prefect and Quidditch captain. You're in Slytherin, aren't you?"

"Yes. Why?" he asked, warily.

"And Miss Granger is in Gryffindor, Head Girl and a Muggle-born?" Dumbledore asked with a tiny smile that lit up his eyes. "I guess there is a first time for everything! When I was at Hogwarts, the Slytherins and Gryffindors were mortal enemies, and they would never even think of dating one another!"

"It's the same now."

Dumbledore leaned forward, clearly interested. "Then how are you going to explain all this once you get back?"

"I really don't care what they think. I love her, she loves me, we're having a baby. There is nothing they can do about it. It's already done."

"I hope, Mr. Malfoy," Dumbledore said, "that the courage you possess right now doesn't take flight when you need it most. It will be hard to deal with the ignorant, who refuse to believe that you, a so-called pureblood, could ever be in love with a Muggle-born. Acceptance by her friends and your family will not come easily."

Did the man think he was stupid? "I know it won't be easy, Professor, but we know that it all turns out fine in the end, don't we?"

"If you say so, Mr. Malfoy." Dumbledore dipped a fat, red strawberry into the sugar bowl and then bit into it. "I wouldn't know, would I?"

Hermione came back to the table, her mind made up; she wasn't going to say anything. What if, instead of making things better, she somehow made them worse? She couldn't risk it. "Now, where were we? You were saying that you paid yourself a visit from the future."

"Yes, well, it was all a hurried conversation. I handed myself a gold watch and a wand and was told that in the summer of 1938 I would be paid a visit by two of my future students. I said that while sunning on the sandy beaches of Kauai, you, Draco, and you, Hermione, would approach me."

"Wait a minute!" Draco said. "You just said 'a watch and a wand'. What wand?"

Dumbledore grinned. "Your wand. Didn't I give it to you?"

"No!"

"I'm sure I did."

"I would remember something like that!"

Dumbledore got up, went into the next room and came back with Draco's wand. "How about that! I never gave it to you!"

Draco snatched it from the man's hand. "How you ever became known as the one he feared most is beyond me!" He examined his wand for scratches. "It's apparent to me that your brain is already full of holes, even at this young age!"

"The one WHO fears most?" Dumbledore questioned.

Draco was elbowed in the ribs by Hermione. "Nothing. He's just babbling nonsense. Ignore him!" She gave him a sideways glance and asked Dumbledore to continue.

"I was to give Draco the watch and tell him a message, which I did. I told myself that you would be staying for about twelve hours and then would be disappearing in the clock you arrived in. I was to make sure that Hermione got plenty of rest because she was with child. That's it."

Draco looked incredulously at Dumbledore. "That's it? What do you mean that's it?"

"What I mean, Mr. Malfoy, is that there is no more. We chatted about Hogwarts, and I told myself what Houses you both belonged to and that you had been the worst of enemies for almost your entire time at school..."

"Your future self told you nothing about why this is happening?" Hermione asked, getting angry. "If we aren't supposed to learn anything from you, then why the bloody hell are we here? What is the purpose of it all?"

"This is a waste of time," Draco said, getting up. "Clearly, he has no answers. We might as well accept it, Granger! We are going to be traveling through time for the rest of our lives!" He grasped Hermione's hand and pulled her out of the chair and then turned to leave.

Dumbledore sat there, his fingers in a steeple under his chin, thinking. "You're wrong," he said to them. "You told me that you visited your dying self. You obviously do not travel aimlessly through time for the rest of your lives."

Hermione quickly turned around. "That's right! Somehow we figure this all out. Draco, we get married and have children. We live in your Manor House!"

Dumbledore motioned for them to sit back down. "Please, I'm sure if we try we can put the pieces together and get you back home."

"So, you say that there have been strange messages at every place you have visited?" Dumbledore asked. "Messages that each contain a capital letter? Can you remember them?"

Hermione and Draco tried to recall the letters. "Um... I'm very sure the first one was a 'D'."

"It was?" Draco said, trying to concentrate. "It seems so long ago!"

"The message was on the wall in the underground chamber, and it said some thing like 'if a man Doesn't know where he's going, there's no telling where he'll be when he gets there'. The 'D' was capitalized." Hermione conjured a piece of parchment and a quill. "So, the first letter is D." She scribbled it down.

Draco ran his hand through his hair, making it fall onto his forehead, where he blew at it. "Okay, the next place was with the dinosaurs, and the message was on that log in the cave. I do remember that one. It said, 'in two days, toMorrow will be yesterday'. The 'M' was bigger that time."

Hermione wrote it down. "D and M so far."

Dumbledore was pacing the floor, keeping the letters and the places they were found in his head for later use. After all, he was the one who apparently put them there.

"Next was Crete," Hermione said. "Horrid place. Never would I EVER want to go back there! I'd rather face that T-Rex!"

"It wasn't all bad," Draco said. "You got your wand back, and I... I got a little." He winked at her.

"Yeah! From someone else, and I'll thank you to never bring that up ever again!"

"It was all your fault, in case you've forgotten, Granger!"

"I never told you to go and screw that Cretan bimbo! You did that all by yourself, Malfoy!"

Dumbledore cleared his throat loudly. "If you please, you have your whole lives to argue about this, can you do it some other time?"

Draco and Hermione glared at each other.

"What did the message in Crete say?" Dumbledore asked, looking at them over the top of his glasses. "And where was it?"

Draco tore his eyes away from Hermione's. "It was etched into a mirror that was hanging in some room of the Palace."

"They told us that you had given that mirror to the Queen as a gift and told her to hang it where it could be seen." Hermione got ready to write. "What was the message, Malfoy, do you remember?"

Draco shrugged his shoulders. "No, do you?"

Hermione's jaw dropped. "You mean you can't remember?"

"No, and I can tell by the dying carp look on your face that you can't recall it either. That's just fucking great!"

"Please, try and concentrate, the both of you. This is of extreme importance!" Dumbledore pleaded.

Draco laid his head back on the sofa and closed his eyes. Words swam in the darkness behind his closed lids, but nothing jumped out at him. "Was it something to do with seeing or looking? It was on a mirror after all."

Hermione sighed. "I just can't think!" It was so hot in the cottage that sweat was running down her back, and her stomach was rolling again.

"Let's move on. We'll come back to it. What was the next place and message?" Dumbledore began pacing again.

"We went to visit ourselves next," Hermione said, fanning herself with the parchment. "The message was on that pocket watch."

Draco took it out from the pocket of his shorts and read it out loud. "a man with one watch knows what timE it is. a man with two is never sure."

Dumbledore smiled. "So true! I was a genius to think of that!"

"You didn't think of anything!" Draco said, rolling his eyes. "I just told you what to write!"

Dumbledore paused. "You know. That's true. This can be very confusing, can't it?" He chuckled and shook his head in amusement. "So we have a D, M, a letter that's missing and an E. What's next?"

Hermione quickly wrote down the letter E and looked up at Dumbledore. "I don't know. Did you see a message in Hameln?" She looked over her shoulder at Draco, who was still lounging on the sofa with just his shorts on now.

"I saw it. It was in the pocket of that disaster of a coat I was forced to wear."

"So you saw a message and didn't bother telling me about it? There you go again, hiding things from me!" Hermione said, jumping to conclusions. She shot out of her chair and stalked over to him, ready to slap him slap upside the head.

Draco sat up and looked at her as if she was out of her mind. "Whoa! Just hold on a minute, Granger! I didn't hide anything from you, so stop being so paranoid." He grabbed her wrist just as her hand came shooting out of nowhere.

"But you just said..."

"I know what I said! Just let me explain!" He couldn't believe how fast Hermione could go from being calm and normal to wiggling out and acting like a total basket case. "When that Sebastian bloke had me trapped in that room, he beat the shit out of me and forced me to put that coat on. When I went to put the flute in the pocket, I noticed that there was some sort of paper in there. I didn't want him to see it, so I just left it there. I forgot all about it until I was on the hill with the children and the clock appeared."

Hermione was suddenly pulled into Draco's lap, and he kissed her. "So, when did you read it then?" she asked, brushing the hair from his wet forehead. "And I'm sorry for thinking you were hiding something from me."

Draco's heart dropped into his gut. He gave her a bright smile and tried not to act guilty. "I forgive you this time, Granger, but don't ever accuse me again." He kissed her cheek and then continued talking to Dumbledore. "I went to put the flute away and realized that the paper was still in my pocket. It's a good thing too, because Sebastian came out of the woods to kill me right then. At the bottom of the paper, under the message, it said 'duck!' If I hadn't, the killing curse would have hit me and not the clock."

"What did the message say, Mr. Malfoy?"

"I only just glanced at it, but I think it said something about looking back... I don't remember the whole thing, but I do know that the letter N was definitely larger than the other letters."

Dumbledore picked up Hermione's quill and wrote down the letter N. "Now we have D, M, E and N. Are you sure there are no other letters?" He looked at the parchment. "There must be a lot more missing than just the one from Crete. This spells nothing."

Hermione suddenly smacked herself in the head. "Of course!"

"What? What is it?" Draco asked.

"The message from Egypt was not the first message."

Draco thought about it for a moment. "Oh my god! You're right! The plaque back at Hogwarts! The one next to the clock!"

Dumbledore grinned happily. "And what did this message say?"

"I remember reading it and having no idea what it meant. It said, 'you'll never get anywhere else if you don't leave where you are now'. The U was bigger." Hermione beamed at him. "Now, I understand what you meant by it." She laid her head on Draco's shoulder. "Draco and I were stuck in a hateful relationship, and we had to leave and go through all of these adventures in order for us to realize how we actually felt about one another."

Dumbledore nodded his head. "And that, my dear future students, is possibly the reason why I go ahead and force you to take these trips. You both need a little push in the right direction. Imagine if I listen to your pleas and don't do this in the future. You probably will not end up together, happy and in love. Maybe you will end up alone or perhaps with someone else, unhappy, feeling empty like you're missing the other part of your soul."

Draco and Hermione were quiet, contemplating the results of such a thing. Draco, who had only ever known the love of his mother, would never want to end up in a relationship with someone he didn't truly love, or worse... die alone and miserable. He had seen how much his future self loved Hermione; in fact, he felt it now. He never wanted to be without her ever again.

At that moment, he vowed to save her from being killed, no matter what he had to do or who he had to kill. She was his love, and his life and nothing was going to take her away from him, not even death.

Hermione had never known she could love someone as much as she loved Draco. Sure, she loved her parents and her friends, but that was different. He made her feel complete, and now she could never imagine being without him, didn't want to. "Professor?" she said, softly. "You go right ahead and do what you need to do. I love him, and if it takes being buried alive in a tomb or almost being devoured by a pack of hungry dinosaurs to make me see that, then by all means, you do it."

Dumbledore smiled lovingly at her. "I would do anything to make my students happy, even those who call me Dumblesnore behind my back." He winked at Draco, who smirked. "So now, we have E, D, N, P and U. I wish the letter from Crete was available because I still see nothing." In fact, he was lying. He did see the word, even with the missing letters. He knew they needed to figure it out by themselves, so he said nothing. "I guess I have been no help to you. I'm very sorry."

"It's all right, Dumbledore. At least we get a vacation out of this. For once, nothing life-threatening is happening and we can relax!" Draco said happily. "Merlin knows we need it!"

Dumbledore looked at his watch. "I hate to seem rude, but my vacation is over. The school wishes me to visit a certain Muggle orphanage to tell some unsuspecting youth that he has been accepted to Hogwarts."

Hermione gulped; there was a loud buzzing noise in her ears. This was her last chance to say something, anything. "Do you know much about him, Professor?"

"Only that he is an orphan and shows extreme talent in magical areas already. I should think he will fit in fine and make a brilliant wizard!" Dumbledore was packing his belongings, his wand waving the items through the air and into the star-covered carpet bag by the door. He failed to notice that Hermione was shaking and looked as if she wanted to tell him something.

"Granger, what's wrong?" Draco whispered.

"I'll tell you later," she whispered back. Getting up from Draco's lap, she walked over to her future Headmaster and embraced him. He stiffened for only a second and then hugged her back. "It was nice to see you again," she said through her tears. "I've really missed you, you know."

"You'll see me when you get back, won't you?" he said, wiping the tears from her cheek. "I'll be looking forward to seeing you again in a few years." He looked over at Draco, who was staring at the floor, his eyes seeing nothing but a blur. "It was nice meeting you as well, Draco. Behave yourself and be good to her." He pecked Hermione on the cheek, and then with a pop, he vanished.

They closed the door and walked in the sand, hand in hand, to their own cottage. The sun was at its highest, and it beat down upon them with burning rays.

"What was the problem back there, Hermione? You seemed frightened or upset about something. What was it?"

"That boy whom Dumbledore is going to see is Tom Riddle."

Draco stopped in his tracks. "No!" He looked at her, shock evident on his face. "Why didn't you tell him? You could have warned him what that boy turned into!" He shook his head slowly. "You could have changed everything!"

Hermione sighed. "That's just it, Draco. What if it changed for the worse?"

"How much worse could it get? I think you should have told him." He could barely control his outrage. "You should have told him everything and then let him decide what to do with the information!"

"Sometimes there ARE things that should be left unsaid, secrets that need to be kept, and I think this was one of those times. I believe with all my soul that I did the right thing." She let go of his hand and walked inside the cottage.

He clenched his fists, counted to ten and then followed her inside. Maybe she was right. Maybe it just would have made things even worse. Now they would never know, would they? She definitely was right about one thing though. Sometimes there ARE secrets that need to be kept.

"What's this?" he asked, picking up an envelope from the table. It was addressed to him. "It's from Dumbledore." Draco opened it and pulled out a wad of Muggle money and a large sum of Hawaiian currency. "Feel like shopping, Granger?"

Hermione took off her sandals, tied her hair in a knot and headed for the bedroom. "I don't think so, not right now. I'm not feeling too well."

Draco put the money in his pocket and followed her, concerned. "What's wrong? Is it the baby?"

Hermione took off her clothes and fell onto the bed. "No. Well, maybe that's part of it. I don't know. I've never been pregnant before!"

Draco sat down beside her and felt her forehead. "You're burning up!"

Hermione smiled at him. "This is summer in Hawaii, Malfoy. I just feel really tired, and it's so damn hot! How do people live here?"

Draco took out his wand. "Here, how about I make it cooler in here for you?" He cast a charm that made the temperature in the bedroom drop to where it was bordering on freezing.

"Ah! That feels so much better!" Hermione sat up and kissed him. "Thank you."

"Sure you don't want to go shopping among the locals?"

"Maybe later. I really want a nap right now." She lay back down and flung her arm over eyes. "You go ahead, but put a shirt on first, I don't want all those beautiful Hawaiian girls gawking at you. You just might run off with one."

Draco laughed. "Tempting, but I think I'll stick with you, even though you're bossy and you sometimes act like a nutter." He slipped on a white linen shirt he found in the closet, but left it unbuttoned. "I'll see you later. Have a nice rest." He kissed her cheek, then her bare tummy and left for his shopping spree.

He trudged through the sand, the sun burning his pale skin. He knew he was going to have one hell of a sunburn later. His first stop was to buy a pair of sunglasses. They were old fashioned and not very flattering, but beggars can't be choosers. They would have to do.

Stall after stall held beautiful goods that were beyond tempting. Colorful clothing that he knew would look good on him; brightly decorated seashells made into art and jewelry; wonderfully scented flower arrangements and food of all kinds.

He bought a tiny dress made from some kind of floaty material for the baby. It was pale yellow with tiny pink flowers on it and had a bonnet to match. Draco was tempted to buy a necklace made from shark teeth and actually stood there for ten minutes debating whether to get it or not. He finally decided he didn't need it and put it down. There was something else that he wanted to get.

On and on he walked, vendors shouting their wares at him trying to get him to stop, until he stood in front of a store. He smiled as he looked at the window display, seeing exactly what he wanted.

Hermione awoke; somehow she had burrowed herself under the covers until only the top of her head was peeking out. "God, it's like winter in here!" It was so cold that when she breathed, she could see her breath.

Draco suddenly appeared from nowhere, Apparating next to the bed. "Damn! It's Christmas in July!" He shivered, his nipples shrinking, resembling tiny, pink raisins. "I went a bit overboard with the cold, don't you think?"

Hermione sat up and wrapped the blanket around her. "I could have frozen to death, but I'd rather be cold than hot." She looked at him with wide eyes. "You are burnt to a crisp!"

Draco put his sunglasses on top of his head and examined himself in the mirror. He had made the mistake of taking off his shirt on the way back to the cottage, and now he was going to pay the price. "Great! Why can't I tan? Stupid parents and their stupid pale skin..."

Hermione laughed, "Come here, lobster boy. Let me put some aloe on that red hot chest and back of yours." Conjuring a bottle of aloe, she smoothed it over his burns as he sat on the edge of the bed with his eyes closed, loving it.

"Turn around, let me get your face." She chuckled a bit at the white circles from the sunglasses, and he frowned, annoyed that he looked like a freak. As she dabbed a bit of the aloe on his nose, she paused and studied his features. He had beautiful, long, pale eyelashes and cheekbones any girl would kill for. "You know, you are a very handsome man." He smiled, his teeth looking very bright against the redness of his skin.

"It's taken you this long to notice, Granger?" he said playfully.

"No. I've always thought you were cute. A bit of an asshole, but still cute."

"You did?" He winced as she tried to gently smooth the aloe into his forehead. "What am I saying? Of course you did! All the ladies think I'm good looking." He shouted "OW!" as Hermione smacked him on the forehead. "What was that for?"

Hermione straddled his lap, putting her arms around his waist. "I just felt like smacking you."

He stopped rubbing his forehead and looked at her, a frown on his sticky face. "Just felt like smacking me?" He leaned forward as if to kiss her, but he made her fall onto her back instead. "You're lucky I love you, Granger, or I'd make you pay for that."

He was on top of her, one hand in her messy hair, the other holding himself up. She reached up, grabbed his head and brought her mouth to his in a hard, brutal kiss. "Make me pay, Draco. Punish me for daring to hit you."

They lay cuddled together under the blanket; he was twirling a piece of her hair around his finger when he suddenly sat up. "I almost forgot!"

Hermione jumped. "Forgot what? What are you talking about?"

Draco got out of bed, his white ass looking even whiter compared to the rest of his body. "I bought the baby something." He took the tiny dress out of the bag and held it up proudly. "Isn't it beautiful?"

Hermione got out of the bed and took it out of his hands. "It's a darling!" She especially loved the little bonnet. "It's so small! I can't imagine that she'll be this tiny."

"I have another surprise." Draco started to get dressed. "I've rented us a boat for the afternoon."

Hermione laid the dress on the bed. "A boat? Do you know how to sail a boat?"

He picked up his sunglasses and smirked, looking so much like his father for a second that Hermione almost fainted. Lucius was the last person she wanted to be thinking about.

"We Malfoys have extensive knowledge about boats."

"I meant, have you, Draco Malfoy, ever sailed a boat? I don't mean sat on the deck of a yacht, sunning yourself and eating caviar while some poor house-elf steers you to Tahiti."

Draco's smirk slid from his face. "How hard can it be?" He threw her clothes to her. "Now, get dressed and let's head out!" He whistled happily as he walked out of the room.

Hermione had a bad feeling about this. A REALLY bad feeling.

Luckily, the weather was nice, a little windy, nothing to worry about, and the water was calm, or else she would have insisted they cancel their little excursion. She was surprised that Draco actually seemed to know what he was doing. He went around adjusting sails and doing whatever it was that he was doing. Hermione knew next to nothing about sailing, and it was bothering her so much that she vowed to read up on it once she got back to Hogwarts.

Draco went to join Hermione. "Here, put this on." He handed her a life jacket, and after helping her get it on, he put one on himself. "Never can be too careful."

"Look!" she shouted, pointing out over the water excitedly. "Dolphins!"

Draco and Hermione watched as two of them jumped out of the water and dove back in. They resurfaced close to the boat and stuck their heads out. Hermione thought they looked as if they were smiling.

"They are so cute!" she said, leaning further over the edge.

"Be careful, don't want you to fall overboard!" he said, pulling her back a little. "I wouldn't want to have to jump in to save you. There are sharks in there, you know."

"Of course there are sharks, it IS the ocean," Hermione said sarcastically. "And besides, only total idiots fall overboard. Are you saying I'm stupid enough to lose my footing and go tumbling into the damn ocean where any number of man-eating creatures are waiting for a free meal?"

Draco said nothing. Hermione was in one of her moods again. Just a second ago, she was happy and thrilled about the dolphins, and now she was about to snap his head off. He decided to go and pretend he was doing something important in the bow, away from her. He had planned this to be romantic, but she was ruining the whole thing with her bad attitude. "Maybe I'll just go away on a business trip every time she's pregnant. I don't think I can deal with this twice more!"

A half hour later, he decided to try once more to talk to her. He had managed to keep busy, adjusting the sails and talking to himself. He was going over and over in his mind what he was planning to say to her. The wind was dying down, so he felt it safe to go to her.

Hermione looked up at him and then back out at the water. "I'm sorry," she said softly. "I don't know why I acted like that." She burst into tears and sobbed into her hands. "You must think I'm crazy! I feel like I'm crazy!"

Draco, who was laughing in his head, but knew better than to laugh out loud, scooped her up into his arms and held her. "I don't think you're crazy."

Hermione lifted her head and stared at him incredulously. Her face was splotchy, and her cheeks were wet with tears. "You're a liar!" She started crying again and buried her head in his shoulder. "You'd be better off without me and my insane mood swings!"

Draco kissed the top of her head and then forced her to look at him. "Hermione, even though you sometimes make me think you have a split personality and act a little moody, I still love you and never want to be without you." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small box.

Hermione hitched in a breath, trying to remain calm.

"I brought you sailing today because I thought it would be a romantic setting in which to propose to you." He opened the box and took out a ring. It was a thin band of gold, and on the top were two dolphins, their bodies together at the head and tail so that they made the shape of a heart. In the center was a beautiful sapphire that was a blue as the Hawaiian sky.

Hermione's heart was hammering in her chest, and the world was suddenly going black. She grasped the edge of the boat and held on, struggling not to pass out. He took her other hand gently in his and said, "Hermione, will you marry me?"

Hermione was crying again. This time, however, they were tears of joy. "Yes, I'll marry you!" she said, and he slipped the ring on her finger. She smiled and then jumped on him, kissing him passionately. "I love you."

"I love you too, Granger." He put her down gently, kissing her again. The boat suddenly lurched, as if being hit by something, and he accidentally dropped the small black velvet box that the ring had been in.

"I'll get it," Hermione said, crouching down to retrieve it just as the boom swung around, hit Draco in the head and knocked him overboard.

Hermione stood up and ran to the side of the boat. "Draco!" she screamed. "DRACO!" She frantically scanned the water, seeing nothing. Running to the stern, she leaned over and looked for him. There he was, floating in a sea of blood, unconscious. "Draco!" she yelled again.

He didn't answer her. "Please don't be dead!" She turned to look for a life preserver or a raft, anything, when she caught something out of the corner of her eye. "Oh my god!" she said, rooted to the spot. She watched the shark fin get closer and closer to Draco, circling and circling. She opened her mouth and screamed.

Will Draco survive the shark attack?

Hermione turned and rushed through the boat, throwing things over her shoulder until she found what she was looking for. She struggled to open the small life raft and toss it overboard. Looking around, she wondered how in the hell she was going to get in the damn thing. Taking a paddle, she perched on the edge of the sailboat, closed her eyes and jumped.

She landed unbalanced and almost fell over the side and into the clear, blue water where the Tiger shark was still circling Draco. She paddled over as close as she could get and then called to him. "Draco? Are you all right?" There was no answer. The shark bumped the life raft, and a small scream escaped her trembling lips. "God damn it, Draco! Answer me!" She stuck the paddle out and used it to lift his head. It flopped backwards, his smooth, lifeless face turned up towards the setting sun.

The huge Tiger shark rammed into the raft again, and Hermione lifted the paddle over her head and brought it down as hard as she could on its head. "Go away, you fucking bastard!" she yelled. To her relief, the shark slid gracefully under the water, its dorsal fin disappearing. Now was her chance to get Draco into the raft. She paddled closer to him and reached out, grasping his life jacket. Pulling with all her might, she only managed to move him slightly.

"Come on, damn it!" She pulled harder, his unconscious body lifting out of the water. "Wake up and help me!" Her arms were shaking from weakness, and much to her horror, he suddenly slipped out of the life jacket. "NO!" She tossed the thing into the water, on the verge of hysteria.

Leaning as far over the raft as she could without falling overboard, she tried to grab his hair, anything to keep him from floating away. "Oh my god!" The fin suddenly broke the surface and headed straight for him. Remembering her wand, she whipped it out and pointed it... a second too late. She saw Draco's body jerk violently, and then he disappeared under the water.

Everything went grey, and she struggled not to pass out. "Draco!" she screamed as tears streamed down her face. "Draco..." She plopped down in the raft, slid her knees up to her chest and wrapped her arms around herself. "No..." There was this strange feeling, a tingling sensation throughout her body. Her heart felt like it was going to burst, and her lungs gasped for air. "He can't be dead. He just can't!"

Something hit the raft again, and she froze, listening. All she heard were the gulls and the slapping of the water against the sailboat in the distance. Another bump, and this time she panicked, thinking the shark had come back for dessert. "Go away!" she said, her hands twisted in her hair, her eyes shut tightly. The raft tilted to the side, making her lean sideways.

She felt something grab her neck, cold and wet, and she screamed bloody murder. Slapping whatever it was away, she turned and beheld Draco, smiling at her in amusement. "Are you sure you want me to go away?" Blood was streaming down his face, and yet he had the audacity to grin at her. It was too much to bear, and something inside of her snapped.

"You bastard!" Hermione hauled off and punched him dead in the face. His head snapped back, and he grabbed his nose painfully. She pulled back her fist to strike him again, but he caught it and pulled her close to the edge, so that they were face to face.

He kissed her hard on the lips, tasting of salt water and a hint of coppery blood. "I thought you'd be happy I was alive, jump into my arms and squeal in delight... not call me a bastard and break my nose!"

"You scared the shit out of me, Draco Malfoy! I thought you were eaten by that shark! I thought you were dead!" She squirmed out of his grasp and watched him climb into the raft, not offering to help him. "How dare you scare me like that? You could have given me a heart attack, or worse, you could have hurt the baby!"

Draco rolled his eyes. "Jeez, I'm sorry!" He swung his legs over and groaned in pain as he took off his shoe.

"Oh my god! That shark did bite you!" The wound was deep, and blood was seeping from what were clearly teeth marks. "What happened?" she asked, taking off her shirt and wrapping it around the bite. It immediately turned red. "We need to stop the bleeding." She took out her wand and started to whisper a healing spell. "What happened?" She looked at his ankle. The bleeding had slowed, and she turned it, examining the deep punctures. "How did you get away?"

"I woke up when it bit my foot and dragged me under the water. I had no fucking idea what was going on! The last thing I remember was putting the ring on your finger, and then the box fell..."

Hermione conjured a first aid kit out of thin air. "This might sting a little." She poured some peroxide on the bite and cleaned off all the dried blood. "I think I can fix this," she said, waving her wand close to his ankle and concentrating. He was watching her every move, and it was making her quite nervous. After a few minutes, she forgot about him as she concentrated even harder on healing him. After she was satisfied that it would be fine, she wrapped it up and then took a look at his head. "That thing on the sailboat swung around and hit you in the head, and you fell overboard."

"Ow!" He winced as she pressed a wad of gauze to the gash on the back of his head. "That bloody hurts!"

"Sorry." She cleaned it up and went to work trying to heal it. "How did you manage to get away from the shark? Where did it go?" She couldn't help but glance at the water, expecting to see it throw itself onto the raft, mouth full of razor-sharp teeth snapping at them.

Draco screwed up his face in pain as the healing spell burned the wound shut. "When I realized that a giant shark was trying to gnaw my foot off, I pulled out my wand and jabbed it in the damn eye as hard as I could!" He made a stabbing motion in the air. "It let go and swam off... I don't know where to."

"You know, you have managed to get hurt at every place we've been to. I'm beginning to think you're doing it on purpose to get attention." She finished bandaging his head and sat down in front of him. "You look like hell," she said with a smirk to rival one of his own.

"I can imagine. All burned to a crisp, bloody and bruised. People are going to think you are an abusive wife, Granger!"

"Well, maybe I will be. How do you know?" she said, a sly look on her face. "Maybe I'll strap you down and beat you with a whip until you collapse, sweaty and confused, not able to tell the difference between pain and pleasure any more." She raised her eyebrow seductively.

Draco gulped. "You promise?"

"My, my, Draco! I had no idea you liked it kinky!"

"Me? I never expected you to even know about whips and such!"

"I love to read and research, you don't think I've come across a few articles about s-and-m?"

Draco laughed and pulled her in for a long lingering kiss.

Once back aboard the sailboat, they realized that the sun was going down, and that meant that the clock would soon appear because their twelve hours were almost up.

"What if the beach is crowded? How are we going to get inside?" Hermione asked, seeing the shore in the distance.

"I don't know, but the sight of a bunch of Muggles standing around with slack jaw, staring at a massive grandfather clock that just appeared out of nowhere will be quite amusing!"

"True!" Hermione laughed. After a bit they both fell silent, watching the sun go down. It was a very beautiful sight, one they would never forget.

After docking the sailboat, they made their way down towards the beach, which to their horror, was filled with romantic lovers also watching the sunset and making out in the sand.

"Just fucking great!" Draco said. "What are we going to do?"

Hermione thought for a second. "Why not Apparate inside the clock? You Apparated into our room in the cottage."

Draco looked pleased with her idea. "You are brilliant, Granger!" he said and picked her up and swung her around.

"Stop! I'll get dizzy!" She was laughing like a child. He stopped, and she slid down his body, locking her arms around his neck. "I love you," she whispered and laid her head on his bare chest.

Draco had never felt happier in his life. Here he was in a beautiful tropical paradise, and this wonderful, beautiful woman was holding him and telling him the one thing he thought he would never hear from another living soul. It was bliss. Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine that he could ever be this happy.

"And I love you." He held her tightly and closed his eyes, not wanting the moment to ever go away.

"Look!" someone said, a hint of fear in his voice. "What do you suppose that is?"

Draco let go of Hermione, and they watched the air crackle with tiny, pink and violet bolts of lightning. A humming noise got louder and louder, and Muggles started to run away in terror as the clock materialized out of thin air. Right away, it gave a loud chime that vibrated their eardrums.

Hermione stood looking at the clock, and something suddenly hit her. The clock always chimed twelve. It always chimed twelve because the hands never moved. The hands never moved because the...

"Ready?" Draco asked, taking her hand.

Hermione looked up at him, dazed. "Huh?"

"I said, are you ready? Is something wrong?" he asked, concerned. "You look like you've seen a ghost."

She could hear him, but his voice sounded very far away. Surely it couldn't be that simple, could it? But how could they... when the clock never stayed after they got out... There must be a way! Muggles were screaming and holding their ears, but she heard nothing.

Draco by now was about to shake the living daylights out of her. "Hermione! We have to go now!" The clock chimed eleven, and Draco grabbed her and he Apparated them both to the interior of the grandfather clock. He let her go, and she fell up against the wall. There was a dazed look about her, and he started to panic. "God damn it, Granger! What the fuck is wrong with you?" He took her by the shoulders and shook her. "Answer me!"

Hermione blinked twice. She could barely make out his features in the dark. "Draco?"

"Who else would it be?" He let out his breath slowly. "Now, are you going to tell me what is wrong, or am I going to have to read your mind? I can do that you know!"

"You cannot!"

"How would you know? Maybe I can! You don't know everything about me, Granger!"

"Why are you shouting at me?" she asked, annoyed.

"I don't know!" he yelled. "Maybe because you scared me back there! I thought you'd had gone daft or something! You wouldn't answer me; it was like you weren't even there!"

Hermione laughed, laughed loud and hard. "I wasn't there."

Draco paused and gave her a funny look. "What do you mean?"

"I was off in my own head. Something struck me back there when I saw the clock. I think I figured out the letters, and I think I know how to get back home."

Draco was about to say something when the clock thudded to a stop.

Hermione smiled at him and opened the door, stepping out.

"Hold on! We have no idea where we are!" Draco tried to pull her back inside.

"I don't care anymore. I know what we need to do. Nothing is going to stop me from fixing that pendulum! Not Dinosaurs, not Minotaurs, not anything!" She flung him off and stepped out of the clock and into the path of a run-away carriage.

Draco rushed out and managed to tackle her, rolling off to the side of the dirt road just as the huge horses trampled on the exact spot where she was just a second before. He coughed as dust filled his lungs. "Did you say 'pendulum'?" he choked out.

to be continued . . .

"Yes, I said pendulum. The letters spell pendulum." Hermione was lying underneath him, her ribs crushed, her eyes watering from the dust that the horses kicked up.

Draco rolled off her and sat by the roadside, running his hand absently through his hair. He went over and over the letters in his head. Two were missing, and one they couldn't remember, but he guessed they could spell pendulum when put together. "What does it mean?" he finally asked.

"It means we have to make it swing. Think about it, Malfoy. Every single time we've gone into the clock, the hands were at twelve. They've never said anything else, no matter what time it was. That first night when we went inside, you noticed that the pendulum didn't swing. I recall you saying something about it!"

Draco tried to remember what he said, but it seemed like years ago, even though it wasn't. "Now that you mention it, it is strange. I mean, how is the bloody thing chiming when the pendulum isn't moving?"

Hermione shook her head in bewilderment. "I haven't the slightest idea how it works. McGonagall said that Dumbledore had the Unspeakables from the Department of Mysteries make the clock. Who knows what kind of magic is inside."

"Well, there has to be Time Turner dust in there for us to be able to travel through time," Draco said. "How else could it happen?"

Hermione stood up and wiped the dirt from her backside. "In fifth year, during the Battle at the Ministry, we accidentally destroyed all the Time Turners." She began to walk back and forth, thinking. "Perhaps they swept up all the Time Turner dust and used it for the clock." Sighing, she continued, "Whatever, it doesn't really matter, does it?" She stopped pacing and looked down at Draco. "What matters now is figuring a way to keep that clock in one place long enough for us to get that pendulum swinging!"

"Exactly how the fuck are we going to do that? We've tried before to stay inside, and well, you know how that turned out!"

"First things first. We need to go to town to get some supplies." She held out her hand and helped Draco to his feet.

"Town? How do you know there's a town nearby? Is it because of that carriage?"

She gave him a bright smile. "That, Malfoy, was not a carriage, it was a stagecoach."

His eyebrow lifted, and for the first time in a long time, he seemed excited. "A stagecoach? Like in the Old West?"

Hermione thought for a second that Draco was going to dance a jig on the spot. "I take it you like the Old West?"

"Hell yeah! Shootouts and poker games, saloons and hangings! What's not to like?"

"How is it that you know about the Muggle history of another country?" she asked, waving her wand at him.

"Books."

"Books?" she said with a tiny laugh.

"You're not the only one who can read, Granger."

"I never insinuated that you were illiterate, Draco." She waved her wand, and he was suddenly wearing different clothing.

"Then why are you laughing?" He looked down at his new attire. "And what the bloody fucking hell am I wearing?" He was dressed like the men of the Old West, hat and all. He took it off his head, examined it and put it back on. "I've seen pictures of men dressed like this and always wondered how it would feel." He patted his hips and scowled.

"What's wrong?" Hermione asked, amused. "Let me guess... no pistols?"

Draco shrugged. "Well, it would make the outfit complete!" He held up pretend pistols and made shooting sounds.

"If you think I'd let you carry around a Muggle weapon, you're crazy!"

"You think I couldn't twirl them around, shoot a bird at 50 yards and put them back in the holster?" He acted it all out as he described it, making Hermione laugh.

"I don't know about that. I'd just be afraid that you'd shoot your damn foot off or something. Muggle weapons are not toys, Draco. They kill."

Hermione waved her wand over herself and was soon dressed in the womanly clothing of the 1870's. The dress was a blue gingham with a tight bodice and sleeves. The skirt flared out from her tiny waist and was gathered at both sides with tiny bows. White frills peeked out from under the skirt, and on her feet were black walking boots. She adjusted the fashionable bonnet on her head and said, "Ready?"

They walked for maybe half an hour before they came to the overturned stagecoach. They slowly and cautiously made their way over and looked through the windows. No one was inside, but there were clothing and valuables strewn about. The horses were nowhere in sight. It was strange.

"I wonder where the people went?" Hermione asked, scanning the brush on the side of the road. "I hope no one's hurt."

"Look!" Draco shouted, holding up a handful of American greenbacks. "Money, right?" He folded it all up and stuck it in his boot.

"We can't just take that! That would be stealing!"

"Ever heard of finder keepers, Hermione?" He dug through the carpet bags and piles of belongings. "Oooh! What's this?"

He sounded so excited that Hermione knelt down next to him. "What! What did you find?" Her smile quickly turned to a frown, and she stood back up, watching him, and then, she rolled her eyes.

"A mirror!" He pulled out a handheld, expensive looking, mirror from a pile of ladies undergarments. "Damn, I look good in this hat, don't I, Granger?" He moved his head this way and that, admiring himself.

When he blew himself a kiss in the mirror, Hermione lost all patience. "For the love of God, Malfoy! You can snog your reflection some other time! We have things to do!"

Draco gave himself one more look and threw the mirror over his shoulder where it landed in the bushes. "I don't see anything else of use," he said, scanning the area.

They set off again, Hermione clicking her tongue in distaste when he took out the money and counted it.

"What?" he asked. "Still angry about me pilfering?" He smirked. "Get over it. I've done worse."

"I know you have! It's just that, well, what if that person needed that money? What if they have a sick child and were on their way to town to buy medicine?"

"I can't think about that. I have to take care of you, protect you. You and that baby are the most important things in my life, and if I have to steal or kill to see that no harm

comes to you, then so be it!" He tilted back his hat and wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. "We may need this money to buy whatever it is that we need to fix that damn clock."

Hermione knew he was right. They probably were going to need the money, but it still made her feel guilty. "How's your ankle? Does it hurt much?"

"Not at all. You're going to make one hell of a Healer when you grow up!"

Hermione chuckled. "You know, I never gave a serious thought to being a Healer until I knew that I really was going to be one."

Draco rolled his grey eyes. "Well. I still have no interest in being one. Why do you suppose I will choose it as a career?"

"Maybe you love me so much that the thought of me going to St. Mungo's every day, working alongside gorgeous, rich Healers, made you decide to just become one. That way, you could keep an eye on me. I might have an affair."

"Like you'd cheat on me! Honestly, that is just ludicrous!" he laughed. "Look at me... I'm everything a woman could want!"

"I'm surprised that you can walk upright with that big-ass head of yours! I've never seen anyone with a bigger ego than yours... except for Professor Lockhart."

"Whatever happened to that wanker, anyhow?"

"He tried to use Ron's wand to erase his and Harry's memory, and it backfired and Obliviated him instead. We actually saw him at St. Mungo's a few years ago."

"He was a fake and a phony if I ever saw one! I never understood why no one could see that."

"He was a nice guy, Malfoy. A little bit stuck on himself, but other than that..." Her face was turning red, and she looked everywhere but at Draco.

"You thought he was sexy, didn't you, Granger?" Draco said in a sing-song voice. "Admit it! You sat in class thinking about that man ripping off your clothes and bending you over your desk, didn't you?"

"I did not!"

"Oh, paaaleeze!"

"Would you just shut up? We're here."

The town was bustling with activity. People walking, riding, talking, and shopping. Draco wanted desperately to go into the saloon and play cards, and Hermione had to actually physically hold him back. He looked so wide eyed and curious about everything. She was amazed that he didn't pee in his pants.

"I've been thinking," she said as they walked past a General Store, "about how to make the clock remain here long enough to fix the pendulum, and there's only one solution."

"Yeah? And what's that?" he asked, watching the wheel at the lumber mill spin around.

"We have to shoot it."

Draco's head slowly turned in her direction. "What! Are you out of your mind, Granger?"

"It's the only way!" she pleaded. "Unless you have another idea!"

He thought for a moment and could come up with nothing. "I can't believe we are going to break it just to fix it!" He suddenly remembered something. "That clock was hit with the Avada Kedavra curse and nothing broke, what makes you think that shooting it with a Muggle weapon will do anything?"

"I don't know that it'll work, but it can't hurt to try."

"Oh, yes, it can! What if we break it so badly that I can't fix it and we get stuck here for the rest of our lives?"

"Who said YOU were going to fix it?" she asked with a smirk. "Maybe I was planning on doing it."

Draco leaned up against the mill's wooden fence. "No offence, Hermione, but I'm a man, and everyone knows that men are better at fixing things than women, and don't forget that I fixed that Vanishing Cabinet last year by myself."

"You have a point. I'm not very mechanically inclined. I'll shoot and you can fix it."

"Absolutely not! I'm shooting it."

"No, you're not."

"Yes, I am, and that's my final word!"

"Your final word!" she bristled. "Who the hell do you think you are?"

"I'm Draco Malfoy."

"So?"

"That means that you have to do what I say... or else."

"Or else what?"

He grabbed her and kissed her hard on the lips. "Or else I'll never kiss you again."

"Oh no! Whatever shall I do without your kisses?" She feigned anguish, holding her heart.

"Do you really want to find out?" he teased her.

She leaned in and kissed him, pulled back and seemed to think about it. "You know, I think I could live without it."

Draco frowned, his sunburned face getting even redder. "You are not going to shoot that clock, if I have to tie you to a tree and..."

Hermione laughed lightly. "Draco, I was joking. You can fire off all the shots you want. In fact, I'm rather curious to see what kind of aim you have. I'm betting you couldn't hit the broad side of a barn!"

"We'll just see about that!"

Hermione wondered where she could possibly go to buy a gun. Maybe they sold them in the General Store. "Give me the money, Draco. I'm going to go to that shop over there to see about getting a rifle or something."

"Do you want me to come with you?" He could barely tear his eyes away from the doors of the saloon. Loud piano music was drifting from the establishment, and drunken men were shouting and picking fights with one another in the street.

"Yes. I think you should," she said, eyeing him suspiciously. It would be just like him to run across the road to the saloon as soon as she turned her back. Who knew what kind of trouble he would get himself into in there? "You look way to curious, and you know what they say about curiosity."

Draco looked at her with sad puppy dog eyes and a pouting lip. "Come on, Granger! I just want to observe. I promise I won't move from this spot." He gave her his most innocent, pleading face.

Hermion, against her better judgement, gave in. "Fine. You don't have to come, but please do me a favor and stay right here. Do not, under any circumstances, go anywhere near that saloon! Those men look mean and drunk, and there is no telling what could happen to you." He didn't respond. "Draco!"

"Huh? Yeah, all right! I won't go anywhere! I promise!" he said to her unbelieving face.

Hermione frowned and headed across the road to the store, looking back over her shoulder to make sure he stayed where he was.

As soon as Hermione was out of sight, Draco made his way to the saloon. What did she know? He knew he could handle any situation that came his way. He was a Malfoy, and besides, he had a wand.

As he made his way across the dusty road, he was cut off by two men on horses. He heard one of them say something about robbing the bank, and he paused.

"What the hell are you looking at?" one of the men said, looking down at Draco from his horse. His face was filthy, and the smell wafting from him was enough to make Draco want to hurl. The man spit a stream of foul tobacco juice from his mouth, hitting the tip of Draco's boot. Draco looked up and saw the man grinning at him, his rotten teeth flecked with tobacco.

"Nothing." Draco said. "You disgusting fucking pig!" he added in his head. He tipped his hat at them and continued across the road, stopping in front of the saloon. He heard the men laugh and watched as they made their way towards the bank.

Curiosity got the better of him, and he decided to follow them. He had read all about bank robberies, and here was his chance to see one for real. He trailed behind them, trying to look inconspicuous while staring straight ahead like he had some place to get to.

The two men rode their horses up to the bank, and one of them, the filthy guy with the nasty teeth, jumped down and handed the reins to the other man. He grabbed a rifle from the saddle and looked around.

Draco ducked behind the building and peeked around the corner.

"I'll be quick, Jake. In and out, and if anyone gets in my way, I'll blow them in half!" He and Jake laughed, and then Mr. Black Teeth walked up the steps into the bank. Jake nervously glanced around, one hand on the pistol in his holster, the other holding tightly to the horse.

There was shouting, and then a loud shot rang out, a woman screamed and then was silenced by another blast. Draco's heart was thumping, and adrenalin was racing through his body. Jake dropped the reins, pulled out his gun and headed for the door of the bank. Draco jumped out from his hiding place, tackled the robber and forced the pistol from his hand. They struggled, rolling around in the dirt, swearing and hitting each other.

Draco elbowed Jake in the head and managed to get to his feet. He kicked the thief in the bridge of his nose and shouted, "Stop right there, or I'll blow your fucking brains out!" He pointed the gun at the man, who was lying on the ground, bloody and pissed off.

The door to the bank suddenly burst open, and without thinking, Draco turned and fired off a shot, hitting the other robber in the chest. The man spun comically on his heel and fell off the steps, landing in the dirt. A large sack of gold and paper money flew into the air and wafted down around his dying body.

Hermione stepped out of the store, supplies loaded in her arms, and beheld all hell breaking loose. People were scattering in every direction, and the Sheriff streaked by on a black horse, narrowly missing her. She dropped the goods she had just purchased and ran to where Draco was suppose to be waiting for her.

"Draco!" she called, trying to be heard over the noise. He was nowhere to be found, and she started to panic. She followed the crowd, fearing the worst. She should have known better than to leave him alone in an alien Muggle world. "Draco!" she shouted again, and the crowd scattered in every direction as another gunshot rang out. Hermione knew something was terribly wrong, and she rushed through the throngs of fleeing terrified people, praying to whatever god there was that Draco was not dead.

Draco stared in shock at what he had just done. He had really just killed a man, and he was certain he was in serious deep shit if the authorities showed up. He started to lower the pistol with a shaky hand when the man on the ground grabbed his leg. Draco jumped and impulsively fired a shot into the man's head. Blood and brains flew up, splattering him in the face. People ran screaming as Draco turned, his mouth hanging open in horror. He took a step, ready to make a run for it, when suddenly there was a rifle pointed at his back.

"Drop it son, or I'll shoot," the Sheriff said.

Draco tossed the gun on the ground beside the now faceless Jake and put his hands in the air.

Hermione broke through the crowd and stopped dead. "I leave him alone for ten minutes and look what happens!"

20

Chapter 20 of 27

Draco gets himself into a bit of trouble, Hermione as a fetish for cowboy hats, and we get to see if shooting the clock will work.

One of the Sheriff's Deputies kicked the gun out of Draco's reach, and it skittered across the ground. Hermione nonchalantly bent over, picked it up, and hid it behind her back.

Draco was standing there, looking as if he was mentally taking an excursion on a distant planet. Did he just commit murder, or was that just a figment of his imagination? He felt detached from himself and wavered on a thin line between sanity and madness.

"Hands on your head!" the Sheriff shouted. He was still mounted on his horse, his shotgun pointed directly at Draco. "I said hands on your head!"

Draco slowly placed his hands on his head, his eyes caught Hermione's, and he saw her bring one hand from behind her back. The sun glinted off the polished metal of the hand gun she held. "No!" he mouthed. He didn't need her to start a shoot out just to save him! What if she got hurt?

Hermione cocked an eyebrow at him. It was clear that he didn't want her to aim the weapon at the Sheriff just to rescue him. He probably thought that she wouldn't be able to succeed in saving him. How typical of him to underestimate her like that! She hid the gun behind her again and pulled out her wand instead. This time, Draco smiled at her.

"What the hell are you smiling about?" the Deputy said and pushed him to the ground. He placed one booted foot on Draco's back, forcing the air out of him.

Draco coughed, dirt and dust filling his lungs. His hat was knocked off his head, and he felt the tip of the Deputy's rifle on the back of his head.

The door to the bank opened, and a man came running down the steps just as Hermione raised her wand, ready to blast everyone out of her way.

The man ran towards the Sheriff. "Sheriff!" the man shouted. "Bank robbers!"

"What are you blabbering about, Josiah?" the Sheriff asked.

Josiah was out of breath, and he clung to the horse. "That man!" he said, motioning towards the dead man with gold coins tinted in blood and paper money stuck to his stiffening body. "That one came into the bank and demanded money! He shot poor Mrs. Simmons!"

The Sheriff still didn't lower his shotgun. "And this man?" he asked, his weapon pointed towards Draco, who was face down on the ground, struggling to breathe. "He was in on it, wasn't he?"

Hermione couldn't take it anymore. She stepped forward, her wand at her side, the hand holding the pistol still behind her back. "Please! He had nothing to do with this!"

The Sheriff looked down from his horse at her. "Who are you?"

Hermione thought quickly. "My name is Jane, and this is my husband, Drac...Drake Mallory. Please! We are just passing through this town! He doesn't know these men; you've got to believe me!"

"Where are you from? You have a strange accent."

Hermione had forgotten about that. "We're from England. We are just visiting. We were on a stagecoach that was robbed by these two men. They killed the driver, left us for dead and stole the horses, not to mention all of our money."

Draco managed to turn his head and look at her. He was amazed at her courage and the fact that she could make up a lie like that on the spot.

"If you don't believe me, just follow that road and see for yourself! The stagecoach is there, over turned, and all of our things are scattered about." She glared at him defiantly. "I'm telling you that he had nothing to do with this robbery."

The Sheriff studied Hermione. He thought himself a good judge of character, and he immediately liked this girl for some reason. Not taking his eyes from her, he addressed his Deputy. "Let him up, Starks."

Starks looked disappointed that he wasn't going to be killing anyone. "On your feet, boy!" he said gruffly, lifting Draco up by the back of his overcoat.

"Speak, boy! Tell me what happened," the Sheriff said, dropping his weapon.

Draco brushed the dirt from his clothes, picked up his hat and placed it gently on his head. "First off, stop calling me 'boy', I'm a grown man. Secondly, tell your man, Starks, here to lower his gun."

The Sheriff nodded to Starks, and he slung his rifle over his shoulder.

"Thank you," Draco said. "It's like my wife said; our stagecoach was over taken by these jackasses. We were left defenseless and walked all the way to town. Jane went to the General Store over there to buy provisions with what little money we managed to hide from them." Draco tilted back his hat. "I was crossing the road when these two rode by on the stolen horses, talking about robbing the bank. Of course, I recognized them, and being curious and maybe a tad bit stupid, I decided to follow them."

"Why didn't you high tail it to the jail and tell me what you overheard?" the Sheriff asked.

Draco frowned and shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I didn't think about that."

"He rarely thinks before acting," Hermione said angrily. "Gets us into a fair amount of trouble it does."

The Sheriff smiled knowingly at Hermione. "And then what happened, Mr. Mallory?"

"I hid beside the bank. There were gun shots, and this guy here," he pointed to Jake, "went towards the door, and I tackled him to the ground and got his gun away from him."

"And then what?"

"Well, the man that went into the bank came out, and I don't know, I just panicked, and I shot the bastard."

The Sheriff smirked at Draco, liking his use of profanity. He thought all English men were pansies, who drank tea from tiny china cups and cultivated rose gardens.

"And then this asshole tried to grab my leg, and I blew his bloody head off! End of story!"

"This man is a hero, Sheriff!" the banker said, taking a step towards Draco and extended his hand. "He should be rewarded, not hauled off to jail!" He shook Draco's hand, grinning from ear to ear. "You did a real bang up job on these would-be thieves! You're a real curly wolf, you are!"

"I agree, Josiah," the Sheriff said, dismounting his horse and slapping Draco on the back. "Name it. Anything you want."

Draco looked at Hermione who just shrugged. He glanced at the horses that the two robbers had ridden into town on. "I want the horses."

The sheriff and Deputy Starks were both taken aback by the request. They watched Draco as he walked over to the strawberry roan and stroked its mane. This man could have any reward he wanted and had decided to ask for horses?

"Very well," the Sheriff said, looking at Draco like he was crazy.

"Are you sure you don't want money?"

"I'm sure. Just these horses will do."

The Sheriff gave in and ordered the Deputy to take care of the dead bodies and then rode away, shaking his head and muttering about crazy foreigners.

Hermione walked over to the other horse, a chestnut gelding, and led it over to Draco by the bridle. "You are so lucky. That could have turned out very badly."

"But it didn't! And now we have transportation." He put his foot in the stirrup and swung himself onto the horse. He picked up the reins and turned the horse like an expert.

Hermione thought about how damn handsome he looked, sitting on that horse in his cowboy clothes. "This time period suits you," she said. "Are you sure you don't want to stay here for the rest of our lives?"

"Tempting," he said, as if considering the very idea. "It would solve a lot of our problems; the main one being telling my father about us."

Hermione laughed, and so did he as she struggled to get on her horse.

"Need help?"

"No."

"Yes, you do."

"No, I don't. I've ridden plenty of times! I know what I'm doing!"

Draco smirked at her, loving how she hated to admit she couldn't do something. After many attempts and much laughter from people passing on the street, she finally succeeded in mounting the animal. "Did you get the supplies from the store?" he asked.

Hermione smacked herself in the forehead. "I dropped them when I heard the gunshots. The supplies are probably still where I left them."

They headed towards the store. Draco picked up their goods that rested on the ground and then put everything in the saddlebags because Hermione didn't want to get off the horse for fear she wouldn't be able to get back on. He made fun of her the entire time, and finally she snapped.

"Shut up, Malfoy! I may not be able to get onto a horse, but I bet I can ride better than you!"

Draco bent over in laughter. "You're not serious, Granger! I've been around horses all my life. I've raced them, jumped them and bred them."

"As they say in the Old West, 'I don't give a continental' if you've raced them, bred them or even had sex with them... I'm telling you, I can ride better." Hermione sat there, side-saddle with her back straight, looking like a lady. "I'll race you."

Draco stopped laughing and cocked his eyebrow. "You're on." He leaped onto his horse, squeezed the horse's side with his legs, clicked his tongue, and then he took off with lightning speed and a loud, "Yeeeeehaaawww!"

Hermione watched him tear-ass down the road with a big grin on her face. She trotted around the bend and then gripped the horse tightly around its neck. She closed her eyes, concentrated and then disappeared into thin air, along with the animal.

Draco was riding like the wind, he felt so free... like he was going to win! Too bad ahead in the distance on the side of the road was Hermione, sitting side-saddle on her horse, waving happily at him. "What the fuck?" he said. He slowed his animal down and pulled up beside her.

"What took you so long, Malfoy?" she asked sweetly.

His horse was foaming at the mouth, and so was he. "You are a cheating bitch!" He shouted. "There is no way you rode past me without me seeing you! What did you do? Apparate?"

Hermione really didn't expect him to react so angrily. "Oh, calm down! It was just a stupid race!"

"A stupid race that you knew you couldn't win, and so you cheated! You... you cheater!"

"Wonderful insult, Draco," she said sarcastically. "I'm beginning to think you're slipping," she laughed. "Cheater? Is that the best you can do?"

"If you weren't a woman, I'd kick your ass, Granger!"

"If I wasn't a woman, I'd kick YOUR ass, Draco... and win!"

Draco clenched his teeth together so hard that his jaw was cramping and the tendons in his neck stood out like cords. This woman was impossible! She was a total pain in the ass, a...

Hermione saw him struggling to keep from exploding. For some odd reason, it was turning her on. "You look so damn sexy when you're angry," she said in a low sensual voice. "Face all flushed, eyes swirling like smoke drifting from a wildfire, hard muscles rippling beneath that clinging shirt, that hat cocked back on your pale head... makes me want to rip your clothes off right now and ride you hard like you rode that horse."

Draco's angry tirade in his mind quickly vanished and was replaced by disbelief. "Are you out of your mind?" he asked, rolling his eyes. "I'm too upset with you right now to even think about grabbing you from that horse, ripping your tight bodice open and sucking your stiff nipples while my hands explore your silky pussy under your pantalettes!"

Hermione looked at him with wide eyes and then burst out laughing. "Pantalettes?" she said. "Since when did you know so much about ladies' undergarments in the 1800's?" She was laughing so hard that she almost fell off her horse.

"Hey! Be careful!" Draco said, reaching out for her just in the nick of time. "I don't need you to fall and break your neck!" She was now suffering from a loud case of hiccups along with her hysterical giggles. Draco couldn't help but chuckle along with her; it was contagious.

"I can just imagine you! Sitting in on a haystack in the stable, leafing through a catalogue with pictures of petticoats and stays!" She hiccupped so loudly that the horse jumped. "That's what you did, isn't it?" She pretended to look through a magazine. "Oh! Look at that woman's bosom in that tight, tight corset!" I bet you had many lurid fantasies about taking a sharp knife, cutting the rib-crunching clothing from her body and ravishing her while the horses look on!"

"Hey!" he laughed. "This one time my mother came in while I was, um... in the midst of pretending to ravish a saloon girl and caught me with my cock in my hand!"

Hermione totally lost it. She could barely breathe, and tears of mirth were streaming down her face. "Nah uh! What did she do?"

"She helped me finish of course," Draco said in a hard, serious voice.

Hermione's head snapped up and she abruptly stopped laughing. Wiping her eyes with the back of one white-gloved hand, she cleared her throat. "You... she... you're not serious, are you?" she asked, disgusted and embarrassed. Maybe Pureblood families frequently practiced incest. What if when she married Draco, she would be expected

to have sex with Lucius? The bile rose up in her throat just thinking about it.

Draco's eyes glinted mischievously. "I'm telling you the truth, Hermione. My mother and I have done things to one another and to our horses that would make a whore blush." He grinned at her, loving how uncomfortable she was, how shocked she looked. "Sometimes my aunts, uncles and cousins will come over, and we will all screw each other. We'll take turns sucking, licking and fucking one another until daybreak." Draco leaned forward, a sexy smirk on his lips. "I've learned a lot from Mother's instructions, not to mention the many things my dear father has taught me, such as, how to properly suck a cock..."

"What! I don't want to hear anymore!" she shouted. "You are disgusting! Your entire family are sick perverts, and if you think I want anything to do with your incestuous inbreeding program, you're absolutely out of your fucking mind!"

It was Draco's turn to break into hysterical laughter.

"Why? How dare you joke about something like that?" Hermione shouted, shaking with anger. "You had me thinking that I'm about to marry into a twisted, fornicating version of the Brady Bunch!"

"How could you honestly think that my family would ever do something like that?" he asked in all seriousness. "And who the bloody hell is the Brady Bunch?"

Hermione sighed, "Actually, quite a few people think that's exactly the kind of thing that goes on in Pureblood families."

"What?" Draco said, shocked. "Blood Profiling?" He frowned. "And they accuse us of being racist and judgmental! Like we Purebloods would have babies with our mothers and father. That's just disturbing!"

"Draco, incest happens in every country, every culture, no matter what kind of blood you have." Hermione shifted on her horse; her ass was getting numb. "So, what have we learned here today from our discussion of this taboo subject?"

"That whether you're a Pureblood, a Muggle or a Mudblood... er Muggle-born." He looked at her apologetically. "We are all the same: fucked up."

"Right-o!" Hermione said. "And now, can we set up camp? I can't feel my arse anymore!"

They found the spot where they expected the clock to appear and built a small fire. Hermione opened up the bed rolls and laid them out. All they had to eat were strips of venison jerky and a few apples that she had bought at the General Store. Luckily, they could produce water from their wands with the Aguamenti Charm and not die of thirst. They gave the horses some water and then let them graze not too far from where they set up camp.

After eating their meager meal, they sat next to the dying fire. As Draco's back rested on a log, Hermione was lying on her bed roll with her head in his lap. The sun was beginning to set, and it was very peaceful. The only sounds that were heard were the crackling of the flames and the distant cries of a coyote.

"Draco?" Hermione said, staring up at the cloudless, darkening sky. "What's your favorite color?"

"My what?" he asked, amused. He was twirling a piece of her hair around his finger, loving the soft texture.

"Do you realize that we know next to nothing about each other? How strange is that?" She looked up at him, seeing the thoughtful expression on his face.

"You're wrong. I might not know if you prefer winter or summer, or what your favorite vegetable is, but what I do know is more important." He caressed her cheek with the back of his hand. "I know that you drool when you sleep. I know you bite your fingernails when you're stressed. I know how you liked to be kissed, to be touched, and I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I love you."

Hermione lifted her head, and as their lips met, she thought about how wrong she had been how wrong they had all been about him. He was gentle and caring, and such a romantic and loving soul, nothing like they believed him to be all these years. She was the luckiest woman on the face of the earth to have the love of this man.

He deepened the kiss as she opened his shirt and slipped it off; her hands running up and down his chest caused him to shiver at the feel of her touch. He moaned as she unfastened his pants and slid a hand inside. Her stroking and squeezing were driving him to the brink of insanity, and he was about to explode when he felt her remove her hand.

Hermione sat up and pulled his boots off one at a time, tossing them over her shoulder so they landed in the bushes by the side of the road. She winked at him saucily as she tugged his pants off, exposing his naked flesh to the cool, night air. "No! Leave it on," she said as he was about to take his hat off. "I want to make love to you while you're wearing nothing but that hat."

He smirked at her and put it back on his head. She knelt over him and captured his mouth in a sensual, passionate kiss. His eyes closed in ecstasy as he felt her hot lips and tongue make their way down his body until she came to his weeping, erect cock.

Hermione licked the tip and then blew on it gently, causing him to groan with pleasure. He grabbed her hair and wrapped it around his fingers, pulling hard. She loved the sensation that walked a fine line between pleasure and pain. She snaked her tongue up and down his stiff cock, loving the way he tasted.

"Fuck!" he said, suddenly pulling her head away, trying to sit up.

Hermione was momentarily confused. "What? What's wrong?" She watched him scramble to his feet and run towards the saddlebags.

"The fucking clock!" He pointed to a spot behind her, closer to the road.

Hermione turned her head and saw bright lightning bolts zigzagging through the darkness. She jumped up quickly. "Where's the gun? What did you do with the gun?"

Draco was rummaging through the bags, frantically searching for the weapon, as the clock materialized and struck one. "Come on! Where the fuck did I put it!"

Hermione ran over and helped him, throwing small pots and other supplies everywhere. It struck two, and her heart began hammering in her chest. "We need to find it! Think! Where did you put it?"

"If I fucking knew where I put it, Granger, I wouldn't be fucking looking for it now, would I?" His voice was very high-pitched and bordering on panic. The clock struck three and then four, and still they couldn't locate it. It was so damn dark now that they could not see anything that wasn't right by the fire.

Five... six. "What are we going to do?" Hermione asked. "I really don't want to wait to do this! I don't think I can take another time trip! I can't!" She began sobbing, making Draco furious. Seven... eight... nine.

"Just stop your damn crying and help me!" he shouted, searching by the bushes where the horses were. "Found it!" He pulled the pistol out from under his discarded boot. The clock struck ten, Draco aimed directly at the glass that encased the pendulum and fired.

Hermione screamed as the glass shattered, sending splinters flying through the air. The bullet hit the pendulum and ricocheted. Then, much to their amazement, it started to swing.

They looked at each other incredulously. Draco grabbed her by the wrist and he ran with her, almost pulling her arm out of socket. They made it inside just as the clock struck twelve.

They were both breathing heavily, clinging to one another as the clock whirled loudly and then came to a shuddering stop.

Draco took Hermione's hand and said, "Are you ready?"

She nodded, and he opened the secret door, and then they stepped out. Right away, they knew they were back at Hogwarts. Filch was still sleeping on the stairs, and everything looked the same as when they had left, except for the three shocked people standing in front of the clock.

"Malfoy?" Harry said with wide eyes.

"Hermione?" Ron screeched. His eyes traveled to their interlocked hands. "What are you doing holding hands with Malfoy?"

"I think the better question is," Ginny said, "why is Malfoy wearing nothing but a cowboy hat?"

21

Chapter 21 of 27

Draco and Hermione have some explaining to do!

A/N: Some of you may be confused right now. It seems that this chapter was accidentally left out, and so I've had to go back and adjust the chapters. The next two chapters after have already been previously posted and should be back up soon, as well as the final ones. Thank you for your patience!

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy, I'm also curious about that."

Draco snatched the hat from his head and covered up his private parts as fast as lightning. "Professor McGonagall! I... er... well, you see..." He gave up, snapped his mouth shut and just shrugged.

"Well? I'm waiting for an explanation." She glanced down as Mrs. Norris came towards her, meowing loudly. She looked up and noticed that Filch was sprawled out on the stairs, unmoving. "What happened to Argus?" she ran to him and checked his pulse. "This man has been Stunned!" She stood up, her mouth a thin line of disgust. Her eyes flashed with anger, and her wand shook furiously in her hand. "I want answers! Who did this?"

"That would be me, Professor," Harry answered, a little frightened. He had seen her angry plenty of times and still always expected her to box his ears. "I had to!"

"You had to?" she exclaimed, her voice raised. "I have never, in all of my years! Five students out after curfew, one of them naked, for Merlin's sake!" She waved her wand, and both Hermione and Draco were suddenly dressed in their school robes.

Ginny, ever courageous, spoke up. "Professor, let me explain." The Headmistress glared at her, waiting for her to continue. "Well, you see, Hermione had been acting strange all week, and we were worried about her." Ginny glanced over at Hermione, looking concerned, even though the girl was clearly not harmed in any way. In fact, she was glowing and seemed happy, holding Malfoy's hand. It was very weird to say the least. "We were in the Common Room, and Ron suggested we look at the map because he hadn't seen her come back from the library."

"What map?" Professor McGonagall asked. "Are you talking about that Marauder's Map?"

"You know about that?" Ron asked.

"Yes, I know about it, Mr. Weasley. Albus told me all about it. I thought, as well as Severus..." Her voice trailed off. "Well, never mind. What happened next? Did you locate her on the map?"

Harry frowned. "It was really strange. We saw her hanging out by the clock, and then Malfoy," he shot Draco a filthy look, "showed up. We thought he was going to hurt her or something!"

"We saw Filch coming, and then Hermione and Malfoy just disappeared from the map," Ginny added. "We ran down here as fast as we could, Stunned Filch when he started to wake up and then..."

"The clock was missing, and we couldn't understand where it had gone. Then there was this strange wind and weird-colored lightning bolts. The clock appeared out of thin air, and then Hermione and a bare-ass Malfoy came stumbling out of the clock!" Ron pitched in quickly, his face an ugly shade of scarlet.

Draco let go of Hermione, his eyebrows raised in confusion. He asked no one in particular, "Are you saying that we haven't been gone for days, or even a week?" He glanced at an equally stunned Hermione. They couldn't believe it!

"No. It's still the same day. Have you gone daft or something?" Ron said, grinning. "Always thought you were a dumb blond!"

"He hasn't gone daft, Ron," Hermione said, rolling her eyes. "He's confused, as well as I am. We went into that clock, and I swear we were gone for at least six days."

Professor McGonagall went over to the clock and checked it out. "The glass is shattered." She looked around at the ground. "I see no broken glass on the floor..." Her face suddenly screwed up, and she looked as though she just swallowed a glass of urine. "The pendulum. It's moving!"

Harry, Ginny and Ron all looked at the front of the clock where the heavy gold pendulum was swinging behind its broken case. They thought nothing of it. None of them had noticed that it had been broken in the first place.

"You say that you and Mr. Malfoy went into the clock? Show me where you entered."

Draco took Hermione by the hand, making Ron frown, and then he opened the secret door on the side of the clock. Minerva started to go inside, and Draco held her back. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. Unless you want to be buried alive in Egypt, chased by a T-rex or perhaps lead a parade of hypnotized suicidal rats to their watery grave."

"What the bloody hell are you talking about?" Harry asked. "Egypt? Rats?" he laughed. "Maybe Ron was right. You have lost your mind!"

"I have not, Potter, and I suggest you keep your damn mouth shut!"

"Why don't you shut it for me, Malfoy?" Harry said, pulling out his wand.

Draco went to get his and realized that he didn't have it. "I lost my fucking wand again!"

"Mr. Malfoy!" Professor McGonagall shouted, scandalized.

"Don't worry, I'm sure daddy will buy you another one. Oh, wait! That's right, he's in Azkaban!" Ron said with a snide grin. His grin suddenly turned to shock as Hermione's wand was thrust into his face.

"One more word, Ron and..."

"And you'll what?" he asked. "Why are you acting like this? Why are you holding his hand and taking his side? What did he do to you?"

Hermione lowered her wand and stepped back. "You want to know what he did to me? He took care of me, protected me, rescued me from danger! He told me I was beautiful and sexy. He made me feel special; he made me fall in love with him!"

Ginny smiled, Harry only raised his eyebrow, and Ron's mouth fell open in shock.

Professor McGonagall was silent. She had no idea as to what this clock was all about. All she knew was that this Muggle-born Gryffindor had just announced that she was in love with this arrogant son of a Death Eater and that all hell was about to break loose. What should she do?

"Not true!" Ron managed to say, lunging at Draco. "What did you do to her?" He knocked Hermione out of the way, which infuriated Draco. "I'm going to kill you! You did something to her! She could never love you, let alone stand the sight of you!" Ron's face was twisted in anger, and even though Harry and Ginny tried to hold him back, he went for Draco, ready to kill him.

Draco pulled back his fist and punched Ron dead in the face. "Before you go and accuse me of slipping her a love potion or messing with her mind, there are a few things you need to get straight, Weasley!" Draco cradled his injured hand. "Now, shut the fuck up and listen to me!"

Ron staggered and fell against Harry. Grabbing his robe to catch his balance, Ron almost dragged Harry along with him to the floor. His fingers went straight to his mouth, and seeing blood, he screamed in a furious rage.

Professor McGonagall had totally lost her patience and pulled out her wand, ready to Stun the lot of them. She rushed forward to help Ron and stepped on the bushy tail of Mrs. Norris in the process. The cat hissed loudly and took off like a bat out of hell.

Draco pulled Hermione close and asked her if Ron had hurt her when he pushed her. After seeing that she was fine, he turned to Ron once more. "It's a good thing she's okay. If you had hurt her or our baby, I would have ripped your bloody head off!"

The silence that followed this threat was so profound that Hermione thought she had gone momentarily deaf. Everyone was frozen in place. It would have been funny had it been a different situation.

Professor McGonagall finally found her voice. "All of you, my office, right now." She gave this command in a clear, calm voice, but inside she was shaken to the core. Of course, this had happened before. Almost every year there was a least one girl who found her way into her office, crying about being taken advantage of and in a total panic because she was now with child. This was different, this was...dare she say it? Sort of exciting in a bizarre way. She left Filch lying on the steps, knowing the spell would wear off soon, and led the way to her office.

Harry and Ginny each took one of Ron's arms and basically dragged him up the stairs behind the Professor. "Did Malfoy really just say that he and Hermione are having a baby, or did someone slip me some hallucinogenic potion during dinner?" Ginny asked.

Harry looked over the top of Ron's head. "You're not tripping, Gin. He really did say it."

"It's just so weird! Only yesterday she was saying what a stuck up piece of rat shit he was, and today we find out she's going to give birth to Draco Jr.!" Ginny glanced over her shoulder at her friend, who was whispering heatedly with Draco. "Maybe we shouldn't worry. It looks like there's trouble in paradise already."

Harry and Ron both turned their heads, beheld them fighting and then smiled hugely at one another. It was clear to them that this was all a passing fancy and that Hermione would dump the evil bastard and things would return to normal... As normal as it could with her having his baby, that is. They would soon find out just how wrong they were.

Draco saw them staring. "What the fuck are you looking at? Mind your own business!" he snapped angrily.

Harry and Ron smiled at him sweetly and then continued up the stairs, laughing.

"Is everything all right, Hermione?" Ginny asked.

"Nothing's wrong, Ginny. We're just worried that we're going to be expelled."

"Oh," Ginny replied slowly. "Well, if you need me, you know where to find me."

"Yeah, under Potter," Draco said, thinking he was witty.

Ginny and Hermione were not amused.

"Whoops! Sorry! I better watch what I'm saying. After all, in the future, we'll be in-laws."

"What? What are you talking about, Malfoy?"

Hermione elbowed Draco hard in the ribs. "I'll tell you later. We need to catch up with the professor."

"Please, have a seat," Professor McGonagall said, flicking her wand. Five chairs appeared around her desk, and they all sat down. "Now, I want you to start from the beginning," she said to Hermione. "Tell me everything."

Hermione knew she couldn't tell her EVERYTHING; that would be embarrassing. She also had no intention of telling her about her daughter and her grandson. Draco didn't even know about that. "After we went into the clock, we ended up first in Ancient Egypt where we were mistaken for Osiris and Isis..."

She got through the whole Egypt thing with minimal interruptions and managed to skip the part about Draco almost being forced to rape her. "We ended up buried alive under the Step-Pyramid, and that's where we saw the first message."

She told them what it said and then told how they escaped with the help of the Pharaoh's Steward, again skipping all the sexual stuff. She hadn't really realized how much of it there was.

"And where did you go next?" Minerva asked, knowing that Hermione was skipping things by the way she blushed and refused to look her in the eye. "Why don't you tell me, Mr. Malfoy?"

Draco seemed to come out of a trance. It was strange to hear her retell what they had gone through. Was it really that dangerous? Dumbledore was an idiot to put them through the horrific ordeals, and for what? They still didn't know!

"We ended up in the age of the dinosaurs, and let me tell you, I never want to ever go back, ever!" He told them about how Hermione was almost eaten by the pack of Deinonychus, and Hermione interrupted with the tale of Draco rescuing her and being seriously wounded.

"And you managed to heal him?" Minerva asked, clearly impressed. "Amazing."

Hermione motioned for Draco to continue. As he told about the message on the log, she watched the faces of her friends. Ginny was horrified, Harry was listening with rapt attention, and Ron was staring at the floor, trying to pretend he wasn't interested. What were they thinking about this whole situation? Were they going to accept this once the story was over? Would they tell her they just couldn't deal with Draco and she would lose their friendship forever? Panic set in, and she suddenly felt sick.

The walls felt like they were closing in. What would she do without her best friends? She suddenly froze, remembering something. Wait a minute! She knew that everything turned out okay! Amethyst told her that Ron, Draco and Harry were all good friends. She said Draco was devastated when Harry passed away! Hermione visibly relaxed. Everything was going to be fine, nothing to worry about.

"I managed to pull her up before she fell to her death," Draco said dramatically, and Ginny gasped. He was loving this. "We made it to the clock just in time."

"He gave the finger to the dinosaurs before closing the door," Hermione said with a smile.

Draco wanted to tell about Crete, so Hermione let him, even though he insisted on telling everyone about her going to dinner with her breasts hanging out. "There was this big mix-up, and, well, I ended up being part of the sacrifice to the Minotaur."

"Mix up? Is that what you call it?" Hermione said, glaring at him. "You set it up so that I would see you having sex with the King's daughter!"

Ron looked interested for the first time. "He did what?"

"Nothing, never mind, Weasley." Crete sure was a sore spot for them, and it always caused an argument. Draco decided that this was the last time he was ever going to mention it. "Anyway, Hermione saved me from the clutches of the feared Man-Bull, and then we ended up far into the future."

"Into the future?" Ginny asked, intrigued. "How far into the future?"

Hermione and Draco looked at each other uneasily. Neither one wanted to tell this tale. It was heartbreaking and full of secrets...a very dangerous territory to tread.

Minerva could sense the tension. "What's wrong? What did you see?"

It was Draco's turn to stare at the floor. "I saw myself die," he said softly.

"You say you saw yourself die?" Harry asked, mortified. "You're lying!"

"I wish to God I was, Potter! No one should EVER see themselves die; it was bloody awful!" Draco's hands were beginning to shake, and he was close to fleeing the room. The last thing he wanted was for Potter and Weasley to see him cry.

Hermione took his hand and squeezed it, hoping it would comfort him. She could tell there was no way he was going to be able to tell this part of the story, so she did. "We stepped out of the clock and into a graveyard. Up ahead there was a huge manor house. Draco took off running like a crazy person, only stopping when he got to the porch."

She told of meeting the mysterious Amethyst and her grandfather. "Later, I learned that Draco knew exactly who that old dying man in the bed was." Hermione took a giant breath and let it out slowly. "Draco and I had a huge row, and I ended up in the old man's room. He showed me pictures of his children...three little girls. They were our girls, Draco's and mine."

Ginny almost jumped out of her seat. "You actually saw photos of your future children? That's... that's... Were you excited?"

"I was so excited, Gin, that I passed out. Draco went to talk to his old self, and when I woke up, Amethyst, my granddaughter, was waiting to talk to me. She had a family tree and more pictures." Hermione said nothing about her strange dream or about Jasper; had she mentioned it, Draco might have been able to put a piece of the puzzle in place.

"What did you talk about with yourself, Malfoy?" Harry asked. "I can't imagine how strange it must have been."

Draco really didn't want to discuss it at all. "What can I say? We joked about how old he was. He cried because Hermione had died some fifteen years earlier and he was alone, and then he told me that something was going to happen."

Everyone leaned forward in their seats, including Ron, waiting to hear what was going to happen.

Draco swallowed the huge lump in his throat. "He told me that Hermione and I were going to make love that night and that she was going to get pregnant...and then he died." Had he told everyone what the old man had really said, Hermione might have realized how she died and who was behind it all, but he said nothing.

"You told me earlier that we end up being in-laws," Ginny said. "Tell me about that. I want to know what you meant." She looked Malfoy straight in the eyes.

"It seems that my oldest daughter has horrible taste in men." He frowned. "Why else would she marry a Potter-Weasley freak of nature?"

Harry and Ginny's faces lit up, and they became extremely excited, trying to talk over each other. They were shooting questions at him like bullets from a gun.

"Whoa! Wait a minute!" Draco said. "One at a time!" he laughed, "Potter, you first."

"I want to know when this happens. If Hermione is pregnant now, and you said your oldest daughter marries our... son," he said with a strange look on his face. "Then Ginny must have a baby soon as well."

Ginny's face turned as red as her hair. "Well, all I know is that I'm not having a baby right now. Maybe their daughter likes younger men or something! My Mum would kill me, and not to mention that Fred and George would disembowel Harry if I got pregnant before I graduated from school!" Harry tried to hug her, but she slapped him away. "Nah uh, no way! Don't you even think about touching me!"

Draco was almost falling out of his seat with laughter. Ron was too stunned to do anything, and Professor McGonagall watched with sudden interest in the fact that Dumbledore's portrait was listening intently to the conversation.

"It doesn't matter WHEN it happens," Hermione said. "What matters is that it DOES happen. Our children fall in love and get married, they have a child, and she is the most wonderful woman in the world! She is Draco's favorite grandchild, and she inherits everything...the money, the Manor...everything."

Ron made a grumbling noise. and all heads turned towards him.

"Something wrong, Weasley?" Draco inquired.

Ron looked kind of embarrassed and upset and managed to sputter out a question. "What about me? What happens to me in the future?"

Hermione gave him a bright smile that instantly made him feel better. "Our youngest daughter, Emerald, marries your son, Jack, and they have two little girls."

"My son? But who is Jack's mother? Who do I marry?"

Draco smirked. "Let's just say that you love to keep it in ZE family," he said in a horrible French accent, "and that you're a CRADLE ROBBER."

Ron was clueless, and no matter how hard he tried to think of whom it could be. He came up empty-handed. Harry and Ginny just rolled their eyes and shook their heads in wonderment at how thick he was. Minerva was still studying the picture of Dumbledore. He winked at her behind his half-moon glasses, and she smiled. She missed him so much!

"I give up. Who is she?" Ron said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Merlin, you're stupid, Weasley!" Draco said in disgust. "Fleur's little sister, that Gabrielle girl?"

Ron's jaw dropped. "But she's like ten years younger than me!"

"Ron, Amee told me that you and Gabby are very happy! In fact, when we visited the future, I was told that you still loved chasing her around in your wheelchair trying to pinch her bum."

"I WAS always the ladies man!" Ron said, slicking back his messy hair.

"Paleeze!" Draco said, "You, the ladies man? You've had what, two girlfriends?"

Ron jumped out of his seat, his wand held aloft, ready to hex the shit out of Draco. "I hate you. You know that? You don't deserve Hermione; you don't deserve to even be alive!"

"MR. WEASLEY!" Professor McGonagall shouted. "That is enough! Now lower your wand!" She was now standing, her hands resting on the top of her desk, her eyes flashing with anger.

Ron, for a fleeting moment, almost decided to defy the Headmistress and just go ahead and kill Malfoy. He would be doing everyone a favor, wouldn't he? "You're lucky we're not alone."

"No, Weasley, YOU'RE lucky. We both know that I'm much better at magic than you."

Hermione had had enough. "Both of you just calm down! How you two ever end up being best friends is totally beyond me!"

Draco and Ron both snapped their heads in her direction.

"Sit down, Mr. Weasley!" Minerva said, more calmly this time.

Ron and Draco glared at each other as Ron took his seat.

"Now, please continue. Where did you go next?" She sat down slowly and rubbed her temples. She was getting a massive headache from all the arguing.

Draco leaned back in his chair, his legs spread out and his arms behind his head. "Well, nothing much happened in the next place we visited unless you count the infestation of rats; a crazy, murderous wizard bent on revenge, who kidnapped Hermione and made me bring all the children of the town to a hill where he could kill them; the clock being hit by the Avada Curse; and Hermione burning a man alive." He smirked. "Other than that, nothing much happened at all."

Everyone was wide-eyed and frozen in amazement.

"Of course," Hermione said, "there was another message, and we had come to the conclusion that it was definitely Dumbledore that was behind it all."

"Albus?"

"Dumbledore?"

"Yes, our former Headmaster had decided that in order for Hermione and me to fall in love, we needed to work together in perilous life threatening situations." Draco was still angry about the whole thing. "And when we saw him, I asked him point blank what the fuck he meant by torturing us this way."

"Mr.Malfoy! Watch your language! I'm not telling you again!"

"You saw Dumbledore? You talked to him?" Harry asked enviously. He missed the old codger more than anyone knew.

"Yeah, we talked to him, and he was able to tell us NOTHING!" Draco spat. "Totally useless he was! I don't even know why we were sent there in the first place. We learned absolutely nothing other than the fact that Dumbledore collects seashells and looks grotesque in a 1930's swimsuit. Total waste of time if you ask me."

Hermione turned her head towards him slowly, her eyebrows lifted, a look of utter disbelief on her face.

"What?" he asked.

"Nothing happened in Hawaii? It was a waste of time?" She was thinking about taking the ring from her finger and shoving it up his ass.

"Well, other than the fact that I asked you to marry me." He smiled at her, lifted her ring hand to his lips and kissed it. "Oh, and almost getting eaten by a tiger shark after falling overboard."

"You asked her to marry you? I think I'm going to be sick!" Ron said, clutching his stomach. "Tell me this is all a bad dream and that right now I'm in my bed, struggling to wake up!"

"Sorry, Ron, but he did ask me, and I did accept. I love him, and he loves me, and we are going to have a baby. Get the hell over it or get the hell out!" Hermione snapped.

"It's her hormones," Draco said, seeing that everyone was looking at her like she had suddenly grown horns or something. "She's prone to mood swings, and believe me, it's not a pretty sight!"

"Yes, well, putting aside Miss Granger's hormonal problem, I would like you to finish telling me what happened. It's two o'clock in the morning, and I would like to get SOME sleep," Professor McGonagall said, taking off her glasses and rubbing her bloodshot eyes.

"We next ended up in the old West where I killed two bank robbers and was hailed a hero and then fixed the fucking clock so that we could get back."

"Mr. Malfoy! I warned you to watch your language!"

"Sorry, Professor. Bad habit that I learned from my father."

"Don't make me wash your mouth out with soap!"

"Okay, okay! I promise not to say 'fuck' anymore!"

A bar of bright blue soap suddenly appeared in Draco's mouth and moved around vigorously, scraping on his teeth and making foam drip from his lips. He screamed in disgust and pulled it from his drooling mouth, throwing it on the ground. He spat a few times while everyone had a good laugh.

"Ha. Ha. Very fuc... freaking funny!" Draco wiped the suds and nasty taste from his tongue. "Why are you laughing, Weasley? Shouldn't you pick up that soap and send it off to your mum? Merlin knows the last time she took a bath!"

"How dare you!" Ginny shouted.

"You've gone too far this time, Malfoy!" Harry said angrily.

"I'll kill you!" Ron jumped to his feet, intent on causing Draco bodily harm.

"Oh, yeah? I'd like to see you try! I could use a good laugh right about now!"

Everyone jumped up and started screaming and yelling, except for Hermione and Minerva, who just looked at each other and rolled their eyes.

"SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP!"

They all froze realizing the voice came not from their Headmistress, but from the huge portrait of Dumbledore that hung on the wall next to the desk. He looked angrier than they had ever seen him. Slowly, they all sat back down, eyeing one another in shame and fear.

"I have been listening this whole time, and I have a few questions, if you don't mind? Tell me, who was it that figured out how to fix the clock?" Dumbledore asked.

"Hermione figured out that all the capital letters from the messages spelled the word pendulum. She had this idea that we had to find a way to keep the clock in one place long enough to fix it and get the pendulum swinging again." Draco said. "She wanted me to hit it with a bullet and disable it long enough so that we could try and fix it."

"You shot the clock?" Minerva asked. "What happened?"

"He shot it and the bullet hit the pendulum. The bullet ricocheted off it, and it started to swing." Hermione answered. "It was with a bit of luck that it happened that way."

"I'm curious; how is it that both of you ended up at the clock in the first place? Surly it wasn't a coincidence?" The corners of Dumbledore's mouth twitched as if holding back a smile.

All eyes were now on Draco and Hermione, who were looking very uncomfortable.

"We both had been having strange dreams about the clock, and we decided to meet and investigate," Draco said.

Harry wasn't convinced that Draco was telling the whole story. "You? And Hermione? Talking about your dreams? When was this? I find it hard to believe that you just happened to have a civil conversation all of a sudden when you've hated each other for seven years!"

Hermione decided to just come out with it and get it over with. "It wasn't like that," she said. "We... we had become friends."

"You were more than just 'friends', Hermione," Ginny said. "You told me on Friday that you and he had done 'things' in the library! The way you talked about him made me think that you were falling in love... and then you told me it was Malfoy!"

"You knew about them? You knew and didn't say anything?" Ron said, disgusted. "Then why did you seem so concerned when you saw them together on the map?"

"It's called ACTING, Ron," Ginny said sarcastically. "It was her secret, and it wasn't my place to tell you about them."

"Minerva, I think I'd like to speak to Miss Granger and Mr. Malfoy alone."

She nodded curtly. "Off to bed, the lot of you! You are excused from classes tomorrow, now get some sleep!"

Harry, Ron and Ginny didn't want to leave, but really had no choice as McGonagall literally pushed them out of her office.

"I wonder what he's going to say to them?" Harry asked as they walked slowly back to Gryffindor Tower.

"This is all so very SUDDEN, don't you think? They hated each other yesterday, and now they're getting married and having a baby the next day?" Ginny said. "What are their parents going to say about all of this?"

"I'm going to tell you what this is all about, and then we need to decide what to do about your futures." Dumbledore looked stern, his blue eyes hard and glinting.

Hermione and Draco were both curious and a little frightened by what he was going to say.

"Time is a strange thing, and no matter how much you study about it or even travel in it, you can never fully understand it. The concept that we are continuously living the same moments over and over again is just too difficult for most to grasp."

He took off his glasses, breathed on them and then wiped them clean with a purple handkerchief. "It's like a rollercoaster that you can never get off of."

"Professor, are you saying that we are doomed to repeat this over and over forever?" Draco asked, mortified.

"Something is wrong. Something either happens or doesn't happen. If this something is not fixed, then, yes, Mr. Malfoy, you will be doomed to live this over and over." He put his glasses back on and then looked over the top of them at Draco. "I'm guessing, Mr. Malfoy, that it's your soul that is restless. You're the reason this is happening. There is something that you want to be different, and unless you get it right this time, you will find yourself in this very situation again and again."

Draco of course knew exactly what it was. He had to stop Hermione from being murdered. He did not want his future self to go through what he just been through, and now he was even more determined to stop her from being killed. He could figure this out, put a stop to it. What was more important, if he could accomplish it, he wouldn't die without her. She would be alive, and he would be happy! Yes! That had to be why his soul was distressed.

Something was wrong, and Hermione was sure that it was about her daughter in the future running off with an evil dark wizard. It had to be! It will cause so much grief in their family! Jade abandoning her family, only to cause her husband to kill himself, and then dying after giving birth to her son. Maybe Draco was totally heartbroken and devastated by what happened, and that was the reason for their outcome. She decided that she would find a way to save her baby from its horrible destiny and thereby put a stop to all of this.

"Is there anything you would like to tell me?" Dumbledore asked. "Anything that might shed some light on what we're dealing with here?" He waited, and neither Draco nor Hermione said anything. "Secrets are destructive. They are a cancer that will eat away at your very soul, causing anguish and mistrust."

Draco and Hermione lowered their heads; neither one could look him in the eye.

"I just wanted you to know that," Dumbledore said sadly. "Now, about your future here at Hogwarts..."

22

Chapter 22 of 27

Draco and Hermione must tell their parents and their fellow students about their relationship. Someone unexpected turns up at the wedding!

"What are you saying, Professor?" Hermione asked on the verge of hysterics. "You're not going to expel us, are you?"

"I'm really sorry," Minerva said sadly. "I really am fond of the both of you, and you are the top students in your year, but the rules are very clear in this matter."

Hermione stood up, tears in her eyes. "Please! You can't do this!" She collapsed back into her chair, sobbing, Draco holding her and kissing the top of her head.

"Minerva," Dumbledore said softly. "I believe there is a way around this."

"By all means, Albus, tell us! The last thing I want to do is expel them!"

"Technically, they did not have sexual intercourse on school grounds," Dumbledore said with a smile and a twinkle in his eye. "I understand, as Miss Weasley said, that they did 'do things,' but that they never 'did it' while they were here at Hogwarts. She did not get pregnant here, so they cannot be expelled."

The two of them looked at Professor McGonagall hopefully. Draco could only think about how disappointed his mother would be if he never took his N.E.W.T.s, and he was afraid Hermione would kill herself if she had to leave school.

"This is true, Albus..." Minerva said, looking thoughtful. "But what about the pregnancy? It clearly states that if a girl is found to be with child, she must be expelled as well as the guilty boy. How would we explain? And more importantly, what would the other students say?"

"Professors," Draco said. "How about if Hermione and I take our N.E.W.T.s early? We're both more than ready for tests."

"That is a great idea, Mr. Malfoy!" Dumbledore said from his frame. "Take the N.E.W.T.s, and then you will be free to move on and prepare for the birth of your child. Do you have a place to go, somewhere to live?"

Draco hadn't thought about that; in fact, he hadn't given much thought to anything. He had no job, no house and no money. How the bloody hell was he supposed to take care of a wife and child? "... I was hoping that my mother would let us stay with her..."

"Absolutely not, Draco!" Hermione said angrily. "Do you honestly think that when she finds out about us she's just going to welcome me with open arms into your Manor and we will become best friends forever?" She gave a disgusted snort. "Fat chance!"

"Granger, you don't know my mother. You have no idea what she has been through!" Draco said, trying to keep his emotions in check. "After Father was thrown into Azkaban, I was all she had left. When... when Voldemort," he shuddered, "gave me, my mission," he looked up at Dumbledore, "we both knew that I was going to die. When she learned that I made it through without injury, do you know what she told me?"

Hermione looked at him with huge, wide eyes. She had never once asked him about what had happened, about where he had gone with Snape that awful night. There were rumors, of course, but no one really knew what had happened to him. "What did she say?"

"She told me that family was the most important thing in the world. She never realized it until she almost lost everything. She said that the only thing she'd ever wanted was for me to be happy and that she and my father had failed miserably." Draco could feel the tears welling up and struggled to keep them from falling. "She was right, you know. I don't remember ever once being happy until you came into my life, Hermione." He caressed her cheek lovingly. "My mum loves me, and I believe with all my heart that once she sees how happy you make me she will love YOU as well."

Dumbledore blew his nose loudly, making everyone jump. "That was so romantic!"

Minerva rolled her eyes. "Maybe Mr. Malfoy here could have given you lessons when you were alive; Merlin knows you could have used the help!"

"Why, Minerva!" Dumbledore said, placing his hand on his heart. "Are you saying that the time I took you on a picnic under the stars was not romantic?" He smiled at her, amused. "When I proposed to you that night, you said it was the most romantic thing that had ever happened to you."

Draco's jaw dropped. "Wait! Are you saying that you..." he nodded towards Dumbledore, "and Professor McGonagall are...I mean WERE married?"

Hermione was laughing. "I always thought there was something going on! The way you glanced at each other! That one time that Ron and I caught the two of you coming out of the Room of Requirement, looking all flushed and... satisfied!" She laughed even harder. "Ron and I were going there to...well, never mind what we were going to do. The point is that you and Dumbledore had been getting busy in there!"

Draco stopped smiling at the mention of Hermione 'doing something' with Weasley. "And what was it exactly that you and Weasel were going into that room to do?" He had bright spots on his cheeks, and his grey eyes flashed with anger. "You weren't going to..." He was getting physically ill thinking about it. "Damn it, Granger! Did you ever have sex with Weasley?"

Dumbledore and Hermione abruptly stopped laughing, and Minerva was looking shocked.

Hermione turned to Draco and, seeing he was an emotional wreck, put his fears to rest. She took his face in her warm, little hands and pulled him close to her. "I never did anything more than kiss Ron. You are my first and you are my only one." She kissed him and felt him relax.

"Well." Minerva cleared her throat. "Now that we've decided that you will take the tests as soon as I arrange for them, I have a few more things to discuss. The first one being your fellow classmates."

"We can handle them," Draco said matter-of-factly.

"Are you sure you don't want to keep this quiet until you both have left? Some of your friends might not take the news too well."

Draco crossed his arms defiantly. "We have no intentions of hiding anything. I really don't care what they think."

"Neither do I," Hermione said. "They're going to find out sooner or later, so why not sooner?" She could tell that Professor McGonagall disagreed.

Minerva looked to Dumbledore for advice, but he was nodding his head in agreement. "They're right. Why hide? Everything needs to be out in the open, and that brings us to the next problem, which is telling your parents."

Hermione's heart felt like it was going to burst in her chest. The thought of telling her mother and father that she was pregnant terrified her. They had such high hopes for her, and she was afraid that they would be disappointed in her. "Will you set up a meeting then? I would feel so much better if you were there to help us explain what happened."

"Yes, Miss Granger, I can do that. I shall owl them, as well as Draco's parents, as soon as we're finished here."

The color drained from Draco's face. "Did you say my PARENTS, as in both of them?"

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy. Even though your father is in Azkaban, I think he still deserves to know."

"Draco, he can't hurt you, he's locked up," Hermione said, trying to soothe him. "Why not write him yourself and tell him how in love you are and about the baby? Maybe he'll be happy for you. Stranger things HAVE happened."

Dumbledore agreed, "I think, Mr. Malfoy, that is an excellent idea. It might be less of a shock if it comes from you."

The fear of telling his father was like a heavy cement block sitting on his chest, suffocating him. What would he do? Would he break out and kill him, or worse, kill Hermione? No one understood just how much he hated Muggle-borns; it was a cancer that ate away at his very soul. "If you think it's best, then I'll send him an owl. Just promise me that if he comes after me or Hermione, that someone will kill him before he kills us."

Dumbledore smiled from his portrait. "Believe me, Mr. Malfoy, I happen to know for a fact that you have nothing to fear."

"That's settled," Minerva said. "I'll owl them, and I'll also set up the N.E.W.T.s." She took off her glasses and rubbed her tired eyes. "Now, off to bed the both of you. You've had a rough... er... day, and you need your rest."

"Do you mean that we have to go to our dorms? Our separate dorms?" Draco asked. "I haven't spent a night away from her in days, and what if she needs me?" He was almost in a panic. "What if something happens to the baby, and I'm not there?"

"Mr. Malfoy, I can assure you that nothing will happen to her or the baby."

"But I can't sleep without her!" Draco almost whined. "Isn't there something you can do? Set us up together in a room or something?"

Hermione pulled on his arm gently. "Draco, it'll be fine. I'll see you in the morning, or afternoon, whenever I wake up."

"But..."

Minerva gave him a stern look. "I have tried to accommodate this situation every way possible, but I draw the line at two unmarried students shacking up in my school, even if they happen to be having a child!"

Draco smirked. "Unmarried, hey? Maybe we'll just have to do something about that!" he said. "A wedding perhaps? You could get all dressed up and boogie until dawn. I would personally love to see you do the Macarena!" He gave her another smirk, took Hermione by the hand, and they left her office.

Minerva heard Dumbledore chuckle, and she turned around, a frown on her face. "And why are you laughing? I see nothing funny about this at all!"

"I just love that boy! Wonderful sense of humor! Macarena!" He danced around in his frame, and when he put his hands on his hips and shook them, Minerva cracked a smile...just a small one, but a smile nonetheless.

When they were almost to the Gryffindor Tower, Draco stopped her and pulled her into a corner. "I'll see you tomorrow, right?"

"I'll see you tonight in my dreams," she said, kissing him gently on the lips.

"I love you," he whispered.

"I love you too."

He watched her say the password and climb through the portrait hole, and then he made his way to his room where he was sure he would not be able to sleep.

Almost twelve hours later, Draco opened his eyes. He felt drugged and sluggish, and his tongue felt swollen from dehydration. "God, I feel like shit!" he mumbled, swinging his legs out of the bed. "So damn tired!" Every bone in his body hurt, and he winced as he stumbled to the bathroom.

Looking into the mirror was a frightening experience. His hair stuck up like he had recently been electrocuted, and his face was still raw from the sunburn. He thought about going down to the Prefects bathroom, but decided that he'd slum it for the day.

He took off his boxers and turned on the water in the bath, making sure it was very hot. He caught a glimpse of his naked body in the mirror and was stunned by what he saw as a gasp fell from his mouth. There were bruises everywhere, and he had a huge lump where his ribs had been broken. He examined his head where the sailboat boom had knocked him and groaned when he pressed his finger onto the almost healed wound. "I look and feel like I've been through a war!"

He decided to pay Madam Pomfrey a visit after he spent some time with Hermione. He couldn't wait to see her, and it was so damn weird! He couldn't stand the sight of her for years, and now he couldn't stay away from her. He wanted to touch her and make love to her.

He climbed into the bath, sighing in pleasure as the steaming water flowed over his tired, aching body. He was so relaxed that if Crabbe hadn't knocked on the door, he would have fallen asleep and drowned.

"Malfoy! Are you in there?"

"Who else would it be, you dumbass?" Draco hated Crabbe and Goyle; they were the epitome of retard. He had never met two people more brain dead in his whole life than Crabbe and Goyle! Still, they followed him and did everything he said, and that was the only reason he put up with them. He always dreamed of the day he would leave Hogwarts, telling them exactly what he thought of them and then walking away, laughing at their clueless, fat faces.

"Why are you sleeping all day? Are you sick or something?" came Crabbe's nasally voice. "I saw the Mudblood down by the lake, and me and Goyle wanted to tell you that she's all alone!" He cackled madly. "We hoped you were awake so that we could go down and harass her."

Draco paused, his fluffy, white towel in mid swipe across his wet backside. "Did you say Her... I mean Granger was down by the lake?"

"Yeah! It'll be fun to catch her alone without Potter or Weasley!" Crabbe jumped back as the bathroom door was wrenched open. He saw billows of steam wafting in the air, and a murderous Draco glaring at him. Suddenly, a strong hand was crushing his windpipe, and he couldn't breathe.

"Don't you EVER lay a finger on her, do you UNDERSTAND?"

Crabbe was confused. How did Malfoy expect him to answer when he couldn't talk or breathe? He waved his chubby hands in the air, his eyes bugging out dangerously. Draco let go of Crabbe before he blacked out, and he slid onto the floor where he lay, purple faced and gasping for air.

Goyle came sauntering in with a big grin on his face. "Did you tell Malfoy about the Mud..." That's all he was able to say before his two front teeth were knocked out by Draco's fist. He looked at him, stunned, blood running in rivulets down his chin.

"I'll tell you what I told him." He nodded towards Crabbe. "Don't ever fucking touch her again, or else I'll kill you." He pulled on his clothes and hurried out of the room, his so-called friends staring incredulously at his retreating back.

"Hey, Potter. Weasley," Draco said running up to them.

"Um... Hello, Malfoy?" Harry said. "Did you need something?"

Draco was totally feeling unsure of how to act or what to say. He had never had a real conversation with either of these people. "I was just wondering if you were heading down to the lake to see Hermione, and if so, could I walk with you?"

Ron lifted his brow so high that it almost disappeared into his hair. "YOU want to be seen in public, walking with US?" Ron grinned. "I don't know, Malfoy, maybe we don't want to be seen with a junior Death Eater; our reputations might get ruined."

"I am not a fucking Death Eater and never will be!"

"Okay!" Harry said, grabbing his arm and pulling him along. "Just shut up! You're causing a scene!"

Draco was pleased, and although he tried to hide it, he was actually happy. He knew that this was the beginning of a long friendship with these two.

Ron looked over at him. He had never seen anything but a sneer or a mocking smirk from this guy, and here he was smiling! Maybe he had gone loopy or something?

As they walked by, every single person stared after them, thinking that hell had suddenly frozen over. Here was Harry Potter and Ron Weasley, walking along with Draco Malfoy, and they were talking, not fighting nor trying to kill each other. Some people even followed them, hoping that a fight would break out and they'd have some excitement.

Hermione was sitting on the bench, looking out over the lake. Every once in a while, the Giant Squid would float to the surface and sun itself. She had slept for ten hours and was still very tired. After getting up and taking a shower, she dressed in her most comfortable clothes, grabbed her favorite book and headed to the lake. She looked around for Draco as she walked from the school, but didn't see him anywhere. She figured that he was probably still sleeping.

It was so strange to sleep without him last night, to be away from him that long. She never wanted to do it again, not ever. She smiled, thinking about him racing that horse down the road. They had so many memories already and still more years ahead of them. How strange it all was! Never in her wildest dreams did she ever think that Draco Malfoy would be the man that she would marry, and she bet no one else thought it either!

"Guess who?" A pair of strong hands covered her eyes.

"Um... Is it that sexy sixth year with the gorgeous black hair and the 'to die for' blue eyes?" She pulled his hands away and looked over her shoulder. "Damn! It's only you!"

"Only me, eh?" He smirked. "Are you disappointed?" He jumped over the bench and sat next to her.

"Only that you didn't come sooner." She leaned over and kissed him.

"What the hell..."

"She kissed him!"

"I think I've gone blind!"

"Tell me I'm hallucinating!"

Everyone around them was whispering and openly gawking. Draco and Hermione pretended they weren't even there. He picked up her legs and swung them over his so that she was sitting sideways.

"Did you sleep well last night?" Draco asked her, playing with the buckle to her Mary Jane shoe.

"It was difficult without you there, but I managed to get a few hours in." She smiled at him as he brushed the stray curls from her face. She ran a finger slowly down his face and over his lips. His hand was now making gentle circles on her bare thigh, and it was driving her mad. They could hear people talking and whispering, but right now, they only had eyes for each other, and no one else existed.

Ron looked around at the crowd that was forming and rolled his eyes. "Go on! Go away! What's the matter? Never seen two enemies fornicating before?" He shook his head in disgust and went back to watching.

Harry was looking everywhere but at the two lovers on the bench, but he noticed that Ron was blatantly ogling them. "Ron!" he whispered. "Should we go?"

"Why? I'm enjoying the show. It's very interesting. See the way she responds when he kisses her neck? I should try that."

Harry was in disbelief. "Why aren't you angry about this? Just the other day you were almost sobbing about how you missed her and wanted her back, and now..." He looked over at Draco and Hermione again and wished he hadn't. They were going at it like two wildcats in heat. "Hey!" he yelled to them.

Draco unglued his lips from Hermione's, and both suddenly realized that there were about forty people gathered around, staring with humungous, glazed eyes and slack jaws. "Oh! Sorry about that. Got a little carried away!" He sat up and smirked at the spectators. "It's just that she's so damn sexy. When I'm around her, I can't control myself; I want to kiss her lips, stroke her soft thighs, slip my tongue into her... mouth. Maybe that's what got us in trouble in the first place and the reason she's pregnant with my child."

"Did he just say..."

"Granger pregnant?"

"I still think I'm hallucinating!"

"I think...no, I KNOW I'm going to puke!"

"Ewww..."

Harry smacked himself in the forehead. "What a way to break the news, Malfoy! Such subtlety! Such pizzazz! Such a friggin' stupid thing to do! It's going to be all over the

school now!"

People were now running and telling everyone what they had just heard. As they watched, a sixth year girl with legs like a chicken and teeth like a picket fence raced over to a group of Slytherins that happen to include Blaise Zabini and babbled out the whole story in one breath. Blaise looked over at Draco and Hermione, shoved the girl out of the way and stalked over to them.

"Oh, this is just fucking great! Just what we need a confrontation with Blaise fucking Zabini!" Ron said, pulling out this wand. "I'm warning you, Zabini, go away before I..."

"Before you WHAT?" Blaise said, looking at Ron's wand, chuckling lightly. "Do us all a favor and put that away before you accidentally hurt yourself. I just want to have a little conversation with my good friend Draco."

Draco stood up and walked over to Blaise. "Something you need, Zabini?" His attitude was one almost of boredom.

"Yeah, I need for you to tell me that what I just heard about the Mudblood and you is not true." He cast a glance at Hermione and curled his upper lip in distaste.

Harry pulled out his wand, ready to hex the smug, racist bastard. How dare he insult Hermione!

Draco shrugged his shoulders and said in a polite, apologetic manner, "Sorry, mate, but it IS true." He suddenly lunged for him, catching him off guard. He grabbed the front of his robes and pulled him close. "If I ever hear you call her a Mudblood again, Zabini, I will cut out your tongue and feed it to Crabbe and Goyle!"

Draco pulled the boy even closer, and for a fleeting moment, Harry was sure Draco was going to kiss him.

"You need to get something straight, Zabini," Draco hissed into his stunned face. "Hermione and I are together whether you like it or not. I won't tolerate you calling her names or harassing her in any way, shape or form. If I catch you, you will get hurt. Do I make myself clear, Zabini?" He shoved the boy away and glared at him.

Blaise had seen the angry side of Draco before, but never the insanely crazy side he was now witnessing. He was literally scared shitless. "Whatever!" he said, brushing the wrinkles from his robes. "If that's what you want..." he said, looking over at Hermione, who was now standing behind Draco, his arm protectively holding her back. "It's your life, and you're free to fuck it up any way you want. Just don't expect me or any of the other Slytherins to accept this." He motioned towards Hermione. "Or them." He nodded at Harry and Ron.

"I really couldn't give a flying, flipping fuck what the lot of you think and could care less whether you accept this or not," Draco snapped. "Now, go the hell away or I'll sick Potter on you!"

Harry blinked when his name was mentioned. He realized what Draco had said and lifted his wand higher, aiming at Blaise's head. "You better do what he said, Zabini."

Blaise put up his hands in defeat. "Fine, I'm going!" He shot one last look of disgust at Hermione and turned and shoved his way through the crowd.

Harry lowered his wand, as did Ron.

"Thanks, Potter."

Harry did a double take. "Did you just thank me?"

"No, you're hearing things," Draco said with a smirk and a wink.

Dinner was eventful to say the least. Everyone stared openly when Draco sat down at the Gryffindor table next to Hermione. Some people were angry that she would go out with Draco after everything that happened the year before, not to mention that he was an asshole of the highest degree. Most couldn't understand what she saw in him. Of course, he was quite good looking, rich and well dressed, but that didn't excuse the way he treated people like soggy shit.

"I, for one, am tired of everyone eyeballing us. How about you?" Ginny asked Harry. "You'd think they didn't see it coming! I mean I've always thought the two of them should hook up!"

"You did?" Ron asked, frowning. He watched Draco feed Hermione a strawberry from his cheesecake. He thought about it. "There was always this, I don't know, weird feeling in the air whenever they would fight."

"It's called sexual tension, Ron," Ginny said. "It was like at any moment you expected them to pounce and rip the clothes off each other."

"I think Weasley has the right idea, Granger. Let's rip each other's clothes off and shock the Hall even more by making hot, passionate love right here on the table."

"Ohhh! I could smear cheesecake and treacle tart all over you and take my time licking it off. Yumm!" She swiped her finger in the tart and stuck it in her mouth, pulling it out slowly, closing her eyes and moaning in pleasure.

Harry and Ron goggled at her, flushed with sudden desire, something awakening in their pants.

"I'll never be able to look at treacle tart the same way again," Harry said, grabbing a tart and Ginny's hand. "Let's go!" They quickly left the table and headed for a dark broom closet. Ron excused himself and fled for the nearest loo to relieve the throbbing in his crotch.

"Ahem."

Draco and Hermione looked up to see Professor McGonagall standing behind them, her mouth a thin line of disapproval. "Yes, Professor?" they said in unison.

"I just wanted to inform you that your N.E.W.T.s will take place next Saturday and that both of your parents will be here tomorrow morning." She looked directly at Draco. "Have you sent the owl to your father yet, Mr. Malfoy?"

Draco wilted in his seat. "No, Professor, not yet."

"I suggest you get a move on, Mr. Malfoy, or I will send it!"

"Yes, Professor. I'll do that right now."

"See to it that you do!" she snapped. "And both of you be in my office tomorrow at eight a.m. sharp!"

"Yes, Professor."

Draco sat alone in the back of the library, sighing in annoyance. He crumpled up another parchment...his third...and tossed it into the bin next to his table. Why was he finding it so difficult to convey his feelings to his father? It wasn't like he was standing right in front of him, his cold, grey eyes boring holes into his brain. He was in Azkaban, safely locked away, maybe for the rest of his life. He had nothing to fear, so why was his hand shaking and his heart thumping?

"Just tell him, for Merlin's sake! Tell him how much you love her, how unbelievably happy she makes you. How when you see her it makes your pulse race and your hands sweaty. Tell him that you can't stand to be away from her for more than a few minutes and that the very thought of living without her makes your soul scream in protest! Tell him!" He picked up his quill, dipped it in the black ink and began to write.

He went alone to the owlery and sent off his letter. He watched his owl fly away into the night sky, feeling like a huge weight had been lifted off his shoulders and he was able to breathe once again. Whatever the response he received from his father, he was glad he was finally able to tell him his innermost thoughts and feelings. He had never been able to do that before, and it felt nice.

The next morning, Draco and Hermione made their way to the Headmistress's office. Both were feeling a little anxious.

"Please come in," Professor McGonagall said, and Draco opened the door for Hermione, following in after her. He shut the door and turned around to see his mother sitting there, looking beautiful in her best robes. She seemed in total control of the situation, poised and calm.

"Hello, Mother," Draco said. She stood and they embraced. She squeezed him perhaps a little too tightly, and he could sense some struggle in her eyes when she looked into his. This was not easy for her...not at all.

Hermione went straight over to her parents, who were standing next to Minerva's desk, looking uncomfortable. "Mum, Dad," she said, hugging each in turn. They smiled at her, a good sign. She motioned for Draco to come over. "This is Draco."

He was scared to death and did everything in his power to keep his outward appearance cool and collected. "Mr. and Mrs. Granger," he said, shaking their hands. "It's a pleasure to finally meet you in more pleasant conditions." He recalled the last time in Flourish and Blotts when his father and Mr. Weasley had gotten into a fist fight in front of them. They smiled at him politely, and he suddenly felt ten times better. They sat down and waited for Professor McGonagall to begin.

Dumbledore looked on with keen interest at the situation playing out before him. He knew of course how it all turned out, but it was fun to watch it all happen again.

"I have taken the liberty of explaining the situation to your parents as best as I could. Even I don't understand everything that has happened." She cocked an eyebrow at Dumbledore's portrait. "I have told them of the clock, your time traveling and your return. I leave the rest for you to tell."

Gee, thanks! Draco said in his head sarcastically.

He and Hermione looked at one another, wondering where to start. The room was so quiet that they could hear their own hearts beating.

"Well, I suppose I should start by telling you that I'm in love with your daughter," Draco said to the Grangers.

Her father seemed surprised; after all, he had many times heard his daughter wishing for the boy to take a flying leap from something called the North Tower. Apparently, he was a bully who loved to torture her and her friends, and there was something about him being one of those Death Eating things.

Her mother was less shocked, but shocked nonetheless. She had held her distraught daughter many times while she cried about this boy calling her a Mudblood. She wondered what wonderful thing had happened to make him see what a beautiful girl her daughter was. In her eyes it was a miracle. There was no denying that he loved her; she could see it in the way he looked at her, the way he gently rubbed his finger over the back of her hand.

"You LOVE her?" Narcissa asked. "But you've told me many times that you hated her and wished she didn't exist! Now you suddenly LOVE her? I'm confused." Her grey eyes darted between Draco and Hermione. What she saw confused her even more. "There is something you're not telling us. Something very important. What is it?"

"Nothing gets past you, does it, Mother?" Draco said, amused. He had never been able to fool her for very long, and hiding things from her was damn near impossible. She was very observant. "As I said, I'm in love with her, and to my delight, she happens to love me back."

"Is this true?" Narcissa said. "You love my son?"

This woman scared Hermione. She was the type of woman who could walk into a room and all eyes would be on her. She was so sure of herself, graceful and well-spoken. She made Hermione feel small and insignificant for some reason. Feeling like this made her angry, and she was determined not to let this arrogant woman make her feel like she wasn't good enough for her son. "Yes, I love him with all my heart, and I never want to be without him." She stared right into Narcissa's pale eyes. "He asked me to marry him and I've accepted."

"We are to be married as soon as possible," Draco said.

There was a collective gasp from all three parents.

"But you're too young! You haven't graduated yet! Think of your futures!" Mr. Granger said, and Mrs. Granger nodded in agreement. "You have your whole lives ahead of you. Surely, you want to wait!"

"I agree. What is the big hurry?" Narcissa asked.

"Well, we want to get married before the baby is born," Draco said quickly. He cringed, thinking that his mother was going to crack him in the head. Looking up after a second, he saw that his mother was leaning back in her chair...something he had never seen her do before. Narcissa never let her back touch a chair; posture was very important to her. "Mother?" Draco said, concerned that she was about to faint or something. "Are you all right?"

Hermione's parents had gotten to their feet. Her mother was clinging to her father, who looked devastated. Hermione felt guilt and shame take over. "Please! I'm so sorry! Please don't hate me!" Tears were running down her face, and Draco was trying to calm her down. Her mother let go of her father and ran over to help him. She rocked her and wiped her tears, soothing her the way only a mother can.

"Hermione, you are my darling daughter, my precious little girl! I trust you understand that no matter what has happened, your father and I will always love you and support you."

Draco went over to see if his mother had died from a burst blood vessel in her brain. He had never seen her so upset, and he was worried that she would never recover.

Narcissa regulated her breathing back to normal and sat up straight once more. She looked as though she hadn't just had the shock of her life. "I'm not going to lie and say that I'm not disappointed in you, Draco, because I am. I thought I raised you better than this. What am I supposed to tell your father? He is not going to be as forgiving as I am!"

"Draco has sent a letter to Lucius, explaining the situation, and I hope he took the opportunity to tell him a few other things as well," Minerva said, looking at Draco from over the top of her glasses.

"Yes, well, I'm just glad Lucius is not here because I shudder to think of what he would say," Narcissa said, standing up and walking over to the window. "I won't make excuses for the way my husband has acted in the past. He had his reasons for doing what he did, and I'm sorry to say that all of my pleading and crying for him to change has fallen on deaf ears." She watched a tawny owl soar past the window and disappear into the bright morning sky until it was nothing but a speck. "He, Draco, will never accept this, but I will. I can see that this woman makes you happy. I see how much in love you are. Who am I to take that away from you? You have been through hell and back, and you deserve more than anyone to be happy."

Hermione was taken aback as Narcissa came towards her, her arms outstretched in a welcoming manner. "Let me be the first to welcome you to the family." She kissed Hermione on the cheek, making her blush.

"Thank you, Mrs. Malfoy," she said, looking over at Draco, who was wearing a huge grin. He mouthed the words 'I told you so.'

Narcissa then held out her French manicured hand, and Hermione's mother took it. "It looks as if we are soon to be family," she said warmly. "I can't wait to have you both over to the Manor for tea."

Mrs. Granger was frightened at the very thought, but refused to show it. "Yes, that would be nice; perhaps we can discuss the wedding plans." Both the mothers' eyes lit up at the thought.

"I hate to tell you this, but we've already decided when and where the wedding will be," Draco said. "But you're more than welcome to take care of the details."

"Draco," Hermione said. "Don't you think we should ask Professor McGonagall first?"

Minerva had sat silently through most of the meeting, following the advice of her husband. He said to just let it unfold naturally, that it would all work out, and he was right, as always! "Yes?"

"Professor," Hermione said. "We would like to be married here at Hogwarts in the Great Hall."

"I don't know... This has never... This is unprecedented!" She looked to Dumbledore for advice, as she so often did. "Albus? What do you think?"

"I will agree to it on one condition," he said with amusement dancing in his eyes. "That you take down my portrait and hang it in the Great Hall so that I may watch the ceremony...oh, and that you play the Macarena during the reception!"

So it was decided that the Saturday after they took their N.E.W.T.s, the wedding would take place. Narcissa said she would take care of the decorations and the cake. Hermione's mother would plan the reception. They both agreed to work on the invitations together because they knew nothing about each other's families.

Draco stood up at dinner that evening and announced to the whole school that he and Hermione were getting married and that they were all invited. He promised to have a 'kick ass' reception with plenty of booze and music. Almost everyone cheered and congratulated them, except for the Slytherins. Draco made a special invitation for them, requesting that anyone with big enough balls to attend his wedding would be more than welcome. He didn't expect any of them to show up, and he was surprised when Blaise told him that he would be coming 'out of respect for his family.'

The days flew by as they studied for their exams and planned for their wedding. Draco found himself wondering if his father was ever going to write him back, and his heart jumped into his throat whenever his owl tapped on his window. It was always his mother asking whether Hermione preferred pink flowers or yellow on the cake, or whether or not some distant relative he had never heard of should be invited. He finally gave up and decided that his father had probably died from a massive heart attack at the thought of his only son marrying a Muggle-born and that's why he never received a response.

Hermione decided to wear her mother's old wedding dress, and with a few minor adjustments, it fit her perfectly. Narcissa gave Draco the wedding rings that belonged to grandmother and grandfather Malfoy. Ginny said yes to being the maid of honor, and Harry told Draco he'd be more than happy to be his best man, which surprised everyone.

"What?" Harry said. "I AM the best man around, you know." Ginny threw a book at his head, and he ducked.

They took the N.E.W.T.s with no problem and agreed that they were fairly easy. The hardest part was the Ancient Runes test, but they were sure they had passed with flying colors.

"The tests should have been easy with all the damn studying we did! I still can't see straight!" Draco joked. "Maybe I should borrow Potter's glasses?" Hermione made circles around his eyes with her fingers. "Not sexy at all. If there comes a time when you need glasses, I think I shall divorce you!" He chased her across the grounds, the crisp autumn leaves crunching under their feet.

The day of the wedding was perfect. Not a cloud in the sky, and unusually warm for October. Hermione was a nervous wreck, but not as nervous as Draco. He was so afraid of messing up and saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, but most of all, he was afraid he would throw up in front of everyone.

The Great Hall was filled with red roses and white lilies. The lights were dim as thousands of candles cast a soft romantic glow upon the guests.

Draco stood with Harry at his side, listening to the gentle music from the harp in the corner, waiting for the love of his life to walk down the aisle. "Potter, I just want to thank you for doing this, for being a friend when I needed one."

Harry clapped him on the back. "I never thought I would consider you a friend, but I do. You take care of Hermione. Never let anything happen to her."

Images of Hermione lying dead flashed through his head. He was almost sick thinking about it. "I promise, Potter, with all my heart that I will never let anyone harm her...never." The music came to a stop, and he knew it was time. He looked anxiously towards the back of the room.

The harp began playing, and everyone stood to watch Hermione walk gracefully down the red carpeted aisle behind a pale and shaking Ginny. She smiled as she passed her mother, who looked very proud of her beautiful daughter. She was already on the brink of crying, and seeing Narcissa dabbing her eyes with a silk handkerchief made the lump in her throat even bigger.

Draco couldn't help but smile as Hermione made her way slowly towards him, her arm linked around her father's. She looked stunning in her dress with her hair piled high on her head in pretty ringlets. She stopped, her father kissed her cheek, and then she was standing next to Draco, her tiny, warm hand in his. She smiled at him, and he felt that nothing could ruin this most perfect day.

Suddenly, the heavy doors to the Great Hall were thrown open, and everyone turned around to behold Lucius Malfoy standing there, his head held high, a smug look on his face...

Lucius gets what's coming to him, and Draco and Hermione welcome a new addition to their family.

The entire room was silent as Lucius strode up the aisle. He still had the rich, aristocratic air about him. His once youthful, handsome face was now worn and lined with age, and his hair was thinner and whiter. He was dressed in the most fashionable attire, and on his head, he wore a black top hat that he now swept from his head as he stood before his shocked son.

"Draco," he said, bowing slightly. "Hermione." He greeted her with a huge grin as his eyes danced wickedly. "I look forward to having such a beautiful, well-endowed witch in the family," he said, looking her up and down as his eyes lingered on her breasts. "And now, if you'll excuse my rudeness, I think I'll take my seat. Please, continue with the ceremony!" He gave a more exaggerated bow this time, turned and sat down next to a pissed-off looking Narcissa. Draco looked murderous, and Harry had his hand on his wand.

Lucius tried to take Narcissa's hand, but she calmly placed something in his palm and then looked coldly at him. Lucius opened it and beheld her wedding ring. His head snapped up, and his hard grey eyes searched her smooth face.

"If you still wish for me to be your wife, Lucius, then you must promise not to interfere with the wedding. Please, let our son enjoy this wonderful day, I beg of you!" she said in a fierce whisper. "If you have any love left in your heart, you will be happy for our son."

He closed his hand tightly over the gold band. It was bad enough that his ungrateful son was marrying and breeding with a Muggle whore, but now his wife had turned her back on him as well! "You ask the impossible, Cissy."

Narcissa closed her eyes as Lucius slipped the ring into his pocket. She felt tears threatening to spill over onto her cheeks as she struggled to keep her composure. It was over between Lucius and her. She would no longer be willing to put up with his narrow mind, his abusive remarks, or his selfish reckless behavior. She thought about the child in Hermione's womb and smiled. She would protect that child from the disease that was Lucius Malfoy. It stopped here, with her. No more Pureblood nonsense, no more pain...she would see to it!

Draco and Hermione turned back towards the altar, and the guests seemed to visibly relax. Draco could barely concentrate on what was being said and missed his responses more than a few times. Hermione was sure that she could feel Lucius burning a hole in the back of her head with his hateful glare. They both stumbled through the ceremony, wishing that Lucius Malfoy had died a painful death in Azkaban and gone to hell where he belonged.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife!" the official said. "You may kiss your bride!"

Draco smirked, grabbed Hermione around the waist, and pulled her close. Their lips met in a heated, passionate kiss, and Fred Weasley whistled loudly and shouted, "I think they're going to do it right here!" Molly elbowed him in the ribs and then dabbed at her misty eyes with the corner of her handkerchief.

Draco reluctantly let go of Hermione, and together they turned towards the crowded room. He was all smiles, and she was flushed and embarrassed. She noticed that Lucius rolled his eyes and that his upper lip was curled in an unflattering sneer. God, she hated that man! Hermione decided to do something to make him even more disgusted. Catching his eyes, she winked seductively and then blew him a kiss.

He jumped slightly and then, looked around to see if anyone had noticed that the Mudblood was trying to seduce him. He glanced back at her and saw she was almost laughing at him. "Stupid bitch!" he said to himself. "We'll see whose laughing when she finds out that Draco has been disinherited!"

"I introduce to you for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. Draco Malfoy!" the official announced.

Everyone cheered as the newlyweds made their way quickly down the red carpet, Hermione trying not to trip over her dress. She gave Dumbledore's portrait a wave as they passed by. He waved back and then blew his nose loudly. Minerva stood next to the painting, scowling at his rudeness.

The reception was held out on the sprawling lawn of Hogwarts. It was a laid back affair with a buffet and an open bar. A stage was set up, and a band was playing a mixture of Wizard and Muggle music.

Harry, Ron and Ginny were gathered in a group of Order members discussing Lucius.

"But how is it that he was able to get an early release?" Harry asked baffled. "I was sure he would rot in there for the rest of his miserable life!"

"It seems that he got his sentence shortened for good behavior. Apparently, he was a model prisoner!" Kingsley said with a sarcastic bark of a laugh. "Good behavior! Have you ever heard of anything so ridiculous in your life?"

"Like that man ever behaved himself!" Tonks snapped. "My mother used to tell me some stories that would make your hair stand on end! The things that man has done!"

"Really, Nymphadora," came the drawing voice of Lucius. "The things I've done pale in comparison with the exploits of your dear mother! Why, she was once known as the neighborhood whore!" Lucius chuckled and sipped his red wine. "In fact, if I remember correctly, she once even tried to seduce me, but I was afraid that gaping hole she called a cunt would swallow me whole!"

Tonks lunged, her fists flailing. "Just shut up!" Ginny and Ron managed to hold her back, Ron getting a fat lip in the process. "I'll kill you, you fucking bastard!" she screamed at the retreating back of a laughing Lucius.

Lucius was steadily getting drunker and drunker as the evening set in. Usually, he could hold his liquor, but that was before, when he had cared about his reputation, which was in tatters now! His wife had left him, his only son was now married to a Mudblood, the Dark Lord thought him a failure, and his so-called friends had abandoned him. What did it matter now if he got shit faced and told everyone exactly what he thought of them?

Harry came running up and pushed Lucius roughly in the back, making him stumble. "I think you owe her an apology!" he yelled angrily.

Lucius turned around slowly, drained the last drops of his wine and threw the glass over his shoulder. "Well, if it isn't Harry Potter!" he slurred. "If I had my wand right now, Potter, I think I'd probably kill you...no, I KNOW I would kill you!"

"You're drunk!" Harry spat disgustedly.

"And you're the reason I've lost my wife and son! If only the Dark Lord would have killed you that night! But noooooo!" Lucius said, banging on the bar for another red wine. "He had to fuck it all up!" he emptied his glass in one gulp. "Because you lived, I was forced to go on half-ass missions to kill you...missions that took me away from my wife and son! Missions that put their lives in danger!" He grabbed Harry by the front of his dress shirt and pressed his nose to his. "I hate you, Harry Potter, and I hate your filthy Muggle cunt of a friend, who's stolen my son from me!"

Ron, Fred and George ran over after witnessing the struggle between Lucius and Harry. Their wands were out, ready to blast Lucius to kingdom come. "Oi! I suggest you shut your damn mouth before I shut it for you!" Ron said, his wand tip pointed at Lucius's temple. "Now, let Harry go."

Draco realized that there was about to be bloodshed, and he raced over to put a stop to it. "What the hell is the meaning of this?" he asked, looking around for Hermione. She was talking to the band, requesting a song. "Look, Father, I'm tolerating your presence here for Mother's sake, but if you can't control yourself, then you're going to have to leave."

Lucius let go of Harry and turned his hatred towards his son. "Your mother's sake? YOUR MOTHER'S SAKE?" he just about screamed. "Your precious mother is nothing

but a traitorous bitch who has chosen you and your knocked-up little whore over me, her husband!"

Draco motioned for the others to leave, and they did so reluctantly. "Harry, would you do me a favor and keep Hermione company until I can sort this all out?"

"Anything else I can do?" Harry asked. "Like get him a muzzle or something?"

Draco smirked. "No, Potter, just keep Hermione busy for me. Have Ginny ask her about the future or something, that should keep them talking for a long while."

Harry pulled Ginny away from Luna, and they walked over to Hermione, Harry shooting glances over at Draco to make sure everything was fine.

"Now, Father, tell me," Draco said, sitting the drunk man down at the nearest table. "Why did you come here? Surely, it wasn't to give us your blessing."

Lucius could barely see straight, and all he wanted to do was go home and crawl into his bed. The bed he hadn't had the pleasure of sleeping in for years. Then he remembered that his wife wouldn't be sharing that bed with him tonight...or any night. "I came because I got your letter."

"You got my letter?" Draco asked, motioning for the bartender. "I'll have a whiskey, straight up, and he'll have another red wine, please." After the bartender left, Draco leaned back in his chair and studied the man that had scared the living shit out of him his whole life. It was almost comical now to think of how much he had wanted this man's approval growing up. He had wanted it so badly that he was willing to do anything to get it. "So, you got my letter and decided to break out of Azkaban just so you could ogle my wife's breasts and insult my friends? Seems drastic!"

Lucius tried to form a coherent thought. Everything had a nightmare quality about it. The sick, orange glow from the setting sun, and the blasted horrible music the band was playing. He knew he was still in his cell, tossing and turning, stuck in some terrible dream world where he was old, tired and drunk, and his son was married to that Granger girl!

"They released me just this morning. I hastened to get here for your mistake of a wedding." He pulled out his gold pocket watch, checked the time, and then closed it, putting it back inside of his jacket pocket.

Draco was jarred for a moment, realizing that the gold pocket watch his father held was the same one that he was going to possess after his father's death. The one he was going to engrave with a secret message and hand over to himself sometime in the distant future. "Father, why can't you be happy for me, just this once?" he asked, actually wishing that it would happen.

Lucius laughed as he watched the bartender put their drinks on the table. "Why would I be happy for you? It seems that I've wasted my breath all these years! I've tried to tell you that Muggles are worthless and vile and deserve to be exterminated, but you go and fuck one, get her pregnant, and then marry her, for Merlin's sake! All the lessons, all the teachings apparently couldn't penetrate your fucking, thick skull!" He pounded his fist on the table, spilling some of his wine. "I'd rather be dead than have you end up this way!"

Draco said nothing; he just watched this sorry excuse for a man rant and rave. It really was sad to see. This man was dangerous and maybe more than a little unhinged. He had to be dealt with. "Well, Father, perhaps you'll get your wish." Draco stood, picked up his drink and walked away, leaving Lucius alone to wallow in his hatred. He lifted his wine to his lips and then tossed it back. He laid his head on the table and was almost asleep when the bartender put down another glass of wine in front of him.

"I didn't order this," Lucius said, trying to focus. His vision was blurry, causing him to see three forms of the bartender standing before him.

"I was told to bring it to your table," the man said and then walked back to the bar where Blaise was waiting to place an order.

Lucius looked around, wondering who would send him a drink. He shrugged his shoulders, stood up, toasted the air, and then finished it in one swallow.

Narcissa and Draco watched from their table as Lucius suddenly dropped the glass and clutched his throat. He was clearly dying, yet neither one made a move to help him.

Tonks was in the middle of a conversation with Remus when, from the corner of her eye, she caught Lucius struggling for breath, turning blue. She watched nonchalantly for a second and then went on talking to Remus as if nothing was happening.

"Draco, tell Narcissa about the cute little dress you bought for the baby when we were in Hawaii. I really do wish we hadn't left that behind. It really was beautiful, and it had the tiniest little bonnet!" Hermione stopped talking, noticing that Draco and Narcissa's attention was elsewhere. She followed their gaze and her mouth dropped in horror. "Oh my god!" she said, getting up and ignoring Draco's pleas for her to sit back down. "He needs help!" she yelled as she ran to assist Lucius.

Lucius was clawing at his throat so badly that it was tattered and bloody. His eyes were bulging out of his head, and his skin had taken on a blackish purple hue.

As soon as Hermione reached him and grabbed hold of his arm, blood exploded from his nose and mouth, and then he collapsed onto the table, his black tongue protruding obscenely from his red, foaming mouth.

There were screams from many guests. A woman fainted at the horrifying sight. Draco and Narcissa stood in stony silence. Lucius was dead, and not one person among them cared.

On the day of the funeral, it was dreary and cold. The sky had been threatening rain all morning, and finally at around noon, it started to rain very heavily. A small group that consisted of Narcissa, Draco, Hermione and a few of Lucius' relatives gathered in the Malfoy family graveyard.

Draco held the black umbrella over Hermione's head; she was stony-faced and shivering from the cold. She hadn't really spoken to him in two days. Once she had learned that someone had poisoned Lucius' wine, she had become very withdrawn and quiet. He suspected that she thought he had something to do with it, which he did of course.

They had moved into the Manor, taking over the entire east wing. He and his mother tried to get her to speak, but meals were spent in silence, and bedtime was an excruciating experience. They slept in the same bed, but she was on one edge and he on the other with a giant empty space between them.

It was in this huge four-poster bed that he climbed into after one of the longest days of his life, expecting another silent night. He was wrapped in his blanket and hugging his pillow like a lover when Hermione spoke for the first time in two weeks, "Draco?"

Draco thought for a second that he was dreaming. "Did you just say something?" he asked, surprised, rolling over. She was sitting up, hugging her knees close to her chest.

"Tell me you didn't kill him."

Draco's first reaction was to tell her what she wanted to hear so that she would squeal with relief, embrace him with joy, and then make love to him all night long. But he knew that he was already keeping things from her and didn't want to add to them, so he told her the truth. "I can't tell you that."

Tears slowly began to fall from her eyes. "I knew it. Deep down in my heart, I knew you killed him."

Draco crawled across the bed and wrapped his arms around her. "I'm not sorry I killed him. My mother and I did what we had to do to protect you and the baby."

"Narcissa? But that was her husband! How could she?" Hermione asked aghast.

"I don't know, Hermione. All I know is that he's gone now and he can't ever hurt anyone ever again." Draco kissed her wet cheek. "Are you really that sad that he's dead?"

So upset that you stopped speaking to me for days?"

Hermione looked at him sadly. "The reason I wasn't speaking to you was because you didn't tell me. You didn't trust me enough to tell me what you were going to do."

"That's because you are so... How, can I put this? Not a murderer," he laughed lightly. "You would have never allowed it to happen!"

"Are you in my head, Draco? How do you know I would have stopped you?" she asked, brushing the stray hairs from his forehead. "I love you. You are my husband, and I will stand by you no matter what, but you have to stop keeping things from me!" She felt like such a hypocrite! Here she was giving him the silent treatment because he kept something from her when she was harboring a horrible secret herself. Maybe she should just tell him about their doomed daughter?

Draco was so very close to just telling her everything. How freeing it would be to just tell her that someone was going to murder her and that he was sure that together they would find a way to put a stop to it.

They had both started to spill their secrets when they were interrupted by a knock at the door. Draco got out of bed, put on his robe and opened the door. "Mother!" he pulled it open all the way, allowing her to enter while glaring at her suspiciously.

"I'm sorry! But I just happened to be passing by and heard voices. Have you kissed and made up?" Narcissa asked, naked hope showing on her face.

"You were just passing by? Your room is on the other side of the Manor!" Draco said incredulously, pushing her out of the doorway. "And as for us kissing and making up, I plan on doing more than kissing!" He closed the door on her happy face and leaned against it. "Damn that woman is nosey! Listening at doors!"

Hermione pulled off her nightgown, exposing her plump breasts. "Well then, let's give her something to listen to!" She opened her legs and motioned to him with her finger. "Come here, Draco. I want you, NOW!"

Draco didn't need to be told twice.

The months passed quickly as fall turned to winter, winter to spring, and spring to summer. Hermione's pregnancy progressed with ease, and she and Draco were very happy. She would lie on the sofa in the library, and he would rub her feet. He would sit for hours with his hand on her tummy, feeling the baby moving, laughing with delight every time it kicked him. He catered to her every need, making sure she had the right kinds of food, bringing her tea, fluffing her pillows. He said he knew everything about having babies, and the information he possessed seemed to solidify his claim.

Secretly, Draco was a nervous wreck. He knew nothing except what he had been reading in the many books on pregnancy he kept hidden in his old bedroom. He didn't want Hermione to think he was a bumbling idiot and that he knew nothing about what was happening to her body or what to expect during the labor. As the due date got closer, he began to feel more afraid than he ever had in his life. What if he was a horrible father? What if his children hated him? What if... What if...

Hermione awoke on the morning of June 30 with a sharp pain in her lower back. She sat up with some struggle and looked at his clock. Four a.m.! For the last month, she had been unable to sleep and was always up before the house-elves, or even the birds. She pulled her heavy body from the bed and slipped on her robe. She took a step towards the door, and suddenly there was a strange shooting pain, and she was standing there as liquid ran down her legs. Panic set in, and she felt faint. "Draco! Wake up! Draco!"

Draco rolled over. "Hmm? What time is it?" he asked sleepily.

"It's time for you to get your ass out of that bed! The baby is coming!"

Draco threw off the covers and jumped up. "Oh my God! Oh my God! What do we do?" he said frantically, pulling on his clothes. "I know! I'll get mother!" He raced from the room, leaving Hermione standing alone in a puddle of amniotic fluid.

Narcissa contacted the Medi-Wizard by Floo, and soon the downstairs bedroom was buzzing with activity. House-elves ran here and there, carrying towels and water and jabbering excitedly about the day when Draco was born.

Draco sat on a chair next to the bed as Hermione held his hand tightly, almost crushing it to a bloody pulp while she pushed.

"Come on, Mrs. Malfoy, one more big push! The head is almost out!"

Hermione, who was on the verge of blacking out from lack of oxygen, sucked in a huge breath and pushed with all her might. She felt pressure and then a feeling like something slithering really fast out of her.

Afterwards, the baby's loud, vigorous cry filled the room as it was cleaned off and wrapped in a little pink blanket. Draco kissed Hermione on her hot, feverish lips; he was crying, and so was she.

"May I present to you my granddaughter, Jade," Narcissa said, handing the pink bundle to Hermione.

"Oh, look at her little face!" Hermione gushed. "And her little fingers!" Hermione kissed the baby gently on her bald head. "Hi, little baby," she whispered. "Your mummy loves you."

"Okay, Hermione, you need to rest, and the baby needs her rest as well," Narcissa said sternly.

Hermione handed the baby to Draco, and he gently carried her over to the rocking chair in the corner. He sat, holding his precious daughter, his heart bursting with love. Never before and never again would he have this strong of a feeling. This was the love that a parent felt when setting eyes on their first-born child; it was like no other.

Hermione watched as Draco rocked the baby, a foreboding feeling overcoming her. He looked so happy, so in love with his child, how was she ever going to tell him that their daughter was going to break his heart? She swallowed the lump in her throat and decided that she wouldn't have to tell him because she was going to make sure that Jade would be different this time, that somehow she would be able to help her daughter to sidestep her sad future.

Jade was a very quiet baby and, much to her parents' delight, would sleep hours at a time. She never fussed, not even when given a bath or having her diaper changed. She would just stare up at you with her big, grey eyes. Hermione noticed that her baby never smiled or cooed for her, and it bothered her to think that, at only six months old, Jade was already an unhappy child. It bothered her so much that she would spend stressful hours trying to get her baby girl to just give her the tiniest smile.

Draco watched in amusement as Hermione made extremely funny faces, dancing around singing some Muggle song about shaking your booty. She even made farting noises with her armpit. Nothing worked; Jade simply sat there on the floor, staring at Hermione like she was crazy.

"Oh, I give up!" Hermione cried in exasperation after a few hours. "It's hopeless! I think she does it on purpose to drive me mad!" She plopped herself down into an overstuffed chair, put her feet up on the ottoman, and then blew the straggled pieces of hair out of her face. "She has no sense of humor!"

"Nonsense, my dear wife!" Draco said, getting up and making his way over to the baby. "You just have to know what she finds funny. Observe," he said, putting his hands over his eyes and then pulling them away. "Boo!" he said loudly. Jade jumped, startled, and then cracked a smile. "See?" he said to Hermione smugly. "Daddy knows what you like, doesn't he, my little angel?" he said, picking her up and blowing on her tummy.

Much to Hermione's annoyance, Jade giggled. Of course, she was daddy's little girl! Maybe the next one would prefer her dramatic attempts at humor to his peek-a-boos and tummy raspberries! Still, it was a relief to know that her baby was not a sullen, unhappy child. Maybe if they kept her happy, she wouldn't grow up to feel unloved. Hermione had decided that it was the reason her daughter had the affair. She simply felt unloved by her husband and family. Why else would someone stray?

She watched Draco playing on the floor with their daughter, waving a toy in her face. She knew she could never tell him, and she also knew that she could never tell Harry and Ginny that her daughter was the reason their son took his own life. She would bear this burden alone to spare the feelings of her husband and her friends. Somehow, she would find a way to change her daughter's destiny and maybe the destiny of everyone close to her. Her hand went to her stomach, and she closed her eyes, wishing happiness and health for the new life that was growing inside.

"Draco?"

He looked up from his daughter, and she took the opportunity, while he was distracted, to grab the toy from his hand. "Why, you little devil!" he said, tapping her on her cute little nose. She giggled and tried to hit him, but he caught her tiny hand and kissed it. "What did you want?" he asked Hermione, looking up at her again. He saw excitement mingled with fear plainly etched on her face. "What's wrong?" he asked, concerned.

Hermione slid out of the chair and sat next to him. "I have something to tell you. Something that I hope will make you happy." She took his hand and held it over her stomach. "Do you sense anything?"

He looked confused for a second and then what she had meant dawned on him. "Another baby?" A smile lit up his face, and he jumped on her, knocking her over onto the plush carpet. "Are you sure?" he asked, holding himself above her with his strong arms.

"I found out just this morning. Are you sure you're okay with this?" she asked, rubbing her hands over his biceps. "I know it's so soon and Jade is only a few months old..."

Draco leaned in and kissed his wife's open mouth, quieting her. "Hermione, my love, I've never been more happy or more excited! Another baby! Just think about it, maybe you'll get lucky and this one will think you're funny."

"Ha ha! Malfoy!"

Suddenly, Narcissa appeared in the doorway. "What is all the commotion? The house-elves are in a flurry, passing around bottles of butterbeer and congratulating me on having such a virile son."

Hermione and Draco couldn't help but laugh at the very image of a house-elf toasting to his manhood. "Mother, Hermione just told me that we're expecting another baby."

Narcissa's hand went to her throat in surprise. "Really? I'm going to be a grandmother again?" She seemed both happy and distraught at the very idea.

"What's wrong, Cissy?" Hermione asked in concern, crawling out from under Draco.

"Oh, nothing! Just that now I'll have to say I have two grandchildren. People will think I'm so old!" She rushed over to the mirror and examined her still youthful face.

"Mother, please! You know you look twenty years younger than you really are! No one will think you're old!"

She fixed her hair, even though there wasn't a strand out of place. "I'm so happy for you!" she said, turning and gathering them into a crushing embrace. "I must tell everyone. Will you excuse me?" She kissed them both on the cheek and rushed from the room.

Hermione went over to Jade, picked her up and swung her around. "You're going to be a big sister!" she said, smothering her drooling face with kisses. For a response, Jade hit her in the head with the toy and then threw it to the floor.

Draco laughed, "It looks like she's not very happy about it!"

Hermione handed the baby to Draco. "Well, she's just going to have to deal with it now, isn't she?" Somewhere deep in her heart, she knew that maybe this was how it started. She had always heard of sibling rivalry, but neither she nor Draco had ever had to deal with it, being the only child. "You'll see, Jade, darling," she said to the yawning baby. "You and Ruby will get along famously!"

The little girl simply stared at Hermione. Her huge grey eyes seemed to shout, 'It's not going to be all right, mother! She's going to steal all the attention! You'll love her more than me, and I'll end up searching aimlessly for that lost love, finding it in the form of a sinister man who'll talk me into leaving my husband and daughter! I'll die lonely and broken-hearted because you just couldn't use birth control!'

Hermione tore her eyes away from Jade's accusing stare and fled from the room.

It seemed that Hermione had worried for nothing after the birth of her second child. Jade and Ruby seemed to get along like the best of friends. Jade would hold her hand and make sure she didn't get into trouble; she would play dolls and tea party with her. Everything looked fine...on the outside.

What Hermione and Draco didn't know was that Jade loved to torture her little sister when they were alone. She would tell Ruby scary stories, threaten the little toddler by telling her she was going to throw her from the tree house. Jade would pull her hair and pinch her. Jade even told Ruby that if she told mum or dad about any of it, she would sneak into her room at night and set her bed on fire.

Ruby would lie in her bed at night, crying in the dark, her sister in the next room listening with a huge, satisfied grin on her face. She hated her sister and she really didn't know why. It was something she had felt since she first saw the squalling newborn in her cradle. Maybe it was the way her mother doted on the little brat, telling her how smart she was. Her mum never said anything like that to her! Sure, she held her and kissed her, sang to her, but it always seemed fake to her, as if her mother was just going through the motions and didn't really mean it.

She sometimes felt that her mother could see right through her, knew all the terrible things she did to her sister. It made her feel guilty and ashamed, and sometimes she just wanted to climb into her mother's lap and tell her everything while her mother rocked her and kissed her, telling her it would be all right. All she wanted was for her

mummy to love her like she loved Ruby.

Her daddy was a different story; she was his favorite and could do no wrong in his eyes. He sat with her and read her stories, told crazy knock-knock jokes and called her his little angel. She loved her daddy with all her heart, and sometimes she worried that he would find out what a bad girl she was, and then he wouldn't love her anymore.

She listened as Hermione went into Ruby's room and tried to soothe her.

"Baby? What's the matter? Why are you crying?" Hermione said, lifting her up and rocking her. "Did you have a bad dream?" She kissed her terrified daughter on her tear-stained, chubby cheek.

"No, mummy, I just thought I saw... I saw a monster at my window."

Hermione laid the sniffling girl back in her bed, and after conjuring a glass of cold water, she gave her a sip. "That's my girl! Now, tell mummy about the monster."

Ruby wanted desperately to tell her about the things Jade had been doing to her, but she didn't want to be set on fire in her bed. "The monster hurts me, mummy."

"Hurts you? What do you mean?" Hermione asked, sitting on the edge of the bed. For some reason, her heart was pounding very fast.

"It likes to pinch me until I scream, and sometimes she... I mean it puts its hand over my face so I can't breathe, and it laughs and laughs when I try to kick it." Ruby suddenly sat up, her eyes full of terror. "Oh, mummy! I don't want it to hurt me anymore! Make it stop!" She clung to Hermione, shivering and crying. "I don't want to be burned up! I don't like fire!"

Hermione felt like she had been punched in the stomach. All the air left her lungs, and her vision turned black. She knew who 'the monster' was now, and she could see it clearly. Hermione had noticed bruises on Ruby, but just thought they were the kind every four-year-old got while running and playing. Last night, during Ruby's bath, Hermione had seen a huge black and blue mark on the child's back.

"How did you get this?" she had asked her. "It looks painful. Does it hurt?"

Ruby looked up at her, eyes filled with tears. "I fell down the stairs. It hurted really bad, but now, not so much."

Hermione now had a dreadful suspicion that her oldest daughter was behind this, and it made her sick to think about her baby girl being hurt like this. "It's going to be all right, sweet pea. Mummy will fix everything. The monster won't hurt you ever again." She picked up her daughter and held her close. "Would you like to sleep in the nursery with Emerald tonight?"

Ruby nodded her head. "I like to watch baby sister sleep; she smiles when she's sleeping."

Hermione carried her daughter to the nursery and laid her in the bed next to the crib. She stayed until she fell asleep. After kissing Ruby on the forehead and making sure Emmie was covered up, Hermione went back down the hall and stood outside of Jade's room. She stood there, staring at the closed door, trying to calm herself. 'How did this happen?' she thought. 'I was so careful to make sure she felt loved and wanted. Why would she do this?' Hermione thought that maybe there was some mutant evil Malfoy gene that was passed down through the bloodline, something that Jade had been born with. It had to be something like that!

Her hand grasped the doorknob and she slowly turned it. Stepping into the room, she closed the door behind her. It was semi-dark, a stream of light coming from the fairy nightlight next to the bed, casting shadows across the floor. Hermione slowly walked over to the bed and looked down at her daughter.

Kneeling down, she smoothed the pale curls from the angelic face and kissed her lovingly on her tiny, pink lips. Emotion took over and she started sobbing. "My baby, my beautiful girl, I've failed you!"

Jade's eyes flew open at the sound of her mother crying. "Mummy, what's wrong! What is it?" Jade thought that her tattletale sister had ratted on her. "Whatever she said, I didn't do it! She's a liar!"

Hermione abruptly stopped crying and stood up. She wiped the tears from her face roughly. "I know what you've been doing Jade Malfoy. I know that you've been hurting your little sister, leaving marks and bruises all over her body." Hermione took a long deep breath. She was disgusted by the fact that she wanted more than anything to grab the girl and shake the hell out of her. "Why, Jade? Why are you doing this?"

Jade simply looked up at her mother and said, "Because I hate her, and I want her to die."

Hermione gasped in shock. "What did you say?" This was not happening. Her daughter did not just tell her that she wanted to kill her little sister. "What is wrong with you?" she said, shaking her head in horror. "How can you say things like that?"

"You only love her, not me." Jade hugged her favorite dolly tightly. "If she was dead then you would love me again."

Hermione bent down and picked her up. "I love you, Jade, more than you'll ever know. You are my first born, my special girl. Tell me how I can make you see what I feel in my heart."

Jade wrapped her arms around her mother and kissed cheek. "Just be with me sometimes, hold me like this and tell me you love me, like daddy does."

"I do tell you! Hermione was tearing up again.

"You tell me, but you don't mean it."

"Yes, I do mean it!" She hugged the little girl closer. "I love you, baby girl, and your sister loves you too. She looks up to you and wants to always be with you. Please don't hurt her anymore, Jade. If you do, we will have to send you away. We can't have you hurting other children or yourself."

Jade started crying, "Don't send me away! I don't know why I do it. Honestly, I don't! Sometimes I hate her so much that I just have to hurt her! I don't want to be like this, mummy! Please help me!"

"I will, darling. Mummy will help you, I promise."

An hour later, Hermione came back to her bed. She took off her robe and slippers and then climbed under the covers. "Draco?"

He rolled over, putting his arm around her. "Yes, my love?" he said tiredly.

"We need to talk."

"About what?"

"Jade."

"What about her?" he asked, opening his eyes and looking into her red splotchy face. "Have you been crying?" He sat up and turned on the lamp next to the bed. "What's wrong?"

"It's Jade! She's been hurting Ruby."

Draco narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean, 'hurting Ruby'?" He didn't believe for one second that his little angel would ever hurt anyone.

"Ruby was crying and I went to her room. When I asked what was wrong, she told me that a monster had been hurting her."

Draco waved his hand. "It was just a nightmare!" he said dismissively. "What's this got to do with Jade?"

"I've been noticing cuts and black and blue marks on Ruby. At first I thought they were just normal everyday bumps and bruises, but the one I saw tonight was not normal. It looked like she had been hit with something."

"Did you ask her how she got it?"

"She said it was from falling down the stairs, but I could tell she was lying." Hermione sat up and pulled her knees to her chest. "When she was telling me about the monster, she slipped and said, 'she' instead of 'it'. Then it just hit me. Ruby spends a lot of time alone with Jade."

"How can you sit there and accuse our little girl of being some kind of child abuser? She's six-years-old, for Merlin's sake!" He shook his head. "No, I refuse to believe that my angel would hurt Ruby. There has to be another explanation!"

"Draco," Hermione said, frustrated. She had never seen any man so loyal to his child. It both pleased her and made her jealous at the same time. "Jade admitted to me that it was her. She said she wanted Ruby to die because she thinks I love her more." Hermione tried to reach out for him, but he shrank away in disgust. "Jade was crying, telling me that she didn't want to hurt anyone, but that she couldn't help it."

Draco collapsed onto his back and stared at the ceiling. He was silent for so long that Hermione thought that he had gone into shock. "What are we going to do?"

Hermione leaned over and laid her head on his chest. "We need to get her some help. I promised."

Both being Medi-Wizards, Draco and Hermione were able to find the best and most discreet help available for their daughter. They refused to send her away and demanded that the psychiatrist come to their house daily instead. She was diagnosed with Anti-Social Personality Disorder, and treatment was started immediately to help her deal with her hostility and impulsive behavior.

Draco and Hermione both had long shifts at St. Mungos, but they made sure that if one of them couldn't be home with her, the other could. On the rare occasion that they had to work the same shift, Narcissa made sure that Jade went nowhere near Ruby or Emerald.

Jade slowly made progress and was allowed playtime with her sisters, and even with Harry and Ginny's son, Raiden, who was around the same age as Ruby. Harry and Ginny knew something was going on, but never asked. They knew the Malfoys were a very private and very proud family, and it really was none of their business what happened inside of the Manor.

Even though Jade never hurt her sister, or any other child for that matter, ever again, she was now prone to bouts of depression that lasted for days. By the time she was eleven, her dejection had worsened. Her letter from Hogwarts came in the mail, and they debated whether or not to send her.

"Jade, angel," Draco said, coming into her room. She and Raiden, who was her constant companion, were building a tower with Exploding Snap cards. "Something came by owl for you today. It's your letter to Hogwarts for this fall."

Jade looked up, her smoky eyes alight with excitement. "It did?" she asked, jumping up and knocking the tower over, where it exploded, sending smoke into Raiden's face. "Let me see it!" She snatched the parchment from her father's hand and read it. "Oh, Raiden, look! I'm going to Hogwarts!" she said, thrusting the letter at him.

"Do you really want to go, Jade?" Draco asked, watching her dance around happily.

"Of course I do! What a silly question!" She stopped twirling around and looked at her father suspiciously. "You don't want me to go, do you?" She suddenly began to cry. "I knew it! You and mum aren't gonna let me go! You want me to stay locked up here like a freak and never have any friends or do anything fun!" Raiden jumped up and assured her that HE would always be her friend.

Draco rushed over to his daughter, assuring her that it wasn't true. "Jade! Please, honey, listen to me!" He grabbed her by the shoulders. "If it means that much to you, you may go...but if there is a problem at any time, you are going to have to come back home," he warned.

"Oh, Father! I promise to behave, and I'll try my hardest not to be sad!" She hugged a startled Raiden and kissed him on the cheek. "I'll miss you, but soon you'll be going as well, and then we can be together again!"

When it was time for Jade to go to school, Hermione and Draco saw their daughter off, and as the Hogwarts Express rolled from the station, Hermione turned to Draco. "I'm trying to be positive, but I have this crushing fear that she's not going to be fine and that something terrible is going to happen."

"You're just afraid that she's going to be sorted into Slytherin, aren't you?" Draco said teasingly.

"I'm kind of thinking she will be whether I like it or not. She is her father's daughter, after all!"

But they were wrong. Jade was sorted into Hufflepuff, much to her father's disgust. His daughter was the first in the entire history of Malfoys not to be sorted into the house of Slytherin. "I'm embarrassed to even tell people. When they ask me what house she's in, I will always have to change the subject!"

"Well, I'm happy she's in Hufflepuff! It shows that instead of being just smart or courageous, or cunning, she's hard working and loyal as well! I'm proud of her and you should be too!"

"It's still embarrassing!" he said, from behind his *Daily Prophet*. "Although there is one good thing about her being in that House."

"What's that?" Hermione asked, sipping her tea.

"She won't get into any trouble there! It's full of boring, rule-following goody goodies, who never swear, drink or have dirty thoughts!"

Jade's first year went smoothly. She had only one bout of depression that lasted for only two days. Luckily, it was over the weekend, and she could just pass it off as being tired from doing school work all week. Sometimes, she missed her family terribly, but the person she missed most was Raiden. Never a day went by that she didn't receive a letter from him. She kept them all tied in a blue satin ribbon in the bottom of her underwear drawer.

She made plenty of new friends; one she liked in particular was named Kate. Kate was a dark skinned, black haired girl with loose morals and a knack for getting in trouble. Jade thought her wonderful and longed to be like her, but didn't want to disappoint her parents, so she stayed away from her.

By her second year, she was beginning to become bored with the endless studying, stupid Quidditch matches and boring talk about things she cared nothing about. She wanted excitement and adventure! She heard all the stories from her parents about the things they did while they were at Hogwarts, and so far her experience was nothing like theirs.

She decided to make her life more fun, more full of danger, and in order to do that, she became best friends with Kate. Kate introduced her to firewhiskey, swearing, and

sneaking around the school after curfew to be groped in dark corners by horny Slytherin boys. She was having the time of her life! This was how it felt to be free, to be careless! Oh, how she missed being bad!

During holidays and the summer, she had fun telling Raiden all the naughty things she had learned during school, and much to his delight, she even showed him some of her exploits. He fell more in love with her every time he saw her. He may have only been eleven, but he knew what he felt was real. She was beautiful and smart. He could overlook the fact that she swore like a sailor and stole liquor from her parents' bar.

In her third year, Raiden and Ruby came to Hogwarts. Ruby was placed in Ravenclaw, and Raiden was put in Gryffindor. Hermione and Draco were very pleased that their middle daughter was so intelligent, and Harry and Ginny glowed with pride that their son was following in their footsteps.

Raiden was so excited about seeing Jade every day, but that excitement was short lived when he saw her making out with a Slytherin boy who was older than she. His heart was crushed. He thought she loved him, and he had every right to think that! Every letter she sent him said, 'I love you,' and just this past summer she had told him that she wanted to marry him when they grew up. Now here she was, letting some perverted Slytherin put his hand up her skirt!

All through their years together at Hogwarts, Jade was friendly to Raiden, even flirting relentlessly with him, but he was just not exciting enough for her. She kept him dangling, drove him mad with desire and made him jealous with her endless affairs with bad boys that cared nothing for her.

"Why can't she see that I love her? That I would be so much better for her than those blokes who just use her and abuse her?" he asked Ruby, who was sitting next to him on the bench doing her homework. Across the lake, he could see Jade and her newest conquest flirting with each other. Every once in awhile, he could hear her giggle, and it drove him nuts.

"Why don't you just forget about her? Obviously, she cares nothing for you except as a friend." Ruby snapped her book shut. "You've wasted your entire youth waiting for her to realize she wants to be with you. I think it's time to open your eyes and see that right in front of you is someone who does love you!" Ruby leaned over and captured his shocked mouth in a passionate kiss.

Across the lake, Jade stared in disbelief. "How dare she!" she said furiously.

Her boyfriend followed her gaze and chuckled. "What does it matter if she's fucking that Potter kid? Unless you're jealous, that is?"

Jade tore her eyes away and looked down at the smirking Slytherin boy. "You don't know anything, so shut your fucking mouth! I'm not jealous, I'm just shocked to see my little sister snogging someone!" In fact, she was more than shocked, she was angrier than she had ever been in her life! She thought Raiden was in love with her! How dare he shift his feeling to her sister!

Jade couldn't stand it if she was not the center of attention and hated it even more if a man was in love with someone else. In her twisted mind, all men should want her and desire her. She did everything in her power to make it so. When one of her men defected, it made her crazy with anger.

The Slytherin boy tried to pull her down into his lap, but she shoved him off and stalked around the lake to confront her sister and her lover. "What do you think you're doing?" she screeched.

Raiden and Ruby unglued their lips and looked up at her in surprise.

"Jade, please, just calm down!" Raiden said, standing up. "It's not what you think!"

"Not what I think? I'm not fucking blind, you know!" she replied hotly.

Ruby was on the verge of tears. She loved her sister and never wanted to hurt her, but for once she felt she needed to stand up to her. "Now, you listen here, Jade Malfoy! I'm free to kiss whomever I want, and as for Raiden, he doesn't belong to you! In fact, he's tired of you stringing him along, making promises you never keep, telling him your heart belongs to him and then ripping it out and stomping on it! You are nothing more than a whore and..." Jade's hand suddenly ricocheted off her face.

"I thought you loved me!" she said to their stunned faces. "You are a bitch, Ruby, and if I ever see either one of you again, I'll kill you!" She suddenly grabbed her own hair in her hands and fled across the lawn, screaming at the top of her lungs.

For three days she refused to come out of her room or eat. Finally, her roommates went to the Headmaster. He tried to help the distraught girl, but there was nothing he could do. Draco and Hermione were sent for, and they quietly took their daughter home one month before her graduation.

No matter what they tried, no matter what they said, Jade would just lie in her bed day after day, staring at the wall. The only person that could get her to eat was Narcissa, and even then, it was a chore.

"I think," Narcissa told her son, "that it's time to discuss sending her somewhere where she can get the help that she needs. Having Ruby home for summer holiday is only making matters worse. She keeps trying to sneak into Jade's room. I think she feels responsible for Jade's depression and wants to help her, but all it does is make Jade worse."

Draco slammed his fist down on the table. "I will not send her away! She's gotten better before and she can do it again!" Hermione said nothing. She knew Narcissa was right. The situation seemed hopeless, and there was no other option.

Narcissa sat down and calmly tried to talk some sense into him. "Draco, I know how much you love her, but you have to understand that she is not getting any better. There is nothing more that we can do for her. She needs to be in a facility where professionals can help her around the clock."

"Draco, your mother is right. We can't just sit here while our daughter is wasting away in her room upstairs; we have to get her some help."

He put his face in his hands and sighed. He was so damn tired! This was so emotionally draining! "Fine, but let me be the one to tell her." He got up from the table and headed to his daughter's room.

He was halfway down the hall when he heard Ruby's screams. Rushing into the room, he saw her standing there with her hand over her mouth, her eyes wide with terror. "What?" was all he managed to get out before she pointed to Jade's bed.

"No!" She was lying there in a pool of blood; both of her wrists were cut so deeply that he could see her bone. "Ruby, get help, NOW!" The girl didn't move; she was rooted to the spot in shock. "Ruby!"

She seemed to come out of her daze, looked at her father's terrified face, and then ran from the room screaming for help.

Jade barely survived. If Ruby hadn't found her when she did, she would have bled to death. For the next year, Jade was institutionalized and made amazing progress. Every weekend, like clockwork, Raiden would come to visit her. At first, she didn't want to see him, but she could never stay mad at him for very long, so after the tenth try, she told the nurse that she would like to see him.

He was still sort of going out with her sister, and even though he liked Ruby and cared about her, his heart still belonged to Jade. She was his first love and his soul mate, and it hurt him to know that he was partly to blame for her being sent away. He still planned on marrying her one day, and if it took years, he would wait...he was a very patient man.

She looked forward to his visits and to their long talks, and she found herself falling in love with him. Why didn't she see what a great guy he was before? Why did she have to waste all those years falling for bad boys who just used her? She suddenly remembered that she had thought Raiden boring and not very sexy. Had she been blind? He

was gorgeous with his green eyes and black hair. His smile was sweet and sincere, and he definitely had a nice body. He was everything she wanted...everything she needed.

And so the day came when she was to be released, and he came with her parents to take her home. He held her hand as they left, her parents smiling behind them.

"Raiden? If I told you that I loved you, what would you say?"

He picked up her hand and kissed it gently. "I would say that I love you too."

"But what about Ruby?"

"It's over between us. Apparently, she wasn't happy about all the time I've been spending with you, and so she decided to find herself a more loyal man," he laughed lightly. "She deserves someone who can love her back. I could never do that because my heart already belongs to you."

Jade and Raiden were married two years later. It was the happiest time in her life, and when she found out that she was pregnant, she was even happier. When she told her parents, they gave each other giant grins and embraced excitedly. She thought she heard them say the name Amee, but wasn't sure if she had heard right. It always seemed that her parents were hiding something, some secret that only they knew about.

Her daughter was born, and she named her Amethyst. She looked nothing like her father except for her nose. Her hair was pale blond like her mother's, and her eyes were grey, almost silver in color with thick, dark lashes. She was beautiful, and Jade made sure everyone knew it. She loved to parade her around at tea parties, dressed in the most fashionable baby clothes, making a fuss when she drooled on her expensive, frilly dress.

Draco would take the baby from her and not give her back for hours. He loved to walk with her in the gardens where she would pick flowers and eat them, and he would laugh when she spat them out. She was the most wonderful little girl, very intelligent, polite and loving. He would do anything for her.

Hermione paid close attention to Jade, trying to catch the slightest glimpse that something was wrong. She had the advantage of knowing what her daughter was going to do, and she planned on putting a stop to it before it happened. She thought she was doing a pretty good job and was even beginning to suspect that maybe something had changed and Jade's future would be different. Her marriage looked happy, she loved her daughter...everything looked fine.

And it was fine... for a while. After a few years, Jade began to get bored. She found herself lying in bed next to her snoring husband, fantasizing about having wild sex with mysterious strangers. More and more, she wanted out of her marriage. It was stale and predictable, and she found motherhood a tedious, unfulfilling job.

One night, she decided to go out and have some fun at the local wizard pub. Instead of telling Raiden her plans, she snuck out in the middle of the night. The feeling of doing something behind his back was intoxicating, and she wondered why she had never had the courage to do it before.

The pub was crowded and noisy, and after ordering a drink, she sat down at an empty table. She liked the music, and she tapped her fingernails against her glass to the beat. There were so many good-looking men! Men with large, rippling muscles, white smiles and smoldering eyes. She was looking around, trying to choose which one she would be fucking later, when someone caught her attention.

He was standing in the corner, staring at her. He was very tall and handsome. His hair was raven black and messy in a stylish sort of way. His eyes were a crystal blue, and he smiled at her with very sensual lips. He pushed off the wall and walked over to her, confident and aloof.

"If I may say so, you are the most beautiful creature I have ever laid eyes on." His voice was deep and sexy, and from the moment Jade heard it, she knew she wanted him.

"There is no need for flattery. Mr....?" she looked at him, waiting for a name.

"My name is Adrian."

"I'm Jade. And now that we know each other's names, I'll get right to it. I find you extremely attractive, and I want you to take me somewhere and fuck me until I scream." He took her to his place, and the moment the door was closed, he threw her up against the wall, ripped her clothes off, and then kissed her violently.

"Mmmm!" she moaned. This was how she liked it, dirty and rough. He dug his fingers into the tender flesh of her arms as she slid her hand in his pants and pumped his rock hard cock. He made deep groaning noises as she stroked him harder and harder.

He licked and bit her neck, her shoulders and her breasts. She released him and arched her body to give him better access. His mouth found her nipple, and he sucked it so hard that she screamed. Suddenly, she was turned around, and he bent her over, one of his hands pulling at her hair, the other plunging into her soaked pussy.

He rammed his cock into her and fucked her relentlessly. He grabbed her hips, and she ground her ass into him, meeting his every thrust. Slipping out of her, he turned her around and pushed her to the floor where he threw her legs over his shoulders and then continued fucking her until both cried out as violent orgasms racked their bodies.

Sex with Adrian was wild, animalistic and addictive. That's why she found herself meeting him every night. After a few months, all she cared about was seeing him again. If her family was falling apart, she didn't notice and really could care less.

Raiden suspected that something was wrong. His wife was cold to him, snappy and quick-tempered. She no longer made love to him or even kissed him, for that matter. She was different with Amethyst as well, and it hurt him to see his daughter being ignored by her mother.

He did the only thing he knew to do; he went to Hermione for advice. Usually, he went to Narcissa, but since she had died the previous spring, Hermione was the next best thing. He would never bother his own parents with anything because... well, because they never had any good advice.

"What do you mean she's acting strange?" Hermione asked, handing him a cup of tea.

"I don't know. It's like she doesn't want to be bothered with us any more. She leaves at night and doesn't come home until the crack of dawn. She ignores Amee and refuses to tell me where she's going or what she's doing. It's like she hates us or something."

Hermione sipped her own tea. She knew the time had come. She knew what her daughter was up to, and she planned to tell her son-in-law exactly what it was so that he could put a stop to it. "Have you considered that maybe she's having an affair?"

Raiden sighed and sat his cup down. "I have thought about that. Do you think that's what it is?"

"I do, and I think you should confront her about. Put a stop to it before it ruins your lives!" Hermione hoped that her daughter would see what her selfish actions were doing to her family and that she would stop. If not, she was going to have to think of some other way to help.

That very night, Raiden waited for her to come home so that he could confront her, but she never arrived. For days he waited and panicked, wondering if she was lying dead somewhere.

Draco, Hermione and Ruby all went out to search for her, but turned up empty-handed. On the fifth night, around midnight, she came home, acting as though nothing was wrong. She walked into the bedroom, took off her coat, and that's when she noticed that Raiden was sitting in the corner chair, staring at her.

"Oh, hello!" she said, nonchalantly, slipping off her shoes.

"That's all you have to say?" he asked, leaning forward. "You've been gone for days, and all you can say is, 'oh hello'?"

"What else would you like me to say?"

He sat back, the air puffing from his lungs in disbelief. "For one, I'd like you to tell me where you've been all this time!"

Jade smiled sweetly at him. "I've been with my lover, if you must know. We drank, we talked, and we fucked all day and night!"

Raiden just stared at her. This woman was a stranger. She had somehow ceased to be his loving wife and had become this hideous monster. "You are a selfish bitch, do you know that?"

She gave a high-pitched laugh, as if making fun of him for finally figuring that out.

"I have known you and loved you my entire life. I have tried to look past all of your faults...and believe me, they are too numerous to name...but this time you've gone too far, Jade, my dear." He stood up, ready for the argument he knew was going to erupt. "You have hurt me more than once, but now there is a child involved. A child who has been up night after night crying for her mother. Her selfish, cold-hearted bitch of a mother, who cares for no one and nothing but herself!"

"You know what, Raiden? You are absolutely right. I'm tired of pretending that I want to be with you and that being a mother is wonderful. I've been living a lie, and I just can't do it any longer!" She took out her overnight bag and started throwing things inside haphazardly. "If wanting to be happy is selfish, then I guess I'm guilty!"

"Where are you going?" he asked, grabbing her arm.

"I'm leaving."

"You're going to him?"

"Yes, and don't bother trying to talk me out of it because you'll just be wasting your breath!"

Raiden lost all control and shook her like a crazy person. "I won't let you go! I won't! You are my wife, and I love you, do you hear me? I love you!"

Jade pushed him with all her strength. "I don't care if you love me! It doesn't matter anymore because I don't love YOU and because I'm having his baby!"

Raiden locked eyes with her, and he could see that what she said was true. "Well, I hope you'll be happy with your lover, and for his sake, I hope he finds out what a selfish whore you are before he gets too involved." He turned and walked from the room, slamming the door behind him.

She finished packing, and after taking one more look around, she Apparated to Adrian's flat. Jade stood there staring at the door, wondering if she really was doing the right thing. Sure, Adrian was handsome and exciting, and the best lover she had ever had, but there were things about him that were disturbing as well.

He was the leader of a society that practiced the Dark Arts. He told her that his family, who had come from Hungary, had always been a part of this secret society and had always held positions of great importance.

Soon, Adrian wasted no time in getting Jade involved in their ceremonies. They consisted of sacrificing animals, huge orgies that were both erotic and humiliating, and then sometimes there were people being tortured until they died. There was always a drink at the beginning that tasted both sweet and sour, and it made your mind swim and your inhibitions fly out the window. It was through this drugged haze that Jade watched and participated in all kinds of sexual deviance and debauchery.

One night, about two months ago, they had given her a double dose of the drink before a ceremony, telling her that she was going to play an important part that night. All she remembered about that night was the killing of some animal that screamed horribly as they slit its throat and the feeling of its blood falling over her naked body as she was being fucked by Adrian. He was chanting some spell over and over, her mind was spinning, and then she blacked out.

She had woken up the next night with a massive headache and felt sick for days. She tried to ask him what had happened, but he only told her cryptically that in time she would know everything. She had dropped it; after all, she loved and trusted this man, he would never hurt her.

Making up her mind, Jade reached out and opened the door to his flat, and then walked in. She closed the door, sealing her fate.

Raiden sat in the den with the Muggle gun that his father-in-law had given him lying in his lap. He and Draco had spent hours together, shooting at targets. His father-in-law was obsessed with the Muggle Old West. Many times he would catch him playing cowboys and Indians with Amee, just like he did when he, Ruby and Jade were children.

This particular pistol in his lap was a birthday gift from Draco. It was an antique and highly valuable. What better use for it than to blow your brains out? He sat in the quiet darkness of the room, thinking about nothing. His mind was blank; he was calm and at peace with his decision. She had broken his heart for the last time; it would never happen again. He put the gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. The last thing he saw was the form of his daughter, standing in the doorway, looking sad.

The shot echoed through the house, and Amee sat up in her bed. She had been having a terrible dream that her daddy was going to hurt himself. It was so real that for a second, she was confused about where she was. He was in the den, and she had been watching from the doorway. He had the gun that grandfather Malfoy had given him... Suddenly, her bedroom door was thrown open, and her nanny rushed to her bed, picked her up and Apparated to her grandparents' house.

Draco rushed to Raiden's house and found him slumped over in a chair in the den. His brains were splattered all over the wall beside him. When he found out why his son-in-law had taken his own life, he disowned his daughter forever. It was heartbreaking to think that after all they had done for her, she would throw it all away for some strange man she had met at the pub. It was hard for him to sever all ties with her, but he was bound and determined to pretend she had never been born.

In the following months after the suicide, Jade tried to make contact with Draco, but every owl she sent was thrown into the fire, unopened. He focused his energy on his granddaughter, Amee. She needed his love and support. She had lost her mother and father in one day. Hermione was very upset. She knew now that there was no hope. There was no changing the future; it had happened the very same way it did before. Maybe Draco was right and, no matter what you did, you could never change your destiny.

Jade finally stopped trying to contact her family. If only they knew what kind of trouble she was in, they would help her, she knew it! Adrian had turned out to be an abusive freak who told her the baby she was carrying was a Dark Lord with evil powers.

He kept her locked in his flat and raped her every chance he got. A few times, she managed to get away and send for help, but it never came. She was so sorry for the pain she had caused her family and just wished she had never been born.

When she realized that she was in labor, she knew she had to escape. Her baby deserved a chance to be normal. Not for one second did she believe that the child she was carrying was full of Dark magic. If only she could get away from Adrian, then her baby would have a chance.

When Adrian came home that night, she was ready for him. She had broken the bathroom mirror, and in her hand she held a huge shard of pointed glass. As soon as he walked through the door, she plunged it into his chest, and then she fled from the building, not looking back. She only stopped running when her labor pains became so intense that she fell to the ground, the rain pounding the ground around her. She was hysterical and crying and just wanted her mother.

Draco looked up at Hermione as someone knocked on their door. It was rather late for visitors, and they had no idea who it could be.

It turned out to be their daughter. Shivering and wet and in intense labor. Hermione quickly brought her into the downstairs bedroom, and without asking any questions, she took off her daughter's wet clothes, dried her off and then made preparations for the birth of the child. She was moaning and saying that her baby was in danger. That Adrian wanted their baby to be evil. Hermione ignored it; she just thought maybe Jade was hallucinating from the pain.

"I don't want her here!" Draco said angrily as Hermione exited the bedroom. "Send her back to her lover, let him deal with this!"

"How can you say that, Draco? She's our daughter! I don't care what you say; I'm going to help her. Now, get out of my way!"

Draco was livid. Here Jade was, thrusting another problem of hers on them. They knew nothing about this man who she was clearly running from. What if the man was insane and he came here looking for her? She had put her life in danger, and now she had put the same fate on the heads of everyone in the house.

He noticed that Amee was standing in the hall, looking at him with wide, frightened eyes, and he calmly told her to go to her room. She said nothing, but ran away as fast as her little legs could carry her.

In her room, she lay on her bed with her hands smashed over her ears, trying to block out her mother's screams.

Hermione told her daughter to push one more time. There was so much blood, and she knew her daughter was bleeding to death. She could see the baby's tiny head of black hair emerging, and then he was out. Blood gushed from her daughter's body and splattered the bed and the floor.

Hermione quickly handed the baby to Draco and went to work trying to stop the bleeding, but it was no use. Jade had lost too much blood. "Jade, honey, you're going to be fine. Everything is going to be fine."

"Mother, you were always a poor liar. I know I'm dying, and I just want to say that I'm sorry for everything. Please take care of Jasper," Jade whispered weakly.

Hermione promised that she would take care of Jasper and then held her dying daughter's hand until she faded away.

The baby began to wail, and Hermione quickly got to her feet. Draco gave him to her, and she looked down at him. He was beautiful and innocent. She could not believe for one second that he would do the things Amee had said he would do. He looked so tiny, so helpless, there was no way he would grow up to be a killer. It just wasn't going to happen! She had failed her daughter, but she would not fail her grandson. She stood there, kissing and rocking the baby that would some day grow up to murder her.

25

Chapter 25 of 27

We delve into the mind of evil Jasper. Will Amee be able to escape him? Will Draco and Hermione continue to keep secrets?

"How did this happen?" Ginny asked as they all sat around the table. The funeral had been over for about an hour, and they were now sitting in shock, trying to figure it all out. "Everything was fine just a few months ago! Now, my son and your daughter are both dead."

Draco picked up his glass of vodka and drank it in one swallow. He filled it back up and offered the bottle to Harry, who gladly took it and refreshed his own drink.

"Weasley," Draco said. He still called her that, even though she had been Ginny Potter for years. "It just happened, and we all know why. There was nothing we could have done to stop it."

Hermione was sitting back in her chair, staring at the floor. The funeral had been the hardest thing she had ever had to endure. Her baby was gone...dead, and it was all her fault. "There was something I could have done."

They all turned to look at her. Harry set his drink down. "What are you talking about, Hermione?"

Suddenly, the tears that she had thought long gone fell from her eyes. "It's my fault! I knew what was going to happen, but I just couldn't stop it!"

Draco stood up and put his hands on her shoulders. "Honey, you're distraught, there is no way that you..."

"I'm telling you that I knew about Jade having an affair! I knew that Raiden was going to kill himself, and I knew that she would die giving birth to Jasper!"

"But, how?" Ginny asked.

"Amee told me. I mean the 'older' Amee, the one from the future. She told me everything."

Draco seemed to wilt right where he was standing. "Why didn't you tell me? You knew all this time, and you never said anything." He realized he was squeezing her shoulders too tightly when he heard her whimper, and he let go. Walking over to the window, he pulled back the curtain and looked out over the mist-covered grounds of the Manor. "I could have helped. Together we could have fixed this!"

"I can't believe you knew that my son was going to kill himself and yet you didn't bother letting me know!" Ginny was quaking in anger. "I would have kept him as far away from your mentally disturbed daughter as best as I could!"

"Ginny!" Harry said, abashed by her rudeness.

"Well, it's true! There was something deeply wrong with that girl, we all sensed it!"

Harry looked apologetically at Hermione. "I'm sorry, she's just upset."

"There is no need to apologize, she's right. There was something wrong with her. I knew it from the start, but she was my child, and I loved her." Hermione wiped her tears with the back of her hand. "She had a very sad life, and sometimes I wonder if she would have been better off not being born."

"Hermione!" Draco said, shocked. "How can you say that?"

"It's how I feel. It would have spared us all the suffering and grief." She noticed that they were all looking at her in total horror. "Sometimes, I wish we never had of made love that night, and then she never would have been conceived!"

"But we did, and she was born, and she did terrible things and caused everyone she loved pain. Now, you tell us that it could have been stopped!" Draco slammed his drink down. "What else are you keeping from us? From me?"

"Nothing! I don't know anything else! Ameer only had time to tell me about Jasper being born, and then you were screaming, and we ran to the bedroom. Remember?" At that moment, Hermione was so terrified of telling him that there was more she had been hiding. He was drunk and angry, and besides, Harry and Ginny were there, and Jasper was none of their business. She decided that she would tell him later when he was sober and not so crazy with grief.

"You better not be lying to me, Hermione," Draco said. It didn't cross his mind that he was just as guilty about keeping secrets as she was.

"Maybe we'd better go," Harry said, pulling Ginny to her feet. "I'll be in touch with you tomorrow." He gave Draco a brotherly hug. "I really am sorry, and so is Ginny."

"I know," Draco said with a weak half-smile.

"At least you have your grandchildren...both of them. That should be some comfort. We'll be over to pick up Ameer next weekend for her visit. Take care of yourselves and let us know if you need anything." Harry kissed Hermione on the cheek, and then he and his wife left quietly.

"Hermione," Draco said, sitting down across from her. "If there is anything else you need to tell me, now would be the time." He reached across the table and took her hand. He looked into her face, and all he saw was sadness. He had never thought for one second that their lives would be this unhappy. He knew every marriage had its problems, but it seemed like they had more than their share. "You know that I love you, don't you?"

"I know," she said. "It's the only thing I've ever been sure of."

He picked up her hand and kissed it. He loved this woman so much! The thought of losing her was terrifying. "I have to tell you something." It was time that he confessed the secret that was eating him alive.

Just then, Jasper started crying, and Hermione stood up. "The baby needs me."

Draco's courage went right out the window. He sighed and let go of her hand. "Then go to him."

Draco sat alone at the table, listening to Hermione singing to Jasper. She absolutely loved that baby, and he could barely get her to put him down. He guessed she felt so guilty about Jade that she had decided to make up for it by smothering the infant with love. It was a good thing, because HE felt no love for the child whatsoever. Every time he looked at Jasper, all he could see was the cause of his daughter's downfall, a product of an illicit affair that had brought about the death of two people.

He got up and started to put the cap back on the vodka bottle and then decided against it and poured himself another shot. The baby was now quiet, but Hermione was still singing. 'She really does have a beautiful voice,' Draco thought.

Taking his drink, he walked from the kitchen and into the library. As he crossed the threshold, he saw Hermione sitting in the rocker, cradling Jasper, and then suddenly, his eyes went funny. It was like he had tunnel vision. He could only see her and the baby, but every thing else was black.

Her singing seemed far away, and then it faded all together, replaced by voices. They were talking...a man and woman. The man was telling the woman he was so sorry about the way he acted. The woman was crying and telling him that she loved him and that he was forgiven.

'Here, let me pour you a drink.'

'Thank you.'

'It's your favorite. Red wine.'

For some reason, Draco's heart was pounding like mad, and he wanted to shout at the invisible woman to not drink the wine. What the bloody fuck was going on? Who were these people that he was hearing?

'I'm so happy you came. I was afraid that after everything he said to you yesterday, you wouldn't come back.'

'You needn't have worried; there is nothing on this earth that could keep me from being here today. Now, drink your wine, and then perhaps we can take a walk in the garden just like we used to.'

Draco was now having what could only be a panic attack. He was breathing far too heavily, everything looked bright, and now there was a low humming noise in his ears. There was something familiar about the woman's voice. He realized that it was Hermione's when he heard her laughing.

'I'd like that!'

He heard her laugh lightly, and then he saw her as clearly as day. She was standing by the fireplace, the flames casting shadows across her face. She slowly was bringing the glass to her lips. Draco actually rushed forward. "No! Don't drink it!" he screamed. "It's poison!" There was a blinding white flash and then blackness.

When he came to, he was lying in his bed. Hermione was wiping his forehead with a cool, wet cloth. "What? Where..." He tried to sit up, but his body felt like lead.

"You fainted in the library. Gave me quite a fright!"

"Hermione, do you remember when we visited the future, and you had that strange dream?"

"The one about some man giving me a glass of wine?" she asked, dipping the cloth in a bowl of water and wringing it out. "What about it?"

"Did he look familiar to you at all?"

Hermione thought for a moment. "In the dream I knew him, but as of right now, no, he doesn't seem familiar at all. In fact, I can't really recall his features anymore."

"Oh."

"Are you okay? What happened back there?"

"I must have had too much to drink and passed out," he lied. He knew that what he witnessed was very important. If only he had seen who Hermione was with! Maybe he could have recognized him, and then he'd know who the murderer was.

"There's a first for everything isn't there?" she said with a smile. "Draco Malfoy, who can drink any man under the table, passed out from a little vodka! Just wait until I tell Ron!"

"You wouldn't dare!"

She smirked at him. "Oh, yes, I would!" She gathered up the bowl and cloth. "I think after I check on Ameer and Jasper I'll Floo him with the news!"

"Great, I'll never hear the end of it!" Jasper's newborn cry floated into the room, making him cringe. All that baby ever did was cry!

"Ten o'clock, feeding time!" Hermione said. "I swear, the way that baby eats! He's going to grow up to be a giant fat guy with a jolly sense of humor and no friends!"

She was dead wrong. Jasper grew up to be a very attractive and fit man. The only problem was that he knew he was gorgeous and used it to his advantage. Conceited was an understatement when it came to Jasper. He really, deep down inside, believed that he was the most charming, witty and sexiest man to ever walk the earth. Most would have agreed, but there were some, Amee in particular, who thought him shallow, narcissistic and evil beyond belief.

Draco thought the boy reminded him way too much of his father. The way he flaunted the fact that he had money, the way he thought he was better than everyone else, and especially the way he manipulated everyone. He thought that maybe Jasper was Lucius reincarnated, sent here to avenge the fact that Draco had murdered him. Maybe he was a demon from hell. Who knew? They didn't know who or what his father was. All Draco knew for sure was that Jasper had Hermione wrapped around his well-manicured little finger.

Hermione loved Jasper and saw none of his bad qualities, or if she did, she ignored them. To her, he was handsome and charming... 'A little spark of the bad boy in him, but didn't Draco have that same spark?' she thought. Jasper brought her gifts, took her for walks in the gardens during twilight, and he never failed to bring her a glass of her favorite red wine in the evening. They would sit in the library and discuss books. Jasper was very intelligent, well read and a great conversationalist. He was perfect in her eyes.

The only person who really knew Jasper was Jasper. He was the only one who knew that hatred and darkness lay in his heart...his very soul. He knew from the first time he could think coherent thoughts that he was different. For one thing, he seemed to be possessed of a great magical power that no one else seemed to have. He could hurt people and animals just by thinking about it.

The first time it happened, he had been playing in the barn with Amee. He was about five at the time, and she was ten. He hated the way she tried to boss him around just because she was older. She thought he should do everything SHE said, play everything SHE wanted to play.

"We're going to play circus," she said, climbing onto the stall and balancing on the back of a huge, black horse named Thunder. "I'll do the horse tricks, and you can be the Ring Master."

"I want to do the horse tricks! You be the stupid Ring Master!" Jasper said, climbing the stall.

"Jasper, get down, you're going to fall and get hurt!" Amee said as her little brother pulled himself up and then tried to get on the horse.

"No! You get down! I want to ride the horse!" He grabbed her hair and pulled and then tried to push her off the horse's back, but Amee grabbed him, trying to hold on, and he fell off instead, landing on his back in the straw-covered stall. He had the wind knocked out of him, and as he glared up at her in hate, something happened. An image of himself taking hold of Amee's arm and twisting it until it snapped flashed through his mind. He felt it push somehow from his head, and then he heard a loud snap and Amee screamed, falling from the horse and landing next to him with a thud.

She was flailing around and screaming, holding her weirdly bent arm. Jasper was shocked, but at the same time he felt exhilarated. He had done this! He had hurt her without touching her! Looking down at her again, he concentrated on an image of himself hitting her in the head with a rock, and sure enough, he heard the blow and then saw a gash appear on her forehead. She stopped screaming and lay silent.

He smiled gleefully. Amee would never boss him around again! His head snapped up when he heard his grandfather calling them in for lunch. Suddenly, he realized that he was going to get in trouble if he didn't do something. Quickly thinking up a lie, he put on his best frightened face, and he yelled for help.

The first person Amee saw when she came to was Jasper. He was standing next to her bed, grinning. "Hello, Amee. Are you feeling better?"

Amee stared at him with huge scared eyes. She wanted so badly to scream, but all of the spit in her mouth had dried up.

"How did it feel?" he asked her, sitting down on the edge of her bed.

Amee automatically scooted away from him, hugging the blanket close to her chin. "How did what feel?" she managed to ask.

"Did it hurt when I broke your arm?" His face looked so innocent, but his eyes were deep, swirling pits of evil. "Are you going to answer me, Amee?"

"You get away from me right now, or I'll..."

"Don't you even think about telling Grandmother or Grandfather," he said. "Or I'll have to hurt you again."

"Well! My girl is awake!" Draco said, strolling into the room. "It's a good thing Jasper was with you when you fell," Draco said, patting him on the head. "This little hero saved your life."

"Saved my life?" Amee said, catching Jasper's eye. He put his finger to his lips, telling her to be quiet.

"If you had been alone, lying there unconscious, that horse probably would have trampled you to death. Lucky for you, your little brother was there to call for help."

"Yeah, lucky for me," Amee whispered. As she stared at Jasper, she suddenly shivered. There was something wrong with him, very wrong. This wasn't the first time she had felt it. Sometimes, she would catch him staring at her as if in a trance. He would start to babble incoherently, his eyes would roll back in his head, and then he would collapse. It always scared the crap out of her, and for a long time, she never wanted to be alone with him.

Hermione would always find him lying on the floor as if he was dead. He wouldn't be breathing, and he had no pulse. Suddenly, his body would jerk, and he would start gasping for air. Always, after Hermione had rocked him and calmed him, he would tell her that while he was 'asleep' he left and went into the scary, dark place. He said he would scream for her and that it was hard to breathe and he couldn't move his arms or legs.

Draco and Hermione were at a total loss as to what was causing his 'episodes'. They had numerous tests done, and they always came back negative. After he turned five, the episodes became less frequent, and in the past four months, he had collapsed only twice. They hoped that he would eventually grow out of it...and he did.

Amee went to Hogwarts the following year. She was sad to leave her grandparents, but was happy to get away from her increasingly strange and violent brother. After the incident in the barn, she did her best to keep as far away from him as possible. He was a freak, and a dangerous one with terrible powers. He had hurt her a few more times; nothing like what happened in the barn, just deep scratches and bites that would appear on her body when Jasper was feeling particularly angry with her.

Sometimes, as she was gazing out her window, she would see him chase the barn cats or rabbits around until he caught one. He would hold it tightly, look around and then, take off into the barn. She wondered what he did to those poor animals. More than once, she was going to tell her grandparents about what Jasper could do, but fear would take over. There was no telling what he would do to her if he found out.

Even while she was at Hogwarts, she would lie in bed and wonder what he was doing to those poor animals. She was sure he wasn't just petting them.

Jasper started off with spiders. He would catch them in the barn and put them in glass jars where he could watch as he injured them with his mind. He'd twist their little legs until they were hanging by a thread, or make them smoke as he imagined them being burned by a magnifying glass.

After he got bored with the bugs, he moved onto the cats. There were many kittens who made their home in the barn, and it was easy to catch them. He would pet them, make them trust him, and then he would watch as they cried out in pain as their heads were twisted or their tails were flattened as if hit with a sledge hammer.

He realized that he had to be close to his victims. Thinking about hurting them while they were not in sight didn't work. He also tried to hurt the animals so badly that they would die, but that never worked either. They were just so severely wounded that they were on the verge of dying. He would then crush the bugs or even bury the cats and rabbits alive. Sometimes, he would dig them up weeks later to see what they looked like.

By the time he was eleven, Jasper had the whole 'good boy' act down pat. He believed that nobody suspected what he really was except Amee. He didn't really worry about her too much. She only came home during holidays, and then her time was split between the Manor and her grandfather and grandmother Potter's house. He had a feeling she was trying to avoid him, and it made him laugh to think that soon he would be at school with her, and then she wouldn't be able to hide.

Amee was so not looking forward to her little brother coming to Hogwarts. True, she was years ahead of him, but the fact that he could be hiding around every corner waiting to hurt her was terrifying to her. What if he started to do things to the other students? Maybe that would be the best thing that could happen. Everyone would find out what a demented freak he was without her saying a word. He wouldn't be able to blame her.

Jasper was sorted into Slytherin, much to Draco's delight. "It's about time! I was beginning to think our family consisted of a bunch of Hufflepuffs!" He smiled proudly. "The only boy, and he's a Slytherin!"

"Not all the kids are Hufflepuffs, Draco," Hermione said, amused. "Ruby was a Ravenclaw."

"That's all fine and dandy, but what about Jade and Emerald? Merlin only knows what Ruby's kids are going to be! Bunch of Longbottom sissies!"

"Are you still on about that?" Hermione asked, laughing. "You knew it was going to happen, I told you about the family tree!"

"I know, but still! Our daughter married to the son of Neville Longbottom and Looney Lovegood!" Draco rolled his eyes. "I just know their kids are going to be absent-minded dorks who suck at potions, and go around wearing vegetables for jewelry and searching for Snorkacks!"

Hermione lost it, and she started laughing hysterically. "Draco!"

"Well, it's true!"

"Maybe the Ravenclaw in her will balance it all out," Hermione said, wiping her eyes. "I guess we'll soon find out, won't we? Ruby's baby is due in a few weeks."

"Another girl, huh?" Draco said, disappointed. "What is with all the girls? It's sad that when I die, the Malfoy name will die with me."

Hermione looked at him funny. "Jasper's last name is Malfoy."

"Yes, but he is not a true Malfoy." Draco could tell Hermione was going to flip, and he tried quickly to back track. "I mean he IS, but you know what I mean, his mother's last name was Potter, and who knows what his father's name was. We gave him the name Malfoy; he wasn't born with it."

Hermione looked at Draco, sadly. "You'll always look at him that way won't you? You'll always consider him the little bastard baby that ruined Jade's life, right?"

"Hermione..."

"He's an innocent boy, Draco! What happened is not his fault!"

"I know that, damn it!"

"Then stop treating him like a plague! He's your grandson, for God's sake!"

"What the bloody hell are you talking about?" Draco's face was red with anger. "How dare you say I treat him badly! I love that child!"

"Do you? Do you really?" Hermione said, glaring at him. "Then why do you look at him the way you do?"

"What way? What are you talking about!" he yelled, looking guilty. And he had every reason to look guilty because he did stare at him. It just hit him one day that maybe it was Jasper who was going to kill Hermione. He didn't know why he thought this; it just popped into his head. He started to watch the child more closely, and what he saw disturbed him.

He had noticed for some time that the cats were becoming few in numbers. Which was odd because barn cats bred like crazy, and there had always been at least twenty of them running around. Draco knew Jasper loved animals, and he spent most of his time in the barn with the horses. He didn't know why, but for some reason he thought maybe Jasper had something to do with the decrease in the cat population.

Draco hid in the barn, feeling a little foolish for spying on a ten-year-old. Jasper walked in a few minutes later, and from where Draco was hiding, he could see that he was carrying a puppy. Where he got the puppy from, he didn't know. There were no dogs at the Manor.

"Aren't you a cute little puppy?" Jasper said, giving the puppy a kiss on the nose. He sat down in the corner on a bale of hay and put the puppy down, where it went to work sniffing the floor. "You're so cute that I almost hate to do this to you."

As Draco watched, he became increasingly mystified. Jasper was just staring very hard at the little beagle, nothing else, just staring at it. Suddenly, there was a yip from the dog, and it fell over, foaming at the mouth. Draco almost let out an audible gasp, but managed to stifle it. The animal was now twitching, and blood was pouring from its mouth and ears; it looked to Draco as if the dog's head was being crushed by an invisible force.

Jasper tore his eyes away from the half-dead puppy and stood. "You poor thing, here, let me put you out of your misery." He picked it up and twisted its neck, breaking it.

"Just what the fuck do you think you're doing?" Draco said, standing and coming out of his hiding place. He was literally sick to his stomach by the sight he had just witnessed.

Jasper was taken by surprise, and he jumped, the puppy falling with a sickening thud to the floor. "Grandfather!" It was the last person he ever wanted to find out about this. He could always talk his way out of it if it were his grandmother, but not his grandfather. He was the only person who scared him shitless. He had a temper to match his own, and from what he had seen, his grandfather was a very powerful wizard.

Draco looked down at the dog and then back at Jasper. "Is this what you've been doing out here in the barn? Killing animals?"

"Grandfather, please! It's not what you think!"

Draco grabbed him and threw him up against the wall, pointing his wand directly in Jasper's face. "You have ten seconds to explain yourself, and then I'm really going to lose it."

Jasper desperately searched his mind for a story that Draco would believe. "The... the puppy was sick! I found it by the hedges. It was having some sort of seizure or something, so I brought it back to the barn to see if I could help it!"

"Help it? I saw you snap its neck!" He shook the boy, his head bashing into the wall behind him. Suddenly, there was a feeling like he was punched in the face, and he let go of his grandson and staggered back wards. He wiped the blood from his nose with the back of his hand. "How dare you strike me!"

Jasper was thrown into the air and landed on his back at Draco's feet. His grandfather's foot was suddenly on his chest, crushing the air from his lungs. "Please! I can't

breathe!" he pleaded. "Grandfather, I was only putting the puppy out of its misery!"

Draco pushed down a little harder before removing his foot. "Is this the truth?"

Jasper sat up slowly, taking huge gulps of air. "I swear!"

"You haven't been torturing and killing the cats?"

"No! How could you think such a thing?" he said, trying to sound appalled.

Draco was silent; thinking about what he had just accused his only grandson of doing. Did he just jump to conclusions, or was the boy lying? He tried to use his skills in Legilimency to penetrate his mind. He wanted to see what was there, and all he saw was darkness. No thoughts, which really disturbed him. There was SOMETHING always there, even when someone was trying to block you from reading their mind.

Jasper knew what he was doing and concentrated on making a false memory of himself tending to injured birds and cats, and even a garden gnome. It seemed to work because he saw Draco physically relax, and he lowered his wand.

"I'm sorry," he said simply and held out his hand. He didn't know if Jasper had really been killing poor defenseless creatures or not, but he did recognize a fake memory when he saw one.

Jasper took it and after standing on his feet and brushing the dust and hay from his clothes, he turned to Draco. "I know you hate me, but I never realized until today just how much. Now I know exactly what you think of me!" He was pleased at the shocked look on his grandfather's face.

"I'm sorry that I disappoint you. I'm sorry that I'm a fatherless bastard, and I'm sorry I killed my mother!" He added some tears to make his little speech more believable. After all, he wasn't sorry for any of those things.

Draco wasn't fooled for one second. "You can cut the shit, son. You're not fooling me one little bit."

Jasper stopped the tears and glared at Draco.

"You are my daughter's son, and my grandchild, and I love you. I only want the best for you. If you are having some sort of problem that you can't control, you can always come to me, and I'll try my best to help you."

"I'm telling you that I don't have a problem." Jasper looked Draco dead in his face. "I'm telling you the truth."

"Fine. You will not be allowed in the barn alone anymore."

"But..."

Draco turned and headed for the door. "I won't mention this to your grandmother." "Great! another secret!" Draco thought to himself. "Take care of your mess and then come inside the house. Lunch should almost be ready." He left Jasper standing there, and as he walked away, he swore he felt something like a thousand tiny pins poking him all over his body.

From that day on, Draco kept a close eye on the boy. He couldn't help but wonder if he was going crazy. Who in their right mind would think their grandchild was some sort of demon, or even worse, a serial killer. He had read that serial killers tortured animals when they were young, and maybe that's how the idea of Jasper being Hermione's murderer began to sound more plausible every day.

During his first three years at school, Jasper was known for his cruel practical jokes and his witty sense of humor. Later, he was well known for his good looks and voracious sexual appetite.

He learned that being rich, charming and handsome, he could have almost anything and any girl he wanted. And when a girl refused to be taken in by his charm, he would force her. They always cried and begged for him to stop at first, but more often than not, they always came back for more. He would give them a good fucking and then send them on their way. Women were weak and deserved to be used.

He never went home for holidays, much to his grandmother's dismay. She missed him, and not a day went by that he didn't receive a package of goodies from her. He liked to stay behind when everyone else went home. There was little supervision, and he and his friends were free to do whatever they wanted.

He was famous for the drunken orgies that took place every Christmas Eve in the Slytherin common room. Jasper loved sex, especially the violent kind. More than once, he had almost come close to killing a sex partner. He liked to wrap his strong hands around the girl's neck and squeeze while he fucked her. Sometimes, the girl would pass out, and he'd just keep fucking her, but sometimes the girl would turn an ugly shade of purplish blue and he would have to stop and resuscitate her with mouth to mouth.

More than once, he snuck up on a poor, unsuspecting girl, dragging her into an empty classroom or broom closet. He stunned her and then took advantage of her. To him it was intoxicating to be able to do to them whatever he wanted. He felt powerful and invincible. Jasper believed that everyone should want him, worship him, and if they didn't...well, he had ways of making them.

The summer after he graduated, he was stunned when Amee showed up at the Manor. He hadn't seen her for at least three years, and the last time he saw her, she wasn't feeling very well. Amee had been sick off and on all that year and had looked like hell. Now, she strolled into the room looking gorgeous and sexy. Jasper sat up and took notice of her. She had long, blond, flowing hair that fell to her waist; she was wearing a tight black dress that hugged every curve, and he especially loved her sensuous red lips and finger-tips.

She hadn't noticed him lying on the sofa and started when he sat up. "Jasper?" she said. "I hardly recognize you!" He was very tall and muscular. His shiny, black hair was fashionably tousled, and his grey eyes smoldered with intensity. She had to admit that he had turned out to be a very handsome man. As he stood and walked towards her, she suddenly felt a rush of panic. Although she hadn't seen him in years, she still remembered all too well what he was capable of.

"Amee!" he said. "It's so nice to see you again!" He reached out and pulled her in close, embracing her. He could feel her breasts pressed against his chest, and the bare skin of her back felt so soft under his fingers. She smelled of some light perfume that made him think of honeysuckle on a hot, summer day. He knew right then and there that he wanted her.

Amee stiffened at his touch, but soon relaxed. Maybe he had changed. He did seem more mature and less of an asshole. She suddenly felt guilty for thinking the worst about him. "It's been so long."

Jasper reluctantly released her. "Too long. I almost forgot I had a sister!" He lifted up her hand and twirled her around. "You look wonderful." He gave her his most charming smile.

"And you! Look at you! All grown up and handsome. I bet you have girls fighting like jealous cats over you!" she laughed lightly. He was still holding her hand and smiling at her. For some reason, it reminded her of a cat at a mouse hole, lying in wait for its prey, and she suddenly felt very uncomfortable. Sliding her hand out of his, she walked over and sat down on the sofa.

"So, dear sister, what have you been up to?" Jasper asked, pouring himself a glass of scotch. "Do you want a drink?"

"Sure." She needed something to calm her nerves. "I'll have what you're having." He handed her the drink and then sat down in the recliner across from her. "What have I been doing?" she said, sipping her drink. "I've been traveling. I went to Venice first and then Greece. I really loved Greece. All the ruins and..." She stopped abruptly in mid-sentence. He was staring at her. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're beautiful." He leaned forward, his eyes sweeping hungrily over her body. "Tell me, dear sister, how many men did you fuck in Greece?" He smirked at her. "I bet the men were clamoring to rip off your clothes, throw those long sexy legs of yours over their shoulders and suck that sweet pussy of yours until you screamed. I know it's something I'd love to do."

Amee blinked. Her face felt suddenly hot, and she wanted to run from the room. He was disgusting! He was a sick pervert! "My sex life is none of your business." She stood to leave. "I was actually willing to try and put the past behind us, to act like a real brother and sister should, but I see now that it will never happen!"

Jasper chuckled, swirling his drink around with his finger. "Why are you blushing?"

"I'm not!"

"Yes, you are," he said, sucking the scotch from his finger. "I think you'd like me to eat your pussy. Tell the truth now!"

Amee was too shocked to speak, and she turned on her heels and then fled from the room, slamming the door behind her. Why, oh, why did she come here? She knew Jasper was going to be here, but her grandfather had been begging her for some time to come for a visit. She missed her grandparents so much, and was so homesick at times that she would cry. The fear of seeing her brother was so intense that it kept her away, and no matter how many tearful letters she received from her grandmother, it was never enough for her to risk a visit. Her grandfather had actually shown up on the doorstep of the flat she was renting on the waterfront in the city of Volos. As soon as she saw him, she collapsed in his arms and bawled her eyes out.

"I've come to bring you home. I can't take any more of my wife crying herself to sleep every night!" He smoothed back the hair from her forehead and kissed it. "Never mind packing, I'll send for your things."

"I've missed you so much!" Amee said.

"You couldn't have missed me all that much because you haven't bothered to visit in two years!"

Amee was guilt ridden. "It's just that..."

"You haven't been sick again, have you? Your grandmother would throw a fit if she knew you had been lying in a hospital with strangers taking care of you." He looked at her, searching her face for any hint of illness, but saw nothing but the image of good health.

Amee couldn't tell him that she was so damn scared of Jasper that she had stayed away for years. She decided to tell him that, yes, she had been sick again. It wasn't exactly a lie; she had been ill off and on the past year. In fact, for two months straight, she had been unable to get out of her bed.

Still, none of the doctors could figure out what was wrong with her. The numerous tests and stays in the hospitals had yielded no answers. So, she was forced to live with the headaches that hurt so badly that she would sometimes scream. She had no choice but to learn to live with the endless days of throwing up and the sharp, shooting pain in her eyes. It wasn't always that way. There were months at a time when she had no symptoms and was able to live normally.

"I was ill, grandfather. I'm sorry I didn't tell you! I just didn't want to burden my family anymore."

Draco put his arm around the girl. "You were never a burden, and you never will be. Now, let's get going. I'm sure your grandmother is waiting impatiently, and we both know it's never a good idea to keep her waiting!"

After Apparating, Draco told her that Jasper had come home and that he was so happy to have both his grandchildren in the house again. Amee almost turned right around and Apparated back to Volos. Why did he have to wait until they were already here to tell her about Jasper?

Hermione told her that her brother was in the library and that he had no idea she was coming home. Amee decided that, for once, she wasn't going to let herself be afraid of him. She would walk into the library full of courage and face him. Who knew, maybe he had changed. Well, not only had he not changed, but now he was worse.

The things he said to her! It was like he knew about all those meaningless trysts she had. All those times in dark corners of noisy pubs when she let strange men slip their hands up her skirt or lift her up and fuck her against the wall while the music drowned out her moans and screams.

As she lay there in her bed thinking about it all, she started to fall asleep. Her body felt so relaxed, being in her own bed again. She loved the sounds of home. The tick tock of the grandfather clock in the hall, the low murmuring of the house-elves... Soon, she was asleep and dreaming.

Jasper crept down the hall, making sure that he wasn't seen. There was a new power he discovered he had, just this past year, and he wanted to try it out on his sister. He slowly and quietly turned the door handle and went inside.

He could barely make out her shape in the semi darkness of the room. She was lying across the bed on her back, her legs dangling over the edge, her hands resting on her stomach. He stood there, looking down at her beauty. Her head was tilted to the side, and her golden hair was splayed across the pink satin sheets. Her red lips were slightly parted and contrasted sharply with her pale skin.

He wanted so badly to kiss those blood red lips, to tangle his fingers in her hair, but then that would ruin his plan. She would definitely wake up, and he didn't want that. Jasper leaned over and put his face as close to hers as he dared. He could feel the tiny wisps of breath that came from her mouth, and he could also smell her perfume. He closed his eyes slowly, inhaling her scent, picturing her every feature, and then he penetrated her very dreams.

Back in school, one day in History of Magic, he was so damn bored that he decided to fantasize about fucking the girl across the aisle from him. He closed his eyes and pictured it as clearly as day in his mind. To his astonishment, the girl let out a tiny moan of pleasure, low enough that only he heard. Opening his eyes, he saw that she was flushed and wriggling around slightly in her seat. Her hands were running up and down her thighs, and her head was thrown back.

Luckily, they were sitting in the very back of the room and everyone else was either sleeping or doodling pictures, looking bored. Jasper grinned and closed his eyes again, picturing himself pounding into the girl's pussy with violent thrusts from behind while his fingers rubbed her clit raw. He suddenly heard her cry out, and everyone in the room turned around.

She was sitting there, red faced and sweaty, her chest heaving, her mind hazy with pleasure. Jasper smirked as she glanced at him, embarrassed. He gave her a wink, and she turned back around quickly.

He was in awe at this new-found power, using it every chance he got. He liked to sit in the library and give unsuspecting girls orgasmic pleasure without even touching them. He found that it was even more effective when the girl was sleeping like his sister was now. Their minds were so much more susceptible to his fantasies while they were dreaming.

In her dream, Amee was lying on her bed, just as she was now, except she was naked. Someone was licking their way up her body, very slowly and very erotically. Their tongue was hot and wet, and it sent shivers through her entire body. He parted her legs, and Amee moaned as his tongue licked her inner thighs, and she almost screamed in delight as his mouth latched onto her cunt, sucking her clit with vigor. She ran her hands through his hair, grabbing it and forcing his face harder into her cunt.

As her orgasm shook her body, he took the opportunity to ram his cock inside her body, making her gasp. She wrapped her legs around him as he buried his head in her neck and sucked the tender flesh. Palming her ass, he lifted her up and slammed into her, harder and faster with each thrust. They were moaning and writhing and grunting like animals. Finally, she arched her back and screamed out as her orgasm exploded like a keg of dynamite. He came a second later. With one final thrust, he released inside of her, his body shaking, his hot breath on her neck.

Who was this man? This lover who could make her feel like no man had before? She slowly opened her tightly closed eyes, and the first thing she noticed was that he had black hair, the most beautiful black hair she had ever seen. He kissed the tips of her nipples, sending a shock through her body. She wanted to see his face, see who he was. She reached down and lifted his head, and to her horror, she was staring into the face of her brother. Amee screamed and screamed and screamed.

While she was screaming and flailing about on the bed, Jasper quickly and quietly left the room. He was very pleased with himself and was sure that if he kept this up every night, she would soon be his... And he was right.

26

Chapter 26 of 27

Jasper goes crazy when Draco helps Amee to escape.

"It's so nice to have the children and grandchildren here today, isn't it?" Hermione said. "It's been so long." She sighed contentedly and looked out over the lush green lawn. The sun was setting, and every so often, a lightning bug would flash in the growing darkness.

"It was nice for a little while, anyway. Listen. I hear no arguing, no screaming, no tiny voices begging for sweets!" He smacked at a mosquito that was hovering over his arm, making the porch swing lurch to the left. "Damn little blood suckers! The mosquitoes, I mean, not the grandchildren!"

Hermione laughed lightly, kicked off her shoes and swung her legs over his. She loved to sit like this with him, listening to the crickets chirping and the squeaking of the swing. It was so peaceful, so romantic. "I wish it could always be like this."

"Like what? Dark and full of bugs?" He reached out suddenly and snatched a lightning bug from the air in front of him. He slowly opened his palm and watched it light up.

"No, you moron. I meant the way we are right now. Just the two of us sitting and talking, being alone with one another. It doesn't seem to happen all that often anymore." She frowned. "You're always at work or off playing cards with Ron and Harry. Even Amee and Jasper are always off somewhere together."

Draco tossed the bug into the air and watched it fly away. "I'm sorry, love. Have I been neglecting you?" he asked, stroking her leg. He leaned his head against the back of the swing and smirked at her. "How shall I ever make it up to you?" His hand was sliding further up her bare thigh, and he wiggled his eyebrows suggestively.

Never could she stay mad at him for very long. The way the corner of his mouth curled in that devious smirk still made her heart beat fast and her knees weak. He was still a very handsome, charming and playful man. He had only to look at her with those sexy, grey eyes and she would melt...and he knew this. "You are such a..."

"Fuck machine?" he said, thrusting his hand all the way up her skirt and attacking her mouth. She was still so beautiful, so desirable. It made him crazy with lust just to watch her walk by. After all these years, they were still so much in love. They were very lucky to have found one another, and he thanked Dumbledore daily for his little time trip.

From the shadows, Jasper spoke to Amee. "To hear dear grandfather refer to himself as a 'fuck machine' is highly disturbing, don't you think?" He pulled her closer into the trees, wrapping his arms around her waist. "I guess it runs in the family though, doesn't it, Amee?" Her head fell back as he placed gentle kisses on her neck, his hands running over the smooth material of her dress.

Amee's head began to swim, just as it always did when her brother touched her, kissed her, made love to her. He was intoxicating, and she just couldn't get enough of him. Far off, in the back of her mind, she knew this was seriously wrong, but whenever she started to think about stopping the illicit affair, he was always there with his soft caresses to change her mind.

He was like no other lover she had ever had. It was like he instinctively knew what she wanted; she was never disappointed in their love making. He was also very charming, and their talks were full of his witty humor and sharp intellect. It was nice to lie in his arms in the late afternoon, discussing the newest novel he had read, or laughing at some joke he had heard at the pub the night before. Still, sometimes, she would think, "What the hell am I doing? He's my brother! This is wrong and it has to stop! For YEARS now, she had let it go on, had fallen more in love with him, and now, she realized that she was helpless to end it.

Jasper's kisses became rougher, needier. He wanted her so badly right now, was tempted to throw her up against the tree and rip her clothes off. She smelled so damn good...always did, her scent haunted his very dreams. He knew what had started off for him as a conquest had now turned to obsession and passion. He loved his sister, couldn't get enough of her. It wasn't just the mind-blowing sex, but the fact that she knew him better than anyone else. She knew secrets about him that no one else knew. He didn't have to hide his true self when he was around her, and that was refreshing.

He couldn't stand to be away from her for too long and found himself thinking about her day and night. He looked forward to seeing her smile every morning at breakfast; he had never thought a woman would ever give him a smile like that, so full of naked emotion. It made his pulse race and his palms sweat. He loved her! Loved her with every fiber of his being!

Jasper slowly raised up her dress, finding her naked underneath. After releasing his aching cock from his pants, he lifted her slightly and then slowly entered her. She moaned, grabbing his hair and pulling it as he slid in and out of her. "Exciting to know that our grandparents are just steps away, isn't it?" he asked. "That at any second they could look this way and see us." He kept his slow pace, driving her absolutely crazy. He could tell she was biting the inside of her cheek to keep from crying out.

Amee shuddered as a wave of pleasure washed over her tingling body. Jasper thrust up and pushed her down on his cock at the same time, and he almost screamed out as he released inside of her. He rested his flushed forehead against her chest, listening to her heart beat frantically. "I love you, Amee," he said, closing his eyes.

A jolt went through her, and she slid down his body until her feet were once more on the ground. He had never said that before, and it shocked her to hear it. "Did you just say that you love me?"

"No, you're just hearing things." He smirked at her playfully.

"I'm glad because we promised that we would never let it go that far."

"Promises were made to be broken, my dear sister."

"Jasper, you have to know that this could never be," she said, motioning between them. "No one would understand or accept this."

"Then let us run away. We could go anywhere, be anyone we wish," he said, taking her hand and kissing it. "No one would ever know the truth."

"We would," she said, her eyes searching his. God, he was beautiful! Those lips, that dark hair, that stubble that made him look so damn sexy! No wonder women threw themselves at him. All he had to do was flash them a smile or stare at them with those penetrating, grey eyes. "This is wrong, isn't it? We shouldn't be doing this!" Ameer said, tearfully. "I should just go away... I can't do this anymore!"

Jasper's smiling face suddenly turned angry; his eyes flashed with violence. He reached out and grabbed her arm, and she winced as he dug his nails into her tender flesh. "Don't you EVER think about leaving, Ameer," he said through clenched teeth. Already, he could feel the need to hurt her.

Ameer closed her eyes and waited for the pain she knew would come. It had been a while since he had hurt her, and she was a damn fool for thinking he had somehow changed. She always blamed his lack of control for his violent outbursts; never would she let herself think that he enjoyed hurting her. That was the old Jasper...the one who was crazy, the one who liked to torture the innocent. He had grown, matured and left all of that behind, right?

"You belong to me, dear sister...body and soul." He dug his fingers in her hair harder and yanked her closer. "I'd rather fucking kill you than let you leave." He leaned into her, putting his face nose to nose with hers. "And you know I'd do it." He pushed her away and she fell to the ground. "You seem to forget who I am, Ameer, what I'm capable of."

She stared up at him, looking like a trapped animal. "Oh, I've never forgotten, Jasper! How could I?" She wiped the tears away, only to have her eyes well up again. "I bear scars as proof to your madness!" She lifted her bangs and exposed a long, thin scar across the side of her forehead. "Remember this? It happened the last time I spoke of leaving."

"Well, apparently it didn't hurt enough! I should have thought about breaking your damn skull instead of just pushing you down the stairs." He was shaking with anger. How dare she talk about leaving him! He watched as she grabbed her throat, gasping for air. He was thinking about wrapping his hands around her neck and choking the life out of her. "Do you think that by running away you'll be able to get rid of me? Get rid of me for another man?" he laughed. "Look at you! You're tainted goods, darling sister! No one but me would ever want you!"

Ameer struggled for air, and finally, as she was about to pass out, the pressure was removed. She lay on the grass as waves of dizziness washed over her. "How can you hurt me like this, Jasper?" she asked in a voice barely above a whisper.

Jasper looked down at her. "I would rather see us both dead than live without you," he said. She was just lying there, crying, her face hidden by her long hair. He suddenly felt a small stab of hatred for her. Why did she have to make him do this? It was all her fault! If only she wouldn't talk of leaving him! "You're to blame for this, Ameer! Do you think I enjoy hurting you? I don't, but you left me no choice!" He suddenly turned and was gone, leaving her broken and bruised, alone and scared for her life.

"Here comes Jasper," Hermione said, watching her grandson stalk across the moonlit lawn towards them. "And he doesn't look happy."

Draco narrowed his eyes at the tall man coming up onto the porch. "Something wrong?" The air had somehow become thick and stifling, almost too heavy to breathe. He had noticed this phenomenon happened whenever his grandson was feeling particularly upset. It was one of many strange things about Jasper that Draco couldn't explain.

He had always made sure to keep a close watch on Jasper. He still had a suspicion that he had something to do with Hermione's murder. There had been strange dreams, almost precognitive in nature, where Jasper was standing in the library, laughing like a loon, while Hermione lay on the floor, a glass of spilled wine next to her body. He didn't know if Jasper was the one to find Hermione or if he was the cause of her death; all he knew was that time was slipping away and he had yet to pinpoint the killer.

Draco kept journals, writing down every detail of these dreams and visions, hoping that he would be able to put all the pieces together before it was too late. He was determined this time to stop it.

"Nothing's wrong, Grandfather. Ameer and I just had a little row is all," he said, giving Draco a dashing smile. "And now I've come to take my grandmother for her nightly walk in the gardens, even though it is past twilight." He held out his hand for Hermione. "Time sort of got away from me this evening."

"That's alright, Jasper," Hermione said, linking her arm through his. "I had a wonderful time catching up with my husband."

"And she shall have a more wonderful time later tonight, if you know what I mean," Draco said, winking.

"Why Grandfather!" Jasper said, pretending to be shocked. After all, his grandfather and grandmother flirted all the time. He was used to it, and he hoped that when he was their age, he and Ameer would still be so much in love.

"What can I say? I've always been a horny little devil!" he laughed. Hermione agreed, and with a smile, she kissed him, and then she and Jasper were off on their nightly walk.

Draco laid down on the swing and closed his eyes. It really was a beautifully quiet night. The chirping of the crickets was interrupted by a soft voice whispering from the side of the house.

"Grandfather!" it whispered. "Have they gone?"

Draco sat up, squinting into the darkness. "Ameer? Is that you?"

She stepped out of the shadows, and Draco stood up. "What happened?" he asked, taking in her tear streaked splotched face and the frightened look in her huge eyes.

Ameer came swiftly onto the porch and fell into his arms, sobbing, "Oh, Grandfather!"

Draco held her tightly. "Ameer, darling, tell me what's wrong."

"I... I need your help; I need to get away, far away from here!" She closed her eyes and prayed that her grandfather would ask no questions, but just give her the help she needed. She knew this was her only chance to break away from Jasper, and she intended to take it.

Draco instinctively knew not to question Ameer. If she wanted him to know why she was upset, she would have told him. He wondered what had gone on between his two grandchildren. First, Jasper was upset and admitted that he and Ameer had a row, and now, Ameer was on the border of hysterics and asking him to help her run away.

"Where is it that you want to go?"

"I don't know! All I know is that I have to get away from him!" She looked at Draco, willing him to understand that her life was in danger and that it was because of Jasper. "Please! Will you help me?"

"Of course I'll help you. Get some things packed. Hurry!" Draco ushered her into the house. "Take only the necessities; I'll send you the rest later."

Ameer ran to her room, tossed some clothes into a bag, grabbed her personal things and then ran towards the door. Catching her reflection in the mirror, she paused. "This is it, Ameer. Don't be afraid," she said to herself and then ran back downstairs. "Where should I go?" she asked Draco, who was peering out the window, looking for his wife and Jasper. They were due back any minute.

He turned as she entered the hall. "Don't worry, I know the perfect place. He will never be able to find you." Draco took her hand in his. "Did he hurt you? Is that why you're

hiding?"

Amee wanted so badly to tell him everything, but was so afraid that he would be disgusted and disappointed in her that she said nothing.

Her silence was answer enough for Draco...that and the fact that she had angry red finger marks on her bare arms. "Close your eyes. Soon, you will be safe. Only I'll know where you are, and there is no way that I'll ever tell anyone...no matter what." He placed his hands on her face. "You are my beautiful girl and I love you. I will see you soon." He kissed her forehead, and with a wave of his wand, she was gone.

He stood there, staring at the spot where she had just been standing. The front door opened, and Hermione and Jasper strolled in, laughing merrily. Draco smiled at them, trying to look like nothing was wrong. "How was your walk?"

"Wonderful as always!" Hermione said, heading for the library. "Care for a drink?" she asked them, lifting the decanter of brandy. "I know how you men love your brandy!"

Draco gave a fake laugh along with Jasper's real one and took the glass from Hermione. He was studying Jasper, looking for any outwards signs that something was wrong, but all he saw was his normal, gentlemanly self. This man had hurt Amees and was acting like everything was fine. He had known that his grandson was capable of violence, but chosen to believe that he could change...apparently, he hadn't.

He blamed himself for being so gullible and blind. He blamed himself for doing nothing while this man hurt his granddaughter. 'How could I be so fucking stupid?' he asked himself. 'He just has this way of sweet talking you, charming you into thinking he's a nice guy with good intentions. Well, it's not going to work any more!'

As Jasper poured Hermione a glass of red wine and handed it to her, Draco suddenly got that strange feeling of *deja vu*, and flashes of his dreams and visions danced through his mind. He heard Jasper speak as if far away, and it all clicked in his mind. He recognized it, and it chilled him to the bone. It had always bothered him that he never saw the killer, only heard him. He could never place the voice...until now.

Draco drank his brandy in a single gulp and said nonchalantly, "What happened with Amees earlier? She was crying and in pain." He looked at him from the corner of his eye as he poured himself another drink. He wanted to see his reaction.

Jasper paused in mid-sip and eyed his grandfather over the top of the glass. He knew right away something was off. His grandfather was a sly, crafty old man, and Jasper always had to tread lightly around him. He could never fool Draco for very long. "What exactly are you insinuating?"

"I'm not insinuating anything, Jasper," Draco said, walking over and sitting down in the black leather recliner. "I'm simply inquiring as to the nature of the row you had with her," he said, swirling his brandy. "And I'm also curious as to why she had bruises on her arms in the shape of your fingers. What have you been doing to her?"

Hermione realized the air in the room had changed. She knew from Draco's tone, and Jasper's body language, that they were about to have one of their knock down, drag out fights, and she sought to stop it before it got out of hand. "Now, Draco!" she said, patting Jasper's arm lovingly. "You can't honestly think that he would ever hurt Amees! That's just ridiculous!"

Jasper stared into Draco's face, trying to intimidate him, but Draco was no damn coward, and he spoke exactly what was on his mind. "As ridiculous as it may seem to you, my love, it's true... isn't it, Jasper?" He was determined not to be the first to break eye contact...or even blink. "And it's not the first time, is it?"

Jasper suddenly smiled sweetly, but his eyes were pits of swirling molten steel as he tried with all his might to keep his composure. "Grandmother, I think it's time you looked into putting grandfather into a retirement home for aging Wizards. He's clearly losing his mind!"

Draco chuckled, "My mind is as good as it ever was. Stop trying to shift the damn attention onto me and answer the fucking question, Jasper!"

Hermione was stunned at the way Draco was speaking to Jasper, but she trusted her husband, and he never said or did anything unless he meant it. There had to be some explanation as to why he was accusing Jasper of hurting Amees. Draco must have some proof to back it all up, and Hermione was scared out of her mind that what Draco was saying was true!

"I have never laid one damn finger on Amees, regardless of what she might have told you! But then, I'd never expect you to take my word over hers. She's a saint in your eyes, and I'm the fucking devil incarnate!"

"Jasper!" Hermione yelled.

"Well, it's true! Little perfect Amees, always so good and pure! You have no idea what she's really capable of! If you only knew what a little whore she really was!"

Draco stood; the blood was pounding in his ears, and he was this close to losing control. "How dare you speak about her like that, you murdering bastard!"

"Oh, excuse me for tarnishing your vision of your perfect angel of a granddaughter!" Jasper said sarcastically. "God forbid that I say anything to knock her from her fucking pedestal!" he shouted.

Hermione looked around, suddenly feeling a breeze. The air was positively crackling with electricity as papers and knick-knacks were starting to lift off surfaces, floating and spinning in the air.

"You're not even fit to speak her name, you sick, sadistic freak!" Draco shouted into the growing wind. Things were now flying around the room, and he saw Hermione duck as a heavy, glass paperweight flew past her head. "You, who likes to torture small, helpless animals! God only knows what you've been doing to my Amees!"

Jasper was losing control. It was like he was not himself; something dangerous and unpredictable had taken over his body. He struggled to keep his violent thoughts in check. "Why don't we call dear Amees down and ask her what I've been doing to her?" he said. The wind had become silent, like they were in the eye of a hurricane, and the furniture was now lifting off the floor, hovering above the Persian carpet. Objects were hanging, suspended in the heavy air as if waiting for a command to attack.

A letter opener was swaying dangerously in the air in front of Draco's face, the sharp point aimed at his right eye. He blasted it out of the way with his wand, and Hermione screamed. "Amees isn't here, Jasper." Draco said with a grin. "She's left because of you."

Jasper lost his concentration, and everything in the room fell to the floor with a mighty crash. "Gone?" he asked in disbelief. "How do I know your not just saying that?" He didn't trust his grandfather, and as far as he was concerned, the old man was a devious bastard with lying capabilities that matched his own. He had seen him in action plenty of times. When it came to deceiving people, Draco Malfoy was the best.

"If you don't believe me, go and see for yourself."

Jasper glared at him and then turned and ran to Amees's room. They could hear him calling her name and begging her to come out.

"Has she really gone, Draco?" Hermione asked sadly.

"I'm afraid she has."

"But why?"

"She came to me after you and Jasper left for your walk. She was crying and begging me to help her. She said she needed to get away from him." He put his arm around his wife and pulled her close. "She was obviously very frightened, Hermione. Jasper has done something to her. I don't know what, but I know it was bad enough that she feared for her life."

Hermione was heartbroken. She thought that she had succeeded in changing Jasper and that he would never be the murderer that he was destined to be. She had catered to him his whole life, made sure that he was loved and well taken care of, and that he had everything he ever wanted. She was sure she had done a great job, and it was a shock to her that all her planning and careful rearing hadn't changed a damn thing. She had failed her daughter, and now she had failed her grandson.

What was the whole purpose of this time travel thing if not to change the future, make it better? It seemed to be a waste of time. She heard Draco's voice from long ago in Crete. "I think that even if we did tell them what horrors lie in their futures, it wouldn't matter; they would do it anyway. Why? Because it's meant to be, Granger, and no matter how hard you try to run from it, you can't change your destiny."

He was right. He was always right. There was one thing though; not only can't you run from your destiny, it seems that you were helpless to change it as well. She lifted her eyes to the ceiling as she heard Jasper screaming in frustration and anguish. "What are we going to do, Draco?"

Draco shook his head sadly. "I don't know. I just don't know."

Jasper tore through Amee's room, throwing clothing, furniture, perfume bottles, anything he could lay his hands on. She had left. She really was gone. Lifting up the picture she kept by her bedside, he glanced down at it. He saw himself smiling, his arm around Amee, who was laughing. He suddenly waxed furious and threw the frame across the room, where it hit the mirror and shattered it. He screamed at the top of his lungs and mentally 'pushed' with all he had. Every window in the house, every mirror, every breakable object exploded at the same time, showering its occupants with deadly shards of pottery and glass.

In the middle of Amee's room, Jasper stood, covered in bloody cuts, bits of glass covering him from head to toe. He would find her, no matter what it took; he would find her and make her pay for leaving him...but first, he was going to make his grandfather pay for helping her!

When the windows had exploded, Draco threw himself on top of Hermione, knocking them both to the floor. She was screaming as splinters, sharp as razor blades, cut her arms and legs. Draco winced as a huge piece of glass flew by, cutting him deeply on the back. In the kitchen, the house-elves ran for cover, hiding in cupboards as the marble tiles flew from the walls and the china exploded into a million pieces.

And then, suddenly, it was over, and it was quiet. Draco opened one eye and then the other. He saw nothing but glass and heard nothing but the dripping of alcohol from the edge of the bar.

Hermione lifted her head. "My God!" she said as Draco helped her to her feet.

"I know! It's going to cost a fortune to replace the windows!"

"Not the windows, Draco!" she said, her voice shaking. "Jasper!"

Draco whirled around, confused and spotted him in the doorway. He was covered in blood and looked absolutely crazy. "Jas..." was all he got out before he flew through the air and landed with a thud against the opposite wall.

"No!" Hermione screamed as Jasper lifted his wand.

"You're the reason my Amee left! You turned her against me!" he said, walking closer to Draco, who was rising groggily to his feet. He imagined his grandfather's leg snapping and smiled when the man screamed out in agony.

"I didn't turn her against you. You made her leave! It's all your fault, Jasper! You have no one to blame but yourself!" Draco said through a haze of pain. He screamed again as his other leg snapped and buckled beneath him. How the fuck was Jasper doing this? He wasn't using his wand!

"HOW DARE YOU SAY IT'S MY FAULT!" he screamed. "We're in love! She loves me, and she would never leave unless you talked her into it!"

Draco was stunned. "What did you say?"

Jasper was now so close, and as Draco lay on the floor, close to passing out, he whispered, "That's right, Grandfather. Amee and I were...are lovers. We have been for years. Does it shock you that you're precious Amee loved to fuck her own brother? That she fell in love with me and I with her?"

"You lie!" Hermione said. "It's not true!"

"Oh, I'm afraid it is," Jasper said, never taking his eyes off Draco. "We were going to run away together, but now YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING!" He raised his wand, "I'm going to take much pleasure in killing you, grandfather. I never did like you. You interfering fuck! AVADA..."

Jasper was suddenly blasted off his feet. He spun around in the air and landed face down in the glass, unconscious. Hermione, her face a mask of pure determination, lowered her wand, stepped over his body and ran to Draco. He was out cold, his legs twisted oddly out of shape, his skin the color of cottage cheese.

"Draco?" she said, shaking him a bit. "Wake up." She slapped his cheek lightly; still no response. Closing her eyes, her shaky hand wrapped tightly around her wand, she began to heal him. Although she had not been a Healer for a number of years, having quit her job to look after Jasper and then never seeing the need to go back, she was still able to fix him up quite quickly and without the need for Skelegro.

He moaned, coming out of his dream where Hermione was again offered that damn glass of red wine. He thought crazily that maybe he should ban all wine from the house. Just as Sleeping Beauty's parents had tried to ban all spinning wheels from their kingdom. It would never work, because just like in the Fairy Tale, it was her destiny, and nothing, it seemed, could stop destiny. "Hermione?" he asked, slowly sitting up.

"I'm here, love," she said, kissing him.

"Where is Jasper? What happened?" His legs were aching, and his head was pounding relentlessly.

"I Stunned him. He's lying over there."

Draco got to his feet, and almost fell over, but managed to steady himself. "What do we do with him? We can't just let him stay here, Hermione."

"We get him help. Maybe there is hope for him."

"Get him help?" Draco said incredulously. "He needs to be locked up! He's tortured helpless animals, raped his sister and tried to kill me, and you think he can be helped?"

"Draco, he's our grandson."

"I don't give a fuck if he is or not! I don't want him anywhere near this house again! I'm going to contact the Ministry and have him sent away for the rest of his poor excuse of a life!"

"Please, Draco! Don't do this!" Hermione begged. "Can't we just send him to the hospital where Jade was? Maybe they can help him! I don't want to go through the rest of my life feeling guilty because we refused to do everything we could for him!" Plus, she still thought there might be some small chance she could do something about his future.

Draco walked over and looked down at Jasper. How could Hermione even think of trying to help this bastard after what he had done? She was a better person than he was! If it was up to him, he'd toss the unconscious prick down an abandoned well and call it a day! If only Hermione knew what this man was capable of...if she only knew that he was the man Draco suspected was going to murder her.

Hermione pleaded with him, and finally against his better judgment, he gave in. "Fine! We'll take him to the hospital and see what they say!" Hermione kissed his cheeks.

"Thank you. I know they'll be able to help him."

"I highly doubt they'll be able to, but I'm willing to give him one more chance...for you."

In the office, Draco and Hermione sat with the supervisor of the mental hospital. He was looking through his notes and tapping his quill on the table. "Is there mental illness on his father's side of the family?"

Draco and Hermione eyed each other uneasily. "Well, you see," Hermione said. "We don't really know. We never met his father."

The Healer looked at them over the top of his glasses. "I see," he said with a frown. "His mother was a patient here many years ago? How is she doing?"

"She's dead," Draco said simply. "She died giving birth to Jasper."

"So the young man has never met his father or his mother?" The Healer sat back in his chair, his fingers in a pyramid under his nose. "Tell me about the strange powers he has."

Draco told him about how he was able to hurt people with his mind and that he seemed to be able to do very powerful magic without the use of a wand. Hermione sat quietly when Draco spoke about the animals in the barn and how Amee had come to him and what she had said. He explained in great detail the events of the night before and that Jasper had tried to kill him.

The Healer just took notes, every once in a while glancing up, his face thoughtful. "During school, were there any incidents?"

"Not that we're aware of," Hermione said. "He did very well. Prefect, excellent marks on the O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s..."

Shutting his notebook, the Healer stood and put his hands behind his back. "I will be quite frank with you; I've never seen a case like this, and I really can't make you any promises. We will do our best to study his situation, and hopefully, we can come up with a solution to his illness."

"Illness?" Draco asked. "So you think you might be able to cure him? That this isn't some genetic mutation that can't be helped?"

"Like I said, Mr. Malfoy, I've never seen anything like this. We will try to help him, and that's all we can do."

Draco and Hermione stood. "Of course you will. Thank you so much, Healer Barlow," Hermione said, shaking the man's hand graciously.

"I'll be in touch," Mr. Barlow said.

He did stay in touch. Every Friday, Healer Barlow sent a report on his findings and an update on how Jasper's therapy was going. He and his staff were in awe of Jasper's powers and were so fearful of them that they kept him sedated most of the time.

He made some progress, but it was slow. Draco went to Amee and brought her back home; she decided to find a job and try to forget that she ever even had a brother. There were nights when she would wake up in a cold sweat, dreaming of him saying he was going to kill her. There were other times that she found herself missing him. She had loved him, and she found it was hard to move on. Even though he was far away, he still had a hold on her.

Jasper had been institutionalized for almost ten years before he was allowed visitors. He was unstable and stubborn, refused help and starved himself until he was at death's door. Any time Amee's name was mentioned, he became so violent that they had to Stun him and medicate him to the point of him being comatose.

Finally, he realized that fighting the system was getting him nowhere, and he slowly began to cooperate by talking to his therapists, pretending he felt remorse and swearing he would change his ways. He used his charm and his great lying capabilities to fool them all.

The day came when he was allowed visitors. Hermione and Draco were terrified to see him, but they went, and to their astonishment, Jasper looked very healthy and normal. He apologized for his past behavior, and even said he had made some friends. He seemed happy...a little too happy for Draco's taste.

Hermione gushed with excitement when they got back home. She was sure Jasper was going to be released very soon. Draco, on the other hand, NEVER wanted his grandson to get out. He didn't believe for one second that Jasper was getting better. He was a master manipulator and a liar. He also felt that if he could keep him in the hospital until he died, then Hermione would escape her fate.

Things had gone back to normal...it was peaceful, and that was the way Draco wanted it. Amee had found herself a nice man, and Draco had it in confidence that the young man was going to propose soon. Why would he want Jasper to get out and ruin everything? No. He was going to stay put...end of story.

Amee loved her job at Gringotts and loved going to work every day. She also loved the fact that she worked alongside her boyfriend, Brian. It had taken him months to get her to even talk to him. Somewhere deep inside, she was still afraid that somehow Jasper was watching her, seeing everything she was doing. She didn't want to open her heart to anyone because she thought it would put them in danger.

Slowly, Brian brought her out of her shell. He started buying her coffee and trying to engage her in conversation. She was very shy at first, withdrawn, and even seemed a little sad. He had this silly romantic notion that she had suffered some sort of tragedy and needed to be rescued from her past. He intended to be the one to save her.

Amee found him to be a very kind, gentle and passionate lover. He never once said an unkind word to her or threatened her in any way. He made her feel safe, and to her that was very important. Her grandparents loved him and were very excited that she had found the love of her life.

When Brian asked her to marry him, she said yes without hesitation. For once, Amee was really and truly happy. She had a wonderful career, a loving husband to be...her future looked bright. All that was shattered in a single moment when she answered a knock at the door one morning and found Jasper standing there, grinning at her.

"H...How did you find where I live?" she asked, her heart pounding. "And when did they let you out?" She was trying to look calm, but inside she was screaming.

"Aren't you going to invite me in, Amee?" he said, flashing his most charming smile.

Amee wanted to slam the door in his face and Apparate to a jungle somewhere to hide. Instead, she found herself opening the door wider and letting him in. Shutting it behind her, she watched her brother walk around her flat, looking at photos and running his fingers over her things. 'God, please let this be a dream, please be a dream!' she repeated over and over in her head like a mantra.

"You have a very nice place," he said, picking up a very expensive vase next to the open window.

"Thank you," she said, getting a grip on her nerves. "I've only been here for a few weeks." She felt for her wand and panicked, remembering that she had left it in the bedroom on the night stand.

"Yes, I know," he said, placing the vase back on the table. "Grandmother told me you had finally moved out."

"She told you where I lived?" Amee suddenly had the urge to Floo Hermione and cuss her out.

"Not verbally, Amee, but I did pluck the information from her mind. It was right there waiting for me. She was trying so hard to not think about it..." He plopped himself down on her sofa and conjured himself a drink.

Amee studied him as he sat there, acting as if it had only been hours since he last saw her, not eleven years. He was still very handsome and did not appear to have aged very much. His raven hair was a little longer, and it fell to his crisp white collar, his bangs sweeping across his forehead. He was much paler, but still looked very healthy. He was wearing a very expensive suit, which was not surprising; he had always liked to dress well.

He looked up at her, his grey eyes the color of a cold, winter sky, and Amee shuddered. There was something missing behind those eyes. They were soulless eyes, dark pits of insanity. How could they set him free? Didn't they see what she saw?

"Something wrong, dear sister? I'm beginning to think you're not happy to see me," he said with a huge grin that reminded Amee of a barracuda. "Come! Have a seat; we have much to catch up on." He patted the cushion beside him, but Amee bypassed it and sat down in the farthest chair from him. He frowned slightly and then sipped his drink.

Amee struggled to find something to say. All she wanted was for him to go the hell away before Brian came home. She had, of course, told her fiancé that she had a brother, but failed to tell him that he was a crazy fuck that could hurt people with his mind. She was so afraid that Jasper would find out about him and fly into a jealous murdering rage. "So, why are you here?"

She regretted the question as soon as it left her lips. She wished she could take it back because she honestly didn't want to know the answer.

Jasper stood up and walked over to her. "I've come for what belongs to me, Amee." He ran his finger along her jaw line. She felt so soft! How long he had waited just to touch her! All those sleepless nights thinking about her, recalling every feature of her amazing body, fantasizing about making love to her again!

Amee wanted to scream, to jump up and run for her life, but she was paralyzed with fear. "What do you mean?" she asked, already knowing the answer.

"You, my love." Jasper tangled his hands in her hair and leaned over, burying his face in her sweet smelling hair. "I've forgiven you for running from me. I understand now that you were frightened. I mean I was too! Starting over in a strange place, not knowing anyone! But, you needn't have feared, my love. I would have taken care of you, made sure you were safe." He was inhaling her scent, that scent that had haunted his damn dreams for years. "I've come to take you away with me. We can finally be together."

'God, he's crazier than I thought!' she said to herself. Her heart jumped as the front door opened and Brian came strolling in, a bouquet of red roses in his hand. He stopped dead in the doorway, his brows knitting together in confusion, his smile fading from his face.

Jasper stood slowly, his hand resting on Amee's shoulder possessively. "And who might you be?" he inquired.

Brian looked at Amee, whose huge, terrified eyes immediately told him something was desperately wrong. "I'm Brian. You must be Jasper." He had seen pictures of Amee's brother, but no one really talked about him. He had been told that he was ill and was off somewhere, getting well, and that was about it. Amee never mentioned him, which Brian thought weird, but perhaps they weren't that close.

Jasper didn't respond, but he did tighten his grip on Amee's shoulder, making her wince. He stared coldly at the intruder, sensing the unthinkable.

"I'm Amee's boyfriend." Brian saw Amee shake her head frantically, and her eyes were now the size of saucers. He was now totally confused. Why wouldn't she want her brother to know she was engaged? "What's going on here?"

"You never told me you were getting married," Jasper said in an accusing voice laced with venom.

"I... I wanted to but Gra..."

"But Grandfather told you not to," he finished for her. That old man had interfered for the last time. "This was his idea, wasn't it? Found you a new man, did he?" he laughed loudly. "He never could stand the thought of me being happy, could he? So he decided to take the one thing from me...the only thing I've ever cared about!"

"Jasper..."

Jasper let go of her shoulder, grabbed her arm and stood her up roughly. Brian dropped the flowers and raced towards her. Jasper simply lifted his hand and made slashing movements. Blood flew from his body, splattering Amee in the face. Brian looked down at his gaping wounds in shock and then fell to the floor. Amee screamed and twisted in her brother's grasp, trying desperately to get free. She scratched and bit and finally he let go.

She ran to Brian, throwing herself on top of him. He was pale white, and blood was pooling under him. "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?" she screamed. "Oh, my God! Brian?"

Jasper watched his sister crying hysterically over the body of her lover. "Will you just stop it? What does it matter if he dies? I'm here now!"

Amee turned her head and glared up at her smiling freak of a brother. "I fucking hate you! I never wanted to be with you. You make me sick!" she said, her voice quaking with anger. "Get out of my house; I never want to see you ever again, you MURDERER!"

Jasper took her by her hair and wrenched her up off the floor. "You little fucking whore!" he hissed, pulling her head back painfully. "I bet you were off sucking cocks the day I left, weren't you?" He pulled her back harder and she screamed in agony. "You belong to me, Amee. You seemed to have forgotten that." He pushed her as hard as he could, and she crashed to the floor, hitting her head on the corner of the table. "I'm going to give you a little reminder, dear sister. of what happens when you piss me off."

Amee's head was spinning; a ribbon of bright red blood trickled from the cut on her temple and fell beside her on the carpet. Her clothes were violently ripped from her body, and realizing what he was about to do, she struggled and screamed, kicked and punched. "No! Jasper! Please! Don't do this!"

"Shut up you fucking bitch and take your punishment!" Jasper hissed in her face. "You deserve every fucking bit of it!" He turned her over and smashed her face into the carpet so she couldn't breath.

Her world was suddenly full of nothing but pain as her brother raped and violated her. Sometime during the assault she blacked out, and when she came to, she was alone. Something was standing on her chest, and as her world came slowly back into focus, she saw it was an owl. In its beak was a letter addressed to her in her grandfather's neat writing.

She tried to get up. Her body felt bruised and broken and covered in blood and God only knew what else. The owl hopped down as she managed to sit up. She saw Brian's dead body lying a few steps away, and she started to sob uncontrollably, crawling over to him. He was cold to the touch, his glassy eyes staring up at the ceiling, seeing nothing.

The little owl hooted next to her, and she glanced down, taking the letter from its tiny, sharp beak. It then flew out the open window, managing to avoid knocking over the

priceless vase.

Amee ripped the envelope open and then laughed hysterically. It was letting her know that Jasper was to be released that morning and to warn her that he might come after her. "Too late, Grandfather! Too late!" she said, looking around at the devastation her brother had caused.

Jasper sat in the corner of a dark and deserted pub that night, drinking pints and making plans. He wanted revenge. Revenge for the way he had been treated his entire life. Revenge for being sent away like some sort of mental incompetent...but most of all, he wanted revenge for having the thing he cared for most ripped from his very hands.

It was all his grandfather's fault...EVERYTHING! He had turned Ameer against him, talked his grandmother into institutionalizing him, and now he was going to pay! He had lost the love of his life, and now his grandfather was going to lose his.

27

Chapter 27 of 27

Will Draco succeed in stopping Hermione from being murdered? How will it all end?

Anything that happens once does not necessarily happen again. Everything that happens twice is likely to happen for the third time as well.

-Arab Proverb

Jasper had disappeared. He was just simply gone and no one...not even the authorities...could find him. Ameer lived in constant fear that he was going to come back and kill her, so she once again moved into the Manor.

Hermione was devastated and walked around like a zombie. The guilt she felt was immense, and it took all her courage to sit Ameer and Draco down and tell them her secret.

"I have known all along what Jasper was going to be. I knew and I tried to stop it." She sat there, waiting for the storm to erupt. "And I failed," she added quietly.

"What!" Draco shouted. "Not again, Hermione! You promised me that there was nothing else you were keeping from me!"

Ameer put her hand on Draco, trying to calm him. "I'm sure she felt she was doing the right thing. If I were able to know before hand what was to happen in the future, I suppose I would try to change the bad things, wouldn't you?"

"I'm not angry about her knowing things, Ameer, I'm angry that she kept this from me after saying she wouldn't!"

"Draco, please try to understand!" Hermione said. "I had failed Jade, I thought 'here's my chance! I can make up for it by making sure her son has a better future than he's destined for!' But it just wasn't meant to be. You can't stop fate."

Draco was silent for a few minutes. "Hermione, did you ever in your wildest dreams think our lives would turn out this way?"

Hermione looked at him sadly. "Never."

Ameer, a slight grin on her tired face, said, "It hasn't been all that bad, has it? You have each other, and there were never two people more in love than you two."

"True, very true," Draco said, picking up his wife's hand and kissing it. "We have been lucky in some things, haven't we?"

Hermione smiled at him. "As long as we have each other, I guess we can get through anything fate sends our way."

Draco's heart lurched. He knew that they wouldn't have each other for much longer...not unless he was able to find his bastard of a grandson and kill him before he could kill Hermione.

Hermione suddenly glanced over at Ameer, a concerned look spread across her face. Ameer was clutching her head in her hands, her face deathly pale. "Amethyst, are you okay? What's wrong?" She stood up and rushed to her granddaughter's side.

Ameer was now moaning in pain. Draco shot out of his seat as she leaned forward and threw up all over the floor. "Let's get her to bed," he said, picking her up and carrying her from the room.

By the time they put her in her bed, she was passed out cold. Her breathing was very labored, and her skin was clammy and pale. They sat by her bed, wondering what to do.

"She hasn't been sick for so long, why now?" Hermione said, tearing up. "After all she's been through these past weeks, now she has to deal with this!"

"Should we take her to St. Mungo's?"

"Why?" Hermione said. "They weren't able to help her before, what makes you think they can help her now?"

Draco wanted to scream in frustration. "There has to be something we can do! Someone who knows what the hell is wrong with her!"

"Shh! You're going to wake her and she needs her rest."

They sat with her all night, and in the morning, there was no improvement. In fact, she was worse. The pain in her head was so intense that she would scream and beg for someone to kill her. Draco and Hermione gave up trying to help her and rushed her to the hospital.

They waited impatiently for the Healers to tell them any news. They hoped that a miracle would happen and somehow someone would find out what was wrong with her.

"Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy?" a very tall and thin Healer said, coming towards them.

"Yes?"

"Amethyst is fine; we have her stabilized."

"Thank God!" Hermione said, putting her head on Draco's chest.

"Have you been able to find what's wrong with her? She has been sick like this off and on her whole life, but never has it been this bad."

"I'm sorry, but until the test results come back, I'm afraid we know nothing," the Healer said. "I do have to ask your permission for something, though."

They looked at him curiously.

"The potion we've given her is not very powerful, and I'm afraid it will wear off in a few hours and she will be in serious pain still."

"And what exactly do you need our permission for?" Draco asked, suddenly scared.

The Healer looked at them, his face very serious. "I need your permission to give her a more powerful potion."

"Of course! By all means, do what you need to do to take the pain away," Hermione said.

"I don't think you understand the consequences," the Healer said.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Draco was now so close to losing his patience with the man.

"If we give her the pain potion, it will more than likely kill the baby."

Draco and Hermione stood there in shocked silence.

"I take it you didn't know your granddaughter was pregnant?"

Hermione managed to speak, "No. We had no idea. I'm not even sure she knows."

"How far along is she?" Draco asked, praying that it couldn't be Jasper's baby. Hermione seemed to read his mind and squeezed his hand in fearful anticipation.

"About three weeks."

Hermione's hand shot to her mouth in anguish, and she started sobbing uncontrollably. "No! God! Why, Draco? Why! Why are we being punished like this?"

"Is there anything the matter?" the Healer asked, concerned.

Draco, his exterior calm and collected, looked the Healer dead in the face and said, "No, nothing. Please, go ahead and give her the potion. We must think of Ameer's welfare first and foremost." He knew it was a helpless child, but he validated his decision on the fact that he was saving it from a life of God knew what. It might be just like its father, and no one wanted that. He hoped Ameer would understand that he did it for her, that he didn't want any more pain in her life.

Hermione was still crying. "Please, help our granddaughter any way you can," she said, "Do whatever is necessary to help her." Hermione was not willing to risk her granddaughter's life just to save a baby that might be as evil as its father. Ameer was still young, and she would have many more opportunities to have children.

After the Healer left, they sat in silence, holding each other, wondering if they had done the right thing. What would Ameer say? How would she react when she found out about the baby?

They needn't have worried. When Hermione told her that she lost the baby she was carrying and that it had been Jasper's, Ameer was quiet for only a few moments, as if silently thanking the heavens. "It was my child, and I'm sad, and even though you might think I'm a monster for saying this, I'm kind of relieved that it's gone." She did not want to be responsible for carrying on whatever evil Jasper had in his veins. It would end with her.

The next day, when Ameer awoke, she was very happy to see the smiling faces of her Aunts.

"You're finally awake!" Ruby said, kissing Ameer on her cheek. "We've been waiting here for an eternity, and you know how Emerald hates to wait!"

"How are you feeling?" Emerald asked. "Is there any pain?"

"I'm feeling a little better; it hardly hurts at all."

"Thank Merlin! You gave us all quite a fright!" Ruby said. "Mum and Dad told us what happened."

Ameer looked at them sharply. "And what exactly did they tell you?"

Ruby and Emerald eyed each other uneasily. What their parents had told them was very shocking and disturbing. To think that this had been going on under their very noses for years and they never knew...no one had bothered to tell them.

"Honey, they told us everything. The affair, the reason Jasper was sent away, how he killed poor Brian and assaulted you and about the ba... Well, they told us everything." Emerald sat on the edge of Ameer's bed. "Why didn't you come to one of us? We would have gladly helped you!"

"I was ashamed."

Ruby pulled out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. "There is nothing to be ashamed about. He took advantage of you, plain and simple." There was a hint of hatred in her voice. "And when they catch him, he'll get his just punishment...that is, if my father doesn't catch him first."

"Your grandfather is on a rampage, and I can only imagine what he'll do if he ever finds Jasper." Emerald said, "Personally, I hope he kills the fucking prick!"

"Aunt Emmie!"

"Well? What did you expect?" She started walking arrogantly across the room, a huge smirk on her face. "I'm a Malfoy through and through. I take no shit from anybody, and God help the person who hurts a member of my family!" she said, mimicking Draco's voice perfectly.

They all had a good laugh at that. The door opened, and Draco and Hermione walked in, looking around at all the laughing faces. "What did we miss?" Hermione asked.

"Oh, Aunt Emmie was just doing her impersonation of Grandfather!"

Draco frowned at his daughter. "I wish you wouldn't do that!"

"You wish I wouldn't do a lot of things, but that has never stopped me from doing them!" Emmie lifted her head and gave him a smirk. She looked so much like Draco when she did that that it always made him smile. "I am a Malfoy, and I do what I want, when I want, and if you don't like it, you can go straight to hell!" she said, sounding exactly like her father.

Draco shook his head in amusement. "I used to love when you'd sneak up on the house-elves when they were goofing off and then shout in my voice! Damn if they didn't piss themselves!"

Hermione stood by the door, watching her family. Everyone was so happy, laughing and having a good time. If only it could have always been like this! If only Jade and Jasper had never... No! She couldn't...wouldn't think that!

Lately, she had been having terrible thoughts like these. They seemed to always be there; she even dreamed about them. If only there was a way she could go back in time and stop Jade from ever being born! If only she and Draco would have never made love that night, perhaps everything would have been different! She actually thought about going to Hogwarts and seeing if that damn clock still worked.

Jasper had followed Draco and Hermione down the hospital corridor, and he was now outside the door, listening to every word. Every now and then, someone would walk down the hall, and he would give them a friendly good morning. Lucky for him, they were always women, and all he had to do was flash a smile, and they became so flustered that they didn't notice he was just hanging out in the hall.

He could hear them all laughing and having a good old time in there. How he hated that sound! What right did they have to be happy when he was so fucking miserable? They wouldn't be laughing for long, though. Not if he got his way...and he always did.

He inched closer to the door and put his ear against it.

"Have you heard anything about Jasper? Have they found him yet?" Ruby asked.

"No," Draco said. "And I hope to hell I find him first."

"What are you going to do? Kill him?" Emerald said with an uneasy laugh.

Draco only looked at her.

"Seriously?" she asked, her eyes huge with shock.

"I've killed before, and I'll do it again if I have to."

"But this is your grandson!" Hermione said. "How are you going to murder your own flesh and blood?"

"You forget, Hermione. I killed my own father, remember? Slipped him some nice poison in his wine?"

"You did what?" Amee said.

"Has he never told you that story?" Ruby asked. "It's a great family legend. I happen to think it's a bunch of bullshit..."

"It's not," Hermione said, and everyone became really quiet. "I was there. I saw Lucius die a most horrible death. Nobody deserves to die like that, not even Jasper."

Draco frowned and changed the subject. "So, did they say when you'll be able to leave?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"Good! Just in time to help us plan the family reunion!" Draco said happily.

"Do you really think that's a good idea?" Emerald said. "I mean with Jasper running loose? He might be crazy enough to show up!"

"I don't think he will. The authorities are after him, and he's not stupid enough to show up at a family picnic where, at the first glance of him, we'd tear him to shreds."

Draco didn't agree with Ruby at all. "He's crazy, and crazy people are unpredictable.""

Jasper grinned; his eyes sparkled maniacally. He had completely forgotten about the reunion. It was the perfect opportunity to carry out his plan. All the talk about poisoned wine was giving him ideas. "I never knew he had killed his father. How dare he call me a murderer? He's just as bad!" He thought about how wonderful it would be to see the look on his grandfather's face when his wife died in the same horrible way his father did!

Back in the room, Ruby and Emerald were saying goodbye to their niece. "We'll see you next weekend. You take care of yourself." Amee kissed them goodbye, and they left, closing the door behind them.

Jasper quickly walked down the hall and turned the corner. He hid behind the giant fern and listened as his aunts walked by.

"I feel so sorry for her! Imagine having your own brother rape you, and then to find out your carrying his child! If that happened to me, I'd be a nutter!"

All the air went out of Jasper's lungs, and he fell up against the wall.

"She's lucky father told that Healer to give her that potion. I mean the baby died, but at least she doesn't have to look at it everyday and remember how it was conceived."

"I just wonder if she had been conscious, would she have made the same decision? Do you think she would have...?"

They passed by him very close, but Jasper no longer heard anything they were saying. He was devastated, and to his astonishment, he was actually crying. Amee had been pregnant with his baby, and his fucking grandfather had made the decision to kill it!

He slammed his fist into the wall, making a huge hole and breaking his hand. He held it up and looked at it. It was already swelling, and blood ran down his knuckles in tiny rivers. He flexed his fingers, relishing the immense pain that made his head swim. "I'll kill them, all of them," he thought. "And I'll kill him last just to make him suffer, make him feel the pain I'm feeling." He flexed his hand again, opening the wounds bigger. He took the tip of his tongue and slowly licked the blood, shuddering at the taste. "You will pay for what you've done, old man. Pay with your life."

The day before the reunion, Hermione was out in the gardens, cutting roses for flower arrangements when a hand fell on her shoulder. She jumped, a tiny scream escaping from her lips. The hand clamped over her mouth, and she struggled.

"Shh! It's me grandmother," came Jasper's voice in her ear.

Hermione stiffened, her eyes wide with fear. He was going to kill her, she knew it.

"I'm going to remove my hand. Please, don't scream." He slowly took it away, and she whirled around to face him, brandishing her wand.

"What are you doing here?" she said, looking around for the nearest help. She was the only one around; Draco was in the house, and Amee was at work. She aimed the wand at his chest. "I'm going to count to three, and if you're not gone, I'm going to curse you."

Jasper lifted his eyebrow in a mocking manner. "Please, Grandmother! You could never hurt me!"

"You're wrong, Jasper. After what you've done, I have no problem hurting you."

"Don't you want to hear my side of the story?" he asked, looking sad and trying to make her feel bad. "I don't know what Amee told you, but I never meant to hurt what's-his-name."

"His name was Brian, and what the hell do you mean you never MEANT to hurt him?" Hermione said, her voice rising. "You murdered him in cold blood, and then you raped your sister!"

"It was an accident! I never wanted to hurt them!"

"An accident? An accident!" She was shaking with anger. "It was no accident, and I wish that for once you would just admit what you've done and face the consequences! Stop lying to yourself, and stop trying to manipulate me!"

"Please, Grandmother, keep your voice down," Jasper said, looking around.

Hermione backed up, keeping her wand on Jasper. "From the day you were born, I held you in my arms, and I cared for you. I've done everything I could to prevent you from becoming the monster I was told you would be. I was the only one who stuck up for you, the only one who looked past your faults and tried to see the good in you. I was the only one who ever really loved you, and THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME?"

Jasper knew he had to do something; this was not going as planned. He never thought she would react this way. "I'm begging you to listen to me!" He reached for her, trying to look as pitiful as he could. "I'm grateful for everything you've done for me. You were always the one I could count on, the one into whose arms I would crawl when everything seemed dark. You made me feel safe and loved; always you had a kind word to say to me."

Hermione was weakening, he could see it. He was counting on her to be over-emotional as always, and she didn't let him down. "I love you, and I just want a chance to tell my side of the story."

"Why, Jasper? Why did you do it?" she said, lowering her wand and sinking to the ground.

He came over and sat down next to her, putting his arm around her. "It was Amee's fault. She made me fall in love with her, and when she left, I went mad. In the institution, all I ever thought about was her. You understand that, don't you?" he asked. "When you're so much in love with someone that they're all you think about...dream about?"

Hermione was silent, taking in everything he was saying. She did know that kind of love, the kind that bordered on obsession. She had felt that way about Draco in the beginning. That feeling that you have to be with the person everyday, all day, that woozy feeling you got in your stomach every time they walked into the room. It was normal to feel that way in the beginning; everyone did.

"When Brian walked in and told me they were getting married, I just lost it! I had been locked away for eleven years! Eleven years I spent waiting for the day when I could get out and be with her again, and then I find out she's engaged to another man! I was furious!"

Hermione looked over at him. He was clearly an emotional mess. Had she been wrong to assume he was a crazed monster?

"We fought."

"Amee didn't mention any fight."

"She didn't?" Jasper said with fake surprise.

"No. She said you killed him as soon as he walked through the door."

"I don't know why she would say that, but that's not what happened."

Hermione was confused. "Why would Amee lie about something that important?"

"Because SHE'S the one who killed him." He had no idea where that came from, but it sounded good.

"What?" Hermione was completely floored.

"We were making love when he walked through the door. He was crazy with anger, and he attacked us with his wand, throwing hexes and curses. I tried to protect Amee, but he was so powerful!" Jasper was laughing inside. The thought of that wanker being more powerful than he was utterly ridiculous! "He hit Amee with some kind of spell, tossing her into the air and sending her crashing to the floor. I tried to get to her, but he came from nowhere, attacking me and pinning me to the ground."

Hermione was listening, hanging on every word. What he was saying made sense, much more sense than him raping his sister and killing her boyfriend. Had they been wrong to just accept Amee's word about what happened? Amee was knocked out for a long time, and maybe she had the facts all jumbled up in her head.

"All of the sudden, Amee came from nowhere and hit him with some spell. I think it was that one Harry told us about...Sectumsempra?"

'That would explain the huge gashes all over his body,' Hermione thought. "What happened after that? Were did you go? When Amee came to, she was alone; you weren't there."

"I honestly can't answer that," Jasper said. "I have no memory of the events after that. I woke up in the park down the street from her flat. I have no idea how I got there. I immediately went back to see if she was okay, but she was gone. The place was a bloody mess, and that's when I saw the letter from grandfather on the floor. I picked it up and read it. It was warning her that I was out and that I might come after her to hurt or even kill her."

"As soon as she read that letter, she Apparated here, to the Manor. She was hysterical and a bloody mess," Hermione said, picking at the blades of grass at her feet. "Draco went back alone and found Brian."

"I was there when he showed up," Jasper said in a sad quiet voice. "I hid in the closet, and I heard him curse me and say that what happened was all my fault. I knew right then and there that I was going to be blamed, that Amee was either confused or that she had turned against me." He was so ecstatic that this weave of lies was turning into a totally believable piece of fiction. It was hard to hold back his glee.

"And all you've said is true?"

Jasper, his eyes welling up with fake tears, cried, "Yes! Every word!" He started sobbing into his hands. "Say you believe me!" He wondered how this woman had ever been considered 'the brightest witch of her age' when she was clearly as dumb as a box of rocks. He knew she wanted desperately to believe him, and he knew exactly how to play her.

Hermione pulled him into a loving embrace. "Of course I believe you!" And she did. She was now sure that Amee must have injured her head during the attack and it

somehow made her remember the events wrongly. She was relieved to know that Jasper wasn't a murderer and that maybe she had succeeded in changing something. "And so will your grandfather when I tell him."

Jasper panicked. "No!"

"You don't want me to tell him?" Hermione asked. "But..."

"Tell me what?" Draco said from the other side of the rose bushes. "Who are you talking to?"

"Jasper, he's..."

The rose bushes were suddenly blasted away, and Draco ran through the smoke, his wand held aloft. "Get the fuck away from her!"

"Draco, no! He told me what really happened; you have to listen to him!"

"I will not listen to a damn word that comes from his fucking mouth! He's a rapist, a killer and a damn liar! How can you even think of believing anything he says?"

Jasper held up his hands, wanting Hermione to see that he was wandless and didn't intend to hurt anyone. He wanted Draco to hurt him first. It would make him look all that much better in her eyes. "Please, Grandfather, I'm not armed! I came only to tell my side of the story."

"Your side of the story?" Draco said, laughing in Jasper's face. "I already know the real story, I have no need to hear your filthy fucking lies!" He jabbed his wand; a jet of red light flew from it, hitting Jasper in the face and sending him hurling through the air.

"Draco! Don't hurt him!" Hermione said, trying to take his wand from his hand.

"Get in the house now, Hermione, and let me do what I need to do!" She was clinging to his arm, trying to smack the wand to the ground. "God damn it!" he shouted, pushing her. "He deserves to die. Now, get the hell out of my way!" He immediately felt sorry for screaming at her, and the hurt look on her face made him stop in his tracks. "I'm sorry," he said grabbing her and holding her close.

Draco felt a sudden furious rush of hot air, and both he and Hermione were knocked to the ground.

"Are you all right?" he said, coughing from the dirt in the air.

"I think so," she answered as he helped her up.

Draco turned to the spot where Jasper was supposed to be, already knowing it would be empty. "He's gone."

Hermione looked at him sadly. "I hope you're happy," she said and left him standing in the middle of the ruined rose garden.

The reunion was wonderful. Draco and Hermione were in their glory, having their entire family around them for the whole day. Neville and Luna, Ginny, Ron and Gabrielle were also there. Harry was unable to come because he had pressing business at the Ministry. It was an amazing day, sunny, warm and not a cloud in the sky.

The children played games, rode horses and ate sweets until they were sick. The adults sat around, gossiping about people, getting drunk and thoroughly enjoying themselves. They hardly noticed the security officers that Draco had placed around the grounds just in case Jasper showed up again.

"Well, I think it's time we head home," Neville said to Luna.

"Yeah, I need a nap; I'm stuffed!" Ron said, patting his nonexistent stomach.

"Do you really have to go?" Hermione asked them. She was having such a great time; she had even managed to forget for a time about the events in the garden the day before. She and Draco had been cool to one another all day, avoiding being alone together. He was so damn stubborn! Why wouldn't he just listen to what Jasper had to say? Why was it that Ameer's version of what happened was the only account in his eyes?

Draco was laughing loudly at a joke Ginny had told him, and Hermione glanced over at him. He looked so happy, sitting here amongst his family and friends, but inside she knew he was a volcano ready to erupt with violence. He had told her in no uncertain words that if she ever saw Jasper again, he was going to take pleasure in dismembering his body, grinding it up and feeding it to the koi in the pond. He was crazy with rage, a vindictive man bent on revenge; it made her wonder if she'd known him at all.

Everyone gathered up their children and grandchildren and headed home. The house-elves went to work cleaning up, and soon it was only Draco, Hermione and Ameer.

Ameer said she was going to head into the house to lie down. She had gotten a bit too much sun, and she wanted a cold bath to cool her hot skin. Draco and Hermione decided to sit for awhile to watch the sunset, so they headed for the porch swing...their favorite place to relax.

To Hermione's surprise, Draco reached over and put his arm around her. "I really love you, you know," he said, smiling warmly at her. "Today made me realize just how much." He kissed her gently on her cheek. "I'm sorry."

She pulled him close and held him tightly. "I love you so much," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. "I don't want anything to ever come between us again."

They sat there, swinging, watching the sun set, turning the sky brilliant shades of pink and orange. "It's beautiful!" Hermione said. "I don't think I've ever seen a prettier sunset."

"It's not nearly as pretty nor beautiful as you," he said, brushing the graying strands of hair from her face. "It's so nice to sit here and grow old with you, to know that our love has endured this long. Through pain and tragedy, we are still as much in love as we were when we were young." His lips met hers, and they kissed tenderly.

As he was kissing her, a huge tawny owl swooped by and dropped a letter in Draco's lap. He picked it up, opened it and read it out loud. "Malfoy, sorry I couldn't come to the reunion, but you know how it is. Work is a bitch; I can't wait to retire! Anyway, Ginny suggested that you and I get together tonight at the Pub and have a little party ourselves. What do you say? Think you can get away from the old ball and chain and get a few pints with me? Say around eight o'clock? Harry."

"Ball and chain!" Hermione said indignantly. "He'll pay for that remark!"

Draco folded up the parchment. "Would you mind if I went? I haven't seen Harry in so long."

Hermione smiled sweetly at him and slapped his cheek playfully. "As long as you're not gone for too long."

Draco jumped up. "I won't stay long, and I'll even take my watch, so I can't use not knowing the time as an excuse for being late." He headed for the house to get his pocket watch.

"Oh, and Draco?"

He paused and looked back at her.

"I'll be waiting up for you... naked," she said with a saucy wink.

He chuckled and went into the house.

After he had left, Hermione yawned tiredly. It had been along day, and what she really wanted was a glass of wine and then a long hot bath. She headed towards the library, walked over to the bar and stopped dead, her hand clutching her chest. "Jasper?" He was sitting in the leather recliner, a glass of what looked like vodka in his hand. "If he finds you here..."

"He won't. He's gone to the pub to meet Harry, hasn't he?" Jasper gave Hermione his most charming smile. "He won't be back for some time; you know once he and Harry get to drinking and reminiscing, it'll be two in the morning."

Draco sat at the pub in he and Harry's regular seat, tapping his finger against his glass impatiently. Harry was late, and it wasn't like him to keep Draco waiting...especially when it came to having drinks. He glanced at the door when it opened. "Damn!" It wasn't him.

Jasper stood up gracefully and walked over to her. "So, did you have a good time today?" he asked. "I wish I could have been there." Hermione reached for an empty glass, and Jasper put his hand on hers. "Here, let me pour you a drink."

Hermione smiled gratefully at him. He returned the smile and then turned his back to her to fix the drink. 'He really is a very kind and considerate man,' she thought. 'If only everyone else could see what I see!' "Thank you," she said

"It's your favorite; red wine," he said, handing her the glass.

Draco sighed in frustration. Still no Harry. He pulled out his pocket watch to check the time, and as soon as his fingers touched it, a wave of dizziness washed over him. He clutched the edge of the table. Visions flashed through his mind, going by so fast that he could barely register most of them.

Flash...he was a child, and Lucius was unwrapping the very same pocket watch.

Flash...he was being screamed at by his father for dropping it on the ground.

Flash...Hermione's smiling face.

Flash...he was older now, and he was taking the same watch out of a package that also held a colorful coat.

Flash...Hermione was bringing a glass of blood red wine to her lips.

Flash...his father was at their wedding, looking at the watch.

Flash...Dumbledore was handing him the watch, telling him it might come in handy in the future when he fears all is lost.

Flash...Lucius was drinking the wine he had poisoned

Flash...Hermione was lying on the ground, Jasper laughing over her.

Draco suddenly screamed and stood up so fast that he knocked the table over and sent beer flying everywhere.

"I'm glad you came. I was afraid that after everything he said to you yesterday, you wouldn't come back." Hermione swirled her wine around under her nose, loving the mellow smell.

Jasper was so impatient for her to drink the damn wine that he wanted to knock her to the floor and pour it down her fucking throat. "You needn't have worried; there is nothing on this earth that could keep me from being here today. Now, drink your wine, and then perhaps we can take a walk in the garden just like we used to."

Hermione smiled and walked over to the fireplace and looked into the fire. She put the glass closer to her lips. "I'd like that!" she said, turning towards him.

"Then hurry and drink the wine," he said, trying to keep the anger from his voice. "Please? We only have a little while to spend together before he comes back."

That seemed to give her a jolt, and Jasper watched as her lips wrapped around the glass and the dark red liquid slid into her mouth.

Draco ignored the strange looks of the other patrons and ran outside where he Apparated to the Manor. "Hermione!" he screamed as soon as his feet hit the floor of the library. Jasper was laughing like some crazy lunatic, and there she was...his wife, his love...lying on the floor in front of the fireplace, an empty glass clutched in her hand.

"No!" he cried, rushing towards her. He fell down next to her, trying to find a pulse, breathing... anything.

"She's dead, Grandfather! And you're next!" Jasper said with a cruel grin, picking up Hermione's wand from the floor and pointing it at Draco head.

Everything had a nightmarish quality to it; the flames dancing off the walls, Jasper's maniacal laughter, Hermione lying dead on the hearth rug. He was crying as he gently laid his head on her chest. She was really dead; he had not been able to stop anything! "Go ahead and kill me then, Jasper," he said, lifting his head. "I don't want to live without her."

For a moment, Jasper thought that maybe a better revenge would be to keep him alive, to force him to live out the rest of his years without her. "How would you like to die, old man? Slowly and painfully or fast and furious?"

Draco looked up at him, a sudden triumphant smile on his lips. Jasper only had time to register that something was wrong when he was hit over the head with a lead paperweight. His face was frozen in shock, and he fell face forward, landing with a loud thud.

"Amee," Draco said, pleading for her to come over. "He's killed her! She's dead!"

Amee crouched down and felt for a pulse. Nothing. He was right; she was gone. Her grandfather suddenly lost his mind, jumped up and attacked Jasper's unconscious body, kicking it as hard as he could.

"I hate you, you sick fucking bastard! I hate you! I hate you!" His foot connected with the side of Jasper's head every time Draco said the word hate. Amee was pulling him with all her strength, trying to stop him. "I'll kill you, you crazy fuck!" he kicked him once more and then sank to the ground, sobbing like a child.

Amee waited until he got a hold of himself. "What are we going to do with him?"

Draco, his eyes swollen, looked her dead in the face. "We bury him alive."

After placing Hermione gently on her bed and covering her with a sheet, Draco and Ameer went back downstairs to the library. Ameer had had a feeling that Jasper would be gone when they got there, but he wasn't. He was still laying face down in a growing pool of blood. They stupefied him just to make sure he wasn't going anywhere. By the amount of blood and the hole in the back of his head, Ameer was sure Jasper wouldn't be going anywhere anytime soon.

"*Mobilicorpus!*" Draco said, and Jasper's body rose into the air. It followed behind them, trailing blood down the stairs as they went down, down, deep under the Manor and into the dungeons.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Draco asked Ameer. "You could go back upstairs and let me do it alone."

Ameer glanced at him, a determined look on her face. "After all he's done to me, how can you even suggest that I not take part?" She pulled out her wand and said, "*Incarcerous!*" Thin ropes wound their way around Jasper's legs and upper body. "Is that it?" she asked, wiping the sweat from her brow.

"No." Draco pulled out a long knife and bent over Jasper. "It's not enough to just tie him and wall him up alive. He is very powerful, Ameer. We need to make sure he can never get out."

To Ameer's horror, Draco opened Jasper's eyelid and plunged the knife into his eyeball. She moaned in disgust as blood and fluid spurted out. He did the same to the other eye and then moved to his mouth. "What are you going to do?" she asked as Draco reached in Jasper's mouth and grabbed hold of his tongue.

"I'm going to slice out his tongue, and then I'm going to cut off his hands." With one swift swipe of the sharp knife, it was out. Draco threw it unceremoniously onto the cold, wet floor. Jasper started moaning and choking on blood as he awoke.

Ameer turned and faced the opposite direction, her hand pressed over her ears as Draco cut off his hands. The sounds were horrible, and she bent over, retching onto the loose stones beneath her feet. "No more, Grandfather! I can't stand it!"

"Help me to get him into the room," Draco said.

Ameer saw that Jasper had once again descended into unconsciousness, and she was grateful that she didn't have to hear him anymore.

The room was very small, almost closet-like, and the three of them could barely fit inside together. They tossed his body on the ground, and with one final glance at the pitiful man, they left and went to work bricking up the entrance.

It took hours; hours of listening to Jasper moan and try to scream for help. The wall was thick, and by the time they placed the last bricks, they could hear nothing from inside the room. They were exhausted and silently, they headed back upstairs to notify the family about Hermione.

Jasper lay on the floor, unable to see, scream or move his arms and legs. It was so dark! Just like the dreams from his childhood. "Grandmother! Please help me! Save me from the darkness, Pleeeeeaaasssee!" he screamed in his head...but just like in his dreams, she never came.

After the funeral, Draco decided to tell Ameer everything. The time travel, how he was supposed to stop the murder so that he and Hermione would stop traveling in a time loop for eternity...everything.

She listened, not interrupting at all. Finally, after he had finished, she spoke. "The solution to your problem is simple. If I'm correct, in fifteen years, you will be paid a visit from yourself and grandmother...just like before." She shifted in her seat, trying to get comfortable. "This is when you will have the chance to change everything."

"How?" he asked. "I've seen my older self, and he didn't tell me jack shit about anything!"

"That's where you're wrong. He told you that sometime that very night, you were going to make love to Hermione and conceive a child. This is where we can fix it!"

"But that means..." Draco was shocked.

"I know what it means, grandfather, and I know the consequences." She kissed his stubby cheek. "Now, we have a lot to do, and only fifteen years to perfect it."

Fifteen years later...

Ameer walked past her grandfather's door. He had moved to the downstairs bedroom earlier in the year because it was getting too hard for him to use the stairs. Pressing her ear up against the door, she listened to the heated conversation coming from within.

"But, Draco! You can't possibly think of doing this!"

"We have already decided, Dumbledore. Ameer is willing to go through with it. Even more so now that they've told her she only has a month to live at the most."

"I'm very sorry to hear that, but you can't comprehend what this one small thing might change in the future!"

"I don't want to discuss this with you anymore. I've made up my mind, and I intend to go through with it. Now, kindly leave me alone."

"Draco, please listen to reason..."

"You know what, Dumbledore? I think you should mind your own business. Why don't you go back and fix it so that Tom Riddle is never born? That may be the reason you're traveling on your time loop. See to it that he's never born. Imagine how much that would change! And who knows, maybe your soul could finally rest. Now, get the hell out of my house!"

Ameer looked up as there was a knock at the front door. She took a deep breath and went to meet her grandparents.

"Hello?" she said, opening the door. She gave them no time to speak, but said, "Come right in, my grandfather has been expecting you." This time, Draco wanted to speak to them right away, tell them everything, and explain how this very night they could change their futures forever.

She ushered the confused pair into Draco's room and shut the door.

"I've been expecting you."

"Who..." Hermione started to ask.

"All will be explained. Just please have a seat and listen to what I have to say."

He told them the whole story, and by the end, both the young people were in tears.

Hermione was shocked at first to learn that the old man in the bed was Draco and that she was married to him. The story he told was heartbreaking and scary. She did not want her future to end as his had.

"What can we do to stop it?" young Draco asked. He took Hermione's hand in his and held onto it tightly. He was willing to do anything to keep his future from being the way this man described it.

"This very night you are supposed to make love, thereby conceiving your first child."

Hermione's eyes narrowed. "Are you telling us that in order to put an end to this, I must never give birth to Jade?" She looked over at Amee, who was looking at the floor. "But... but that means that you will never exist!"

"That's right," she said. "My life has been nothing but grief. I've been very sick, tortured and manipulated, raped, had my husband-to-be and my grandmother murdered, and now, I find out I only have a month to live." Tears were running down her face. "It would be better for me to have never been born. It's what I want. If I can give my grandfather a few more happy years with the love of his life, then I'm willing to sacrifice my existence."

They were shocked. "There is no other way?" Draco asked the old man.

"No. This is the only way."

Amee led them from the bedroom and shut the door quietly behind her. "I'll show you to your room. I hope that you'll make the right decision. I've seen the devastation that your future and mine holds, and please believe me when I say that I do not want it for you or anyone in my family. You have a chance to give your children and grandchildren a wonderful life, filled with love and security where nothing bad will touch them. All you have to do is listen to your heart...it will tell you what to do."

Amee left them and went back downstairs where she crept into her grandfather's room. She pulled up a seat next to his and held his hand. She noticed that in his arm he was holding his favorite picture...the one of his three little girls at a tea party. She studied her mother in the picture. Her big, grey eyes, her wavy, pale hair. She looked so happy then, so full of life. Amee looked away and closed her eyes. It was going to be a long night. As she fell asleep, the image of her mother in the picture started to fade...

"Draco?" Hermione said, lying next to him on the bed. "I don't know what to do."

He turned over and put his arms around her. "We do what's right."

In the morning, they crept silently down the stairs. On the table by the door was a package addressed to Draco. He opened it and took out a gold pocket watch and a hideous gaudy coat.

"There's a letter," Hermione said, opening it.

"It says that he hopes we made the right decision, but if we didn't, he's giving us the watch. The coat, he says, you will need for the next place we're going. Amee made it herself, so don't laugh at it."

"That's it?"

"There's a p.s. down at the bottom. It says 'For God sakes don't eat the sauerkraut, no matter how tempting it looks, or you'll regret it later!'"

She handed the letter to him; he reread it and then folded it up and put it in his pocket. "Shall we get going? The clock will be here any minute."

As they left, the old man in the bedroom opened his eyes. It was so bright that at first he thought he had died and gone into the afterlife...but it was only the sun shining through the curtains. He rolled over, expecting to be alone in the bed and was surprised when he hit something solid.

He patted the form, finding it soft and yielding...the body of a woman. He sat up. "Hermione?"

Hermione rolled over, her eyes tiny slits. "What time is it?" she asked sleepily.

Draco was suddenly on top of her kissing her, caressing her, sobbing like a child.

"What's wrong? Why are you crying?" Hermione asked.

"I've missed you!"

"Missed me?" she said, confused. "But I've been here all along."

Draco just smiled, happier than he had ever been in his life. She was here, really here! He slipped his arms around her and kissed her on her soft lips. He didn't know how long she would be here with him, but he hoped it would be forever.

Only time would tell if that one small decision had made a change in the future of his younger self, if it had made anything better...but that wasn't for them to worry about. All he knew was that the wife he had missed like hell was now lying next to him, her warm body pressed close to his. He kissed her once more and then curled up next to her. Draco Malfoy slept well for the first time in fifteen years.

The End

July 20, 2007