

Muggle Studies

by silverdoe

After the Battle of Hogwarts, Hermione and several of her classmates return to complete their N.E.W.T.s. Draco Malfoy is among them. Draco has decided he is no longer welcome in the wizarding world, so he looks to the only Muggleborn he knows to help him learn about the Muggle world. During their "Muggle Studies" Hermione tries to talk him into staying. Will he stay or leave in the end?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 7

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Mine, Mine, all Mine. Yea right and if you believe that I got this bridge for sale

Chapter 1

Hermione arrived with a 'pop' right outside the Hogwarts' gates. With a bright smile she began to drag her trunk and Crookshanks' basket towards the gate. It was September 1st and the start of the new school year.

She looked up at the castle and saw that the renovations were coming along with remarkable speed. Just months ago the castle had lain in almost ruin, and now with the help of Professor Flitwick, the tiny charms professor, there were only a few minor repairs to attend to. She vividly remembered the last time she was here.

The memories of that day came rushing back. Faces of her fallen friends flashed before her. Among them the faces of some whom she held dear to her heart: Fred Weasley, Remus Lupin, and Nymphadora Tonks, and there were so many more who were friends and acquaintances. There were even a few she didn't know, but she still remembered how their faces looked in death.

She glanced towards the lake, where there was now a small graveyard for those who had fallen there. There were about fifty grave markers that surrounded the marble tomb of Professor Dumbledore. It was decided that all those who fell here during the battle should remain here forever. It was somewhat comforting to her to know that her classmates and friends from the Order were now being watched over in death by the greatest wizard to ever live. The feelings only grew stronger when she remembered those dreadful few minutes that she thought one of her best friends had been killed.

With a shiver, she realized his grave could have been among those in the cemetery. But Harry Potter was still alive. He had defeated Voldemort. Now the whole of the wizarding world was trying to regain a sense of normalcy, and that is just what Hermione was planning to do.

She had returned to finish her incomplete seventh year. The Ministry and the Hogwarts governors had agreed to allow any student in their seventh year to use their last

posted grade in each subject for their N.E.W.T. level. Many of her classmates had done just that, including Harry and Ronald Weasley, her other best friend and, finally, her boyfriend.

Harry told her that he would just be too busy helping Kingsley Shacklebolt and Arthur Weasley reform the Ministry. She also knew that, once they were finished at the Ministry, Harry wanted to attend to the schooling that was required for an Auror. Ron, who was never very studious, had already taken to helping his brother George in his joke shop. She knew that at one time Ron had wanted to become an Auror too, but that the death of George's twin Fred had put those dreams on hold for him. He was determined to help George through his grief and to make sure that Fred's dream for the joke shop didn't fail.

However, Hermione wanted to have a complete education so she returned. And besides, she wasn't exactly happy with her grades and knew she could improve them. With a sigh, she continued on to the school. Just a few feet inside the gate, Hermione heard someone calling her name. She turned to look and was surprised to see Neville Longbottom running towards her.

"Hello, Neville. Are you here to finish your N.E.W.T.s?" asked Hermione.

"Yea, Gran wants me to," he said in a tired voice.

"Neville, does she still believe you can't live up to your parents? Because after last year..." she began but, Neville cut her off.

"No, no, Hermione. I know she is proud of me. She tells anyone who will listen how proud she is of me and how I pulled the Gryffindor's sword from the Sorting Hat just like Harry Potter did once before. But she wants me to complete my schooling. She feels that education is important and I shouldn't take the easy way out. She is still Gran, after all." He laughed. "And after seeing her take on Death Eaters last year, I am not about to argue," he said with a smile.

Hermione laughed too. She knew that Neville was one of the big heroes from the Battle at Hogwarts. He had destroyed the last HorocruX, killing Voldemort's snake Nagini with the sword he pulled from the sorting hat. She also knew how much that meant to him.

"Here, let me help you with your trunk," he continued.

"Did you already unpack?" She asked.

"No, our dorms are not ready yet. Professor Flitwick and Professor Carmichael, the new Transfiguration teacher, are working on them now. I got here early this morning. I wanted to help Professor Sprout get the greenhouses in order. She just finished getting Greenhouse Two rebuilt yesterday. There was a lot to be done in preparation for the start of school, and she sent me letter asking for my help and I agreed," he said proudly. Hermione knew that his favorite subject was Herbology.

"Are there any others from Gryffindor here yet?" Hermione asked.

"No, I asked Professor McGonagall, who was returning to finish. She said that there were only going to be about thirteen from our class coming back to finish."

"Wow," she exclaimed "so few! Why are they setting up a dorm for us? Are we not staying in Gryffindor Tower?"

"No, they set up a special dorm for us all to stay together. Something about with all we have been through, being able to live together and help each other with our studies will help us heal." Hermione just nodded. Most everyone in their year stayed to fight the final battle.

"I suppose that is why they wanted us all here earlier than the other students," Neville continued "to let us know what is expected of us." Their letters had asked them to arrive early so they could discuss the accommodations and classes being offered especially for them.

They reached the front steps and went through the giant oak doors leading into the entrance hall. Hermione saw Neville's trunk along the wall which lead to the dungeons and placed her stuff next to it. It was almost lunch time, so they went into the Great Hall to await the rest of their class, who should all be there soon.

They did not have to wait long. Within fifteen minutes, the one smaller table that was set up in the Great Hall was staring to fill. The first to arrive were Padma and Parvati Patil, the twins. Padma was in Ravenclaw and Parvati is in Gryffindor. They both greeted Hermione and Neville and started discussing their summers. Next were Susan Bones and Hannah Abbott both of Hufflepuff. Hannah had returned last year after leaving in their sixth year due to her mother's death at the hands of Death Eaters.

A large group of Ravenclaws came in next and Hermione recognized most of them. There was Terry Boot, Mandy Brocklehurst, Michael Corner, Anthony Goldstein, and a girl Hermione thought was named Daphne Greengrass from Slytherin. Lavender Brown from Gryffindor came in next and sat down next to her best friend Parvati. She started to tell everyone how she wasn't going to come back, but changed her mind at the last minute because she couldn't think of anything better to do. "Besides," she said "at least I get to hang out with my friends for a few more months this way." Everyone laughed.

Ernie Macmillan from Hufflepuff strolled in as they were all laughing and starting greeting everyone in his normal pompous manner. They were all chatting happily that they barely noticed the next and last person to join their group. He sat down quietly at the end of the table. Hermione looked up as he sat down and could barely believe her eyes. The very last person she expected to see...Draco Malfoy.

A/N

My thanks to lilywillow.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 7

After the Battle of Hogwarts, Hermione and several of her classmates return to complete their N.E.W.T.s. Draco Malfoy is among them. Draco has decided he is no longer welcome in the wizarding world, so he looks to the only Muggleborn he knows to help him learn about the muggle world. During their "Muggle Studies" Hermoine tries to talk him into staying. Will he stay or leave in the end.

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Chapter 2

The chatter at the table ceased. Everyone stared at Malfoy. They knew about his past and that he was a Death Eater. He spent the last year in the company of Voldemort, who had used Malfoy Manor as a headquarters.

The shock of a known Death Eater sitting down at the table had Hermione at a loss for words. She realized that her mouth was gaping open and hastened to close it. Malfoy didn't look at them or say a word. He stared at the empty plate in front of him.

Just when Hermione thought she would shoot some offhanded remark to him, Professor McGonagall walked in the Great Hall. She came up to the table and sat down in the last empty chair.

"Good afternoon, everyone," she said. "There are several things we need to discuss before the rest of the school comes this evening, but first we will have our lunch."

With that, lunch appeared and everyone began to eat in earnest. Hermione noticed that while Malfoy was eating, he barely took his eyes off his plate. Was he being shy and reserved? No, of course not, she assured herself. He will be back to his arrogant, snotty pureblood righteousness just as soon as the headmistress was out of sight.

At first there was no conversation. Slowly as everyone ate their fill, small conversations started. Soon, one by one they all joined in. Hermione smiled, she felt like she was home. She didn't realize how much she had missed this when she was gone last year. She had spent her seventh year on the run. Hiding from the Muggle-Born Registration Commission, Voldemort and his followers, helping Harry find the missing Horcruxes and destroying them.

Being here in the castle wasn't going to be the same without her two best friends, but at least she was going to get to finish school. When Professor McGonagall had sent her an owl and asked to see her last month, she had agreed. McGonagall told her that she would be allowed to return and finish school. Hermione was relieved. She had been afraid that she would have to start this year with the returning sixth years, which would put her a year behind. But the headmistress informed her that based on her grades and her exemplary performance during all of her years at Hogwarts, not to mention her 13 O.W.L.s in her fifth year, she would be able to return and do the review work with the rest of her class.

Just then Professor McGonagall stood and the table fell quiet.

"I would like to thank you all for agreeing to meet with me before we welcome the rest of school back this evening. Now as I am sure you are all very aware, this is a very unusual situation for this school. We have agreed to set up a review course of your classes so that we can refresh and prepare you for your N.E.W.T.s. Our plan is to have everyone caught up by the holidays. We will spend January reviewing and the testing will begin in February. This will enable the professors to spend the remainder of the year preparing the seventh years for their N.E.W.T.s in June. We have a classroom prepared for all of you to use to review. I will be with you daily to help in any way I can. Each evening, the other professors will make time to come to our classroom after dinner and work on some of the more complex assignments with you. Any practical work will be done during this time.

"Also for those of you taking Herbology and Care of Magical Creatures, Professors Sprout and Hagrid have agreed to give up their free periods during the week to assist you. Herbology will of course meet in the green houses and Care of Magical Creatures can meet Professor Hagrid by his cabin."

"Since the professors and I feel we should treat you like guests and not students, we have made some special arrangements for you. You will not be living in your regular dormitories. There is simply not enough room with the new students coming in. I have had some of the guest quarters transformed to a dormitory where you can all stay together. There is a common room and several bedrooms, one for each of you. As I explained in your letters, if you chose to commute each day to school, that is fine. I believe that only one of you has decided on this course of action.

"Draco," she said looking at the pale boy, "your common room fire is connected to the Floo Network and will return you to the manor every night."

Draco raised his head for the first time and nodded at Professor McGonagall as she said this. He quickly returned his gaze to his fingers which he had been intently studying all during her speech.

"You are all free to come and go as you please in your free time. There is no curfew for you, though we do increase security in the castle at midnight. So do try to be back here by then. If you need something in Hogsmeade, just be sure to let someone know you are leaving the castle. Also, Madam Pince has agreed to remain in the library until 11:30 pm every night. The students will not be allowed in there after 10 pm without special permission. This time is strictly for you, to assist you in reviewing for you N.E.W.T.s. You are permitted to use the Restricted Section, though those books must remain in the library.

"You will still remain members of your house, although there will be some changes made to how we will meet as a school. In order to show a more united front for the whole school, we are doing away with house tables this year. We will have several smaller tables where students will sit according to year during feasts and special events. Everyday meals can be taken at whichever table you feel most comfortable. Our hope is that during the school year this may help create stronger bonds with students from all houses. We are looking to you and our prefects to make examples to the younger students of school unity.

"Lastly, as most of the professors do not have a lot of time to spend with you, we want for you to work as a group to make sure that every one achieves their best on their N.E.W.T.s. All of you spent at least some time here last year with the exception of Ms. Granger. It will be best if each of you recognize your strengths and weaknesses so we know what areas you need to improve in. We are looking to each of you to rely on the others for help if possible. Each of you has strength in subjects and may need help in others. Teaching is also a form of learning. It will greatly improve your skills to practice spells and charms with one another. I hope you will rely on each other for necessary tutoring.

"Now if you will all follow me, I will lead you to your quarters. You can settle in while we wait the rest of the school to arrive. I will come and get you before the feast."

With that she stood and motioned for them to follow her. Hermione noticed when they reached the entrance hall that their trunks must have already been taken to their new dorms while they were eating. Professor McGonagall began to climb the stairs, and they all followed wondering just where they were heading. Hermione was deep in thought when she realized she had never thought about where the guest quarters were located.

She also realized she never stopped to consider where the professors and staff stayed during their time at Hogwarts. She knew that Madam Pomfrey had quarters close to the hospital wing. There were rumors that Professor Snape, who was a professor at the school until the end of their sixth year, had quarters down in the dungeons. But there was never any mention of Staff quarters, not even in "Hogwarts a History", which she has read thoroughly and on numerous occasions.

She was so lost in her thoughts she barely noticed they had turned down the second floor corridor. At the end was a large tapestry with the Hogwarts crest. Professor McGonagall said a password and the tapestry dissolved and another corridor appeared.

She turned to them and said, "This is staff corridor, most of our living quarters are down here. You will all be given a password to the tapestry that will allow you to enter here. Please do not share with anyone your password. Also, do not share with the other students this location. We try to retain some privacy for the staff, so the less the students know, the better."

She turned and continued back down the corridor. Hermione noticed there were very few pictures and statues here. Several doors led off to what she assumed were the teacher's quarters. When they reached the end of the corridor, they turned to the left and continued down a smaller corridor. At the end they came to a door.

Professor McGonagall turned and said to them "This is the entrance to your quarters. The password is Encore, which I feel you are doing here with us this year."

Hermione noticed a slight smile on her face when she said this.

A/N: Sorry for my delays in posting and responding to reviews. I decided to spend some time in the mountains and I have very limited computer access there (using an air card with slightly poor reception). Hope you all enjoy this. My thanks to my betas whose help is greatly appreciated, liliywillow, coley21 and sempra (who also did some Brit picking for me) Thanks gals!

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 7

After the Battle of Hogwarts, Hermione and several of her classmates return to complete their N.E.W.T.s. Draco Malfoy is among them. Draco has decided he is no longer welcome in the wizarding world, so he looks to the only Muggleborn he knows to help him learn about the muggle world. During their "Muggle Studies" Hermoine tries to talk him into staying. Will he stay or leave in the end.

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Chapter 3

A/N: J.K. Rowling owns it all; I am merely manipulating it in a way that pleases me.

They all moved into their common room. It was large and kind of oval. A fireplace took up several feet along one wall. In front of the fireplace were four large and comfy chairs. There were several tables with just as many chairs spaced throughout the room. A few more chairs were positioned by one of the window seats.

It was decorated using a blend of all of the house colors. There were Slytherin green throw pillows trimmed in silver on the chairs by the fireplace and window seat. The walls were Ravenclaw blue with Hufflepuff yellow trim. A large window seat facing the lake had the Gryffindor red colors on the cushion. A large painting of the Hogwarts crest was above the fireplace. There were four banners that hung down from the ceiling, one for each house.

The wood on the furniture was dark and rich. It looked brand new, but Hermione could tell by the detailed work that it was several centuries old and quite possibly hand carved. She knew that she would enjoy being here this year. This room was an excellent environment in which to study, and she could hardly wait to climb into the window seats with a book.

There were a dozen doors leading off the common room. These were the entrances to their rooms. Professor McGonagall was leading them each to their own door and explaining to them how to set the password for their room. When it was Hermione's turn she walked to her door and thought of the one phrase that always seemed to make her happy – sitis pro scientia. She knew it was a simple password for anyone who knew her, but she also thought maybe they would think it was too obvious.

She went into her room and looked around. It was better than the descriptions she had heard of the head boy and girl rooms. There was a full size, four poster bed in the middle of the room. The duvet had a Gryffindor lion on it. There were several large pillows propped up along the billboard sized headboard. Splashes of scarlet and gold were everywhere from the throw pillows on the settee to the trim on the walls.

A large ornate desk stood along one wall. Behind it were several large bookshelves. The settee was placed near the foot of the bed looking out a window. She looked out the window and noticed her view was one that would constantly remind her of her friends, and this made her smile. It was Hagrid's cabin she saw when she looked out the window. It reminded her of all the good times they'd had down there visiting with him.

Next to the window stood a wardrobe in which all of her clothing was already neatly hanging. To her left was a door that led to her own private bath. It was simple but elegant. A small vanity and sink, made out of beige marble, were along one wall with a door that led to the toilet. The other wall was almost entirely taken up by a regal marble tub with many different spouts on it. Next to that was a simple shower stall with beige marble surround.

After a few minutes exploring her room, she returned to the common room. Malfoy sat in the window seat staring out at the lake, or possibly the graveyard she couldn't be sure.

Professor McGonagall waited in one of the chairs by the fire. Slowly the rest of her classmates made it back to the common room, and Professor McGonagall stood and started to speak.

"I will return in a little while to escort you all to the Great Hall. You will wait in an adjoining room until I have had the chance to explain to the rest of the school the unique situation this year. I am afraid you will miss the sorting."

With that she left them.

Hermoine glanced around the room, everyone else was roaming about looking at the room. Pavarti, Padma and Lavender were showing each other their rooms. Malfoy was still sitting looking out the window. He didn't move or look around.

'That's odd,' Hermione thought, 'I wonder why he isn't bullying people around.'

It seemed so unlike Malfoy to just sit quietly and not say anything to anyone. Now that the headmistress was gone, she was sure he would start acting in his usual superior manner.

'I wonder what he is doing here. I need to write a letter to Ron anyways. I'll mention it; maybe he and Harry will know why they let him come back.'

Malfoy's quietness had made her uneasy.

She returned to her room and sat behind her desk. At first she just rubbed the top of the mahogany desk, caressing the smooth wood beneath her palms. Then she began putting her quills and parchment away in the drawers. She set out on the desktop a little crystal bottle of ink that her parents had gotten her for her thirteenth birthday and several pictures of her friends and family.

There was a Muggle photo of her parents in Australia, a photo of Harry, Ron, Ginny and her all standing in front of the Burrow waving and one of just her and Ron, looking into each other eyes. That one was her favorite. It was taken just after the fall of Voldemort at a celebration party. It was during the first days of her relationship with Ron.

She'd had a crush on him since third year. She had almost giving him up as a hopeless case, figuring he would never notice. Finally during the battle, as parts of the castle were falling down around them, they kissed. It was incredibly romantic and frightening at the same time. Pulling her eyes away from the photo, she grabbed a piece of parchment and one of her new quills and began her letter to Ron. They had promised to write each other every day. Well, at least she promised to write every day. Ron would have good intentions, but she knew he would get sidetrack once he started training.

She told Ron all about her day and especially her new room. She loved it here already. When she mentioned to him everyone that had returned she left out Malfoy at first. She wasn't sure why. Well actually she was. She knew if he found out, he would be here before the end of the feast insisting that she come home with him. And Harry would be right behind him. She knew he was bound to find out, yet she couldn't bring herself to tell him. And then she added to the bottom of the letter,

Malfoy is also here. Though he is only commuting to school, so he won't be staying here in the dorm with the rest of us.

I love you, Ron. Don't worry I can take care of myself and Ginny, too.

Love,

Hermoine

'There,' she thought, 'maybe he won't worry too much if he knows he is not staying in the castle. I had to tell him.'

A/N: Thanks to my lovely betas for their input and assistance, lilywillow, coley21 and sempra.

Sitis pro scientia – thirst for knowledge, courtesy of sempra

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 7

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Chapter 4 -

The next morning at breakfast, Hermione was sitting at a table talking with Ginny and Luna. Across from her Neville was enthusiastically telling Parvati, Padma and Lavender all about his new 'Mimulus mimbletonia'. Suddenly it seemed as if everyone at the table had gone quiet. Neville was staring at something behind Hermione with his mouth gaping open. She turned to see what had brought silence to such an exciting meal and her eyes met the cold grey eyes of Malfoy.

"A word, Granger," Malfoy sneered.

Hermione looked over at Ginny who had the same dumbfounded look that Ron would have on occasion. Suppressing a giggle, she looked back at Malfoy.

"What do you want?" she said with a rather snotty tone in her voice.

"I need to speak with you, outside," he said softly, as though he was slightly embarrassed.

Hermione turned to look at Ginny again. Her expression had still not changed. Luna sat with a slightly strange smile on her face. She looked at Hermione and shrugged. She glanced at Neville and Parvati, and neither of them said a word.

Before she could turn back to look at him again, she heard his voice soften further, "Please."

"Er... sure," was all she could manage to get out.

Her brain was whirling. Had Malfoy just said *please*? No, not possible. She must be hearing things. All the excitement of being back at Hogwarts and classes made her imagine it. Yes, she convinced herself that was it. Because everyone knows that Malfoy could never be that polite to her. After all, he saw her as just a Mudblood, not worthy of pleasant exchanges.

Out in the entrance hall, Hermione followed Malfoy to the second floor, where their new dormitory was. Once inside the common room, he turned to look at her. He didn't say anything; he just stood there, half staring at the floor and the wall behind her.

Hermione waited for him to say something... anything. This strange, silent Malfoy was beginning to unnerve her. Finally, when she could stand it no longer, she broke the silence.

"Out with it, Malfoy. What is so important that you had to interrupt my breakfast?"

Nothing. Not even some biting response from him. She looked at him more closely and then turned on her heel and headed towards her dormitory.

"McGonagall said we should ask the other students to help us review," he said quietly to her back.

Hermione turned to face him as he began to speak.

"I thought that since we both missed last year, we could help each other learn what we missed."

"And just why would I want to help you? I thought I was nothing but a useless Mudblood to you," she sneered.

He flinched at her remarks. She saw the flinch, and a triumphant grin crossed her face.

"No snappy comeback, Malfoy?"

He knew he'd been awful to her in the past. He knew that he had hurt her and her friends on numerous occasions. He also knew that he was giving her no reason to help him.

What she didn't know was that he had honestly changed since they last saw each other. He had spent most of last year being held hostage with his parents, in his home, by the most feared wizard in the world, made to do everything that Voldemort had commanded. He was informed on several occasions of what would happen if he disobeyed. They would kill him and his parents. As it was, Voldemort had spent several days torturing him, in front of his parents, for his failure to kill Professor Dumbledore the year before.

In the end, Voldemort succeeded in murdering his parents. Though they did not die by his hand directly, he was the reason behind their demise. His mother had died just two months ago, right after the final battle. Injuries she had sustained from months and months of Voldemort's curses had ravaged her body. In the end, there was nothing the Healers could do to repair the damages. Her strength and will finally gave out.

His one small consolation in her death was that he finally got to hear his mother say, 'I love you' to him. It was during the months that had led to the final battle that his parents had realized what they had to lose. That the maniac they'd followed would be willing to destroy everything for his own needs, including their family.

His father, overcome with grief and guilt at his fall from grace in the eyes of the entire Wizarding world, took his own life the day they buried his mother.

Draco understood his father's feelings. How could anyone trust the Malfoys? The world had known that they were all Death Eaters and had been buying their way out of trouble all these years.

The day after he found his father's body in the study, Draco decided that he would not venture out into the world again. He could live in the manor alone and send for anything he needed. He felt this was the best way to live, so as not to burden the rest of the Wizarding world with his traitorous presence.

He was sitting in his dining room, pondering this when the fireplace glowed green and Minerva McGonagall stepped through. She sat with him all day and well into the night. She offered to let him come back and get a fresh start. She listened to him as he told her about his fears of not being wanted. She watched the tears fall down his face when he told her that he was completely alone in the world, and unable to face a new beginning. She counseled him on what to expect and reassured him that she would be there to help. At midnight, she stood and looked at him. He was defeated and afraid.

"I will be expecting you on September 1st at noon for lunch. You will be grateful someday that I am forcing you to do this. Do not let me down."

And she was gone. So, because of that conversation, he was here and asking Hermione for help, even though she didn't really understand just how much help he needed. He needed her for more than just his studies. He needed her so he could start a new life. He had been working on this plan since McGonagall had come to see him. He knew she was the key. This is the real reason he came back to Hogwarts.

"Hermione, I..." He what? How could he make her understand that he had changed? He wasn't the spoiled brat she had known for the last seven years.

He took a deep breath and decided that if he truly wanted a new start, he had better start by being honest.

A/N: All my thanks to my Betas for putting up with my punctuation errors, lilywillow, coley21 and sempra.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 7

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Chapter 5

"Hermione, I..." He what? How could he make her understand that he had changed? He wasn't the spoiled brat she had known for the last seven years.

He took a deep breath and decided that if he truly wanted a new start he had better start by being honest.

"Have a seat, please. I would really like a chance to talk to you. No yelling. No disparaging remarks. Just promise to listen to what I have to say. You can choose to believe me or not when I am finished."

Hermione eyed him skeptically. She moved to sit down when he spoke again.

"Could we possibly speak in private?"

"Oh, I don't think so, Malfoy. If you want to say something, you will say it here."

"Fine. Look, I know that I am the last person you want to talk to or even help, but I want to explain myself to you. Maybe make you understand where I come from, who I am."

"Where you come from, Malfoy, is a dark and twisted pureblooded family. I know you to be a spoiled, little prick. I had had hopes to never see you again, but unfortunately here you are."

Malfoy flinched. It is how he expected people to look at him now. He could understand; he had said the same things to himself, many times, over the last few months. He needed to make her listen to him. Maybe if she listened, she might help. After all, he was just like those many lost causes she had championed over the years. Everyone

had given up on him. He needed her to believe him.

"I don't expect you to believe me. I know I have never giving you, or anyone really, any reason to trust me. I just want a chance to explain myself to someone, even if they don't care to listen."

She looked at him. Her expression changed from anger to curiosity. When she didn't move to leave or speak again, Malfoy took that as a sign to continue.

"I grew up thinking, no, knowing I was better than everyone else. I was a Malfoy. It was expected of me to behave a certain way.

"I knew from a young age that I would one day marry another pureblood witch. In old pureblood families the thought of tainting our bloodlines with anything less was appalling. My father told me the arrangements were made shortly after my first birthday.

"The wedding would have taken place one month after my graduation from school. I would have learned the identity of my future wife two weeks before the wedding, at the engagement party.

"If the Dark Lord was still around, I would have been married by now and well on my way to producing the next spoiled Malfoy heir."

Hermione raised her eyebrows at this, but did not say anything.

"My early education came from tutors. I usually had several different ones each year. I learned basic spells, charms, and potions. I also learned to read and write from these tutors.

"When I was eight, my father began teaching me himself. Our lessons centered on the Dark Arts and discipline. I learned quickly to never question him or his beliefs. The Cruciatus Curse is a powerful motivator.

"Over the next three years, I slowly became a smaller version of my father. I was hateful and cruel.

"By the time I reached Hogwarts, my future was set in stone. I would be placed in Slytherin. My friends were already chosen, my name guaranteeing me a place in the hierarchy that is Slytherin House. The whole of my seven years were planned for me, before I ever set foot in this castle."

Malfoy paused for a minute, and a rare smile graced his face.

"I even knew that I would become the Seeker in my second year. It was planned that I would be the second youngest to do so, but Potter beat me to it.

"Once school began, it became increasingly difficult for my father to control every aspect of my life. He used my 'friends' as his eyes and ears. During breaks I was punished severely for anything he considered unbecoming behavior for a Malfoy. He claimed he was doing this to toughen me up.

"When we all got detention that time in our first year, he actually came to the castle to 'speak' to me about my actions."

By his tone, Hermione understood that Malfoy was punished for his detention.

"By the end of our first year, I had had enough of my punishments and became the proud Slytherin I was supposed to be. I sometimes wonder what I would be like today if I had had friends that first year, real friends that weren't under my father's control.

"Although my behavior and attitude were more like what my father expected, he was extremely disappointed in my grades. Not that they were terrible. It was just that I was not top of our class. You were. And that was unacceptable. A mere Muggle-born beating a Malfoy, you can not even imagine how disappointed he was about that."

He stopped when he saw her expression change from curiosity to pity.

"I am not telling you this for your pity. This is how it is... was in families like mine, families that had ties to the Dark Lord.

"I know that both of my parents loved me. They may never have told me that until the end, but I could tell. They could never express their love; someone might have seen it, and it could have been used against them or me. Love is a burden, and the Malfoys do not do well with burdens... of any kind.

"That summer my father redoubled his efforts in my 'training'. It was you that I focused my anger on. I blamed you for every curse, comment and beating that I endured. I hated you by the time school resumed, more than I hated anyone, even more than Potter.

"That was my father's plan after he found out about you. He wanted to be sure that I was cruel to you. He wanted to guarantee that I would not let you beat me again.

"I am not sure if he knew what that diary would or would not do, but once he found out that the Chamber was open, he told me in every letter that he hoped you would be one of Basilisk's victims. He even said if there were any way in which my friends or I could arrange this, we would be rewarded.

"I knew what you were doing. I saw you with the mirror. I did nothing to stop you," he admitted, a look of shame on his face.

"Were you rewarded," she asked.

He laughed, actually laughed. Leave it to her to ignore the fact he had willingly endangered her life.

"Yes, I was. I received a magnificent Andalusian stallion when I returned home that summer." He told her with a smile. "Maybe someday... no, never mind. Where was I? Ah, third year. By now I was beginning to live up to my father's expectations. He continued to tutor me in the Dark Arts when I was home on break. He began to teach me what I now believe to be a corrupted version of wizarding history.

"What he taught was nothing short of propaganda, probably fed to him for years by He-Who-Was-Once-A-Dark-Lord. He said that Muggle-borns were the cause of the unusually high number of squib births. That their tainted blood was going to be the downfall of our society.

"His lessons continued for the next several years. I was rewarded for being a 'proper' Malfoy and punished severely for any mistakes."

Malfoy paused and looked as if he was going to say more, but Hermione interrupted him.

"That must have been awful. Did your mother let this happen."

"Even if she had tried to stop it, it would not have changed anything. My mother had no control over my upbringing. As I was the Malfoy heir, it was expected that my father would be the main influence in my life.

"When I was young, she tried her best to instill in me a sense of right and wrong. Her family raised her much the same way I was raised, pureblood supremacy and all.

"She was more like her sister Andromeda than Bellatrix. They were very close when she was younger. When Andromeda married that Muggle, she was cut off from her by her parents and then later by my father. She would often tell me stories about her when I was small. I think she regretted not knowing her sister later in life.

"My mother was never cruel like Aunt Bella. She could see what was happening to purebloods from all of the inbreeding that was going on. She just wasn't strong enough to fight her family or their prejudices."

He had been pacing around while speaking, but stopped for a moment. He looked at Hermione and smiled.

"My mother knew of you from our first year. Though I doubt she would ever admit it out loud, she admired you for your intelligence. She could see the power in you the first time she saw you, at the World Quidditch Cup.

"I remember her telling me all the time, 'The most powerful thing in the world is knowledge. Never mind what your father or the Dark Lord or even Dumbledore say. Without knowledge of ourselves, our world and our magic, we are no better than Muggles. Blood and love can only get you so far.'

"I was never allowed to bad mouth your intelligence in front of her. I could say anything about you heritage, friends and family, but not that. Trust me; I never crossed my mother when she was truly angry.

"When you were brought to the Manor last year, my parents had already begun to doubt their allegiances to the Dark Lord. She really didn't want any harm to come to you or Potter.

"Even though it looked like she was trying to get me to say who you really were, I saw her eyes. There was something different in them."

He stopped again, lost in his thoughts. Hermione shuddered as she remembered what had happened there. It was a while before either of them said anything. Hermione broke the silence first.

"Malfoy, I highly doubt you told me all of this just to get me to help you study. What exactly do you want from me?"

"I want to disappear. I want to live somewhere where no one knows who or what I am. I don't want people staring at me with hate in their eyes. I can hardly stand to look at myself." He sat down next to her and looked directly into her eyes.

"When I finish school, I am leaving England. I will go to Europe or America. Anywhere as long as it is far from here and when I get there, I will not use magic, ever again. I am done."

Hermione stared at him, dumbstruck. She tried to speak, but the words wouldn't come. After stumbling to find her voice, she managed to speak.

"You are done with what, being a wizard? Malfoy, you cannot possibly be serious."

"I am. I don't want this life anymore. I need you to teach me to be... a Muggle."

"Well, just let me run down to the bookstore and pick up a copy of 'How

To Be a Muggle in Thirty Days,' she snorted.

"No, not thirty days, five months. I promised McGonagall I would finish school."

He was completely serious.

"So, you want me to help you learn to be a Muggle."

"Yes, I thought I made that pretty clear."

"You have lost your mind. There is no way a pompous, arrogant git like you could survive living like a Muggle. You realize that there will be no one there to wait on you. You will have to cook and clean up after yourself. It is just not possible." She was beginning to rant.

Harry and Ron would have known to head her off now, before she really got going. Unfortunately, Malfoy did not.

"I know, while I am helping you, I can house train a Chimaera to keep you company."

"Granger."

"Maybe I'll leave the Wizarding world too."

"GRANGER!"

"Then we can get a place together, and I can keep right on teaching you how to be a Muggle."

"HERMIONE."

She stopped. He had used her given name. He had to have completely lost his mind.

First he is polite, then he wants her to help and now he is calling me Hermione. Yep, he has definitely lost his mind.

"I have not lost my mind. I have actually given this a lot of thought. It is either this or I become a hermit in my house. I won't push myself on people who don't want me around."

He looked at her. She could see the defeat on his face. Upon closer inspection, she could see how tired he looked. The arrogance that usually showed through his eyes was replaced by something else. It took her a moment to recognize it. It was fear. Draco Malfoy was afraid.

Neville chose that moment to appear in the common room.

"Hermione, McGonagall is looking for the two of you. Class started ten minutes ago."

Hermione and Malfoy made it to class in record time. After a stern lecture from the Headmistress on being prepared and on time for the first day, she gave them their course outlines and study guides.

Sitting at the last empty table, Hermione began to pull her books out of her bag. She glanced down at her course outlines and decided to begin with Ancient Runes. Malfoy sat next to her and began with the same book.

Just before lunch, Hermione began to gather up her belongings. She looked over at Malfoy and nudged him.

"Meet me in the common room in fifteen minutes, so we can finish talking."

"You're going to help me," Malfoy said, somewhat amazed.

"I might." And she left to grab a quick snack.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 7

After the Battle of Hogwarts, Hermione and several of her classmates return to complete their N.E.W.T.s. Draco Malfoy is among them. Draco has decided he is no longer welcome in the Wizarding world, so he looks to the only Muggle-born he knows to help him learn about the Muggle world. During their "Muggle Studies", Hermoine tries to talk him into staying. Will he stay or leave in the end?

This is canon through DH, but I have made some changes mostly involving the relationships and completely ignoring the epilogue. There is a slight bit of OOC, because how else will Malfoy fall for Hermoine? Contains DH spoilers.

Malfoy arrived in the common room twenty minutes later to find Hermione in the same chair she had sat in earlier. She was staring into the fire and did not hear him approach.

"Still trying to decide whether or not I am worth redemption," he drawled.

"No, I have already decided that you just might be. I am trying to decide the best way to start," she said.

She turned to look at him after she said that. The look on his face was one of amazement.

"I really didn't expect you to say yes," he said. Stunned by her willingness to help, he sat down in the chair across from her. "Why are you so willing to help me?"

"I guess it is because of your mother."

"Just because she said a few nice things? That doesn't make any sense," Malfoy said, while shaking his head.

"No, it was not what she said, but what she did."

He looked confused. What had his mother done to make a difference in this girl's mind?

"I still don't understand."

"She saved Harry, and in turn saved us all. I am sure some people think she did that just to help you, and maybe she did, but if she hadn't, where would we all be? I would most certainly be dead. You would be following Voldemort in a quest to kill off Muggles. For that reason, and because I believe in a second chance, I will help you. I feel like we owe it to her."

"I... I guess; wow, even I never looked at it that way."

Hermione shrugged and said, "No one did, really. People don't take into account, that one small act may have changed the course of the war. It changed everything for your family. Had Harry failed after that, I am sure your family would have been punished along with the rest of the so-called blood-traitors. Since he succeeded, you and your family were pardoned.

"I am sure a lot of people will think I am crazy for helping you, and when I tell them why, they still won't understand."

A dark look crossed his face.

"You can't tell anyone," he pleaded. "If they find out, I will be dead."

"Who? I thought you just wanted to disappear," she said, concern filling her voice.

"I do, but there have been threats. Not many, just a few. I don't even know if they are serious."

"Well, then you report them and let the Ministry deal with it."

"Uh, yeah, I can see the Aurors dropping everything to help a former Death Eater, especially one who caused Dumbledore's death," he drawled. The Malfoy smirk reappearing on his face

"You were cleared, surely they will help you."

Malfoy laughed. "You know, I never thought you would be this naïve. They all feel like I deserve to be punished. Even you do... or did."

She tried to deny this, but he was right. Just yesterday she was thinking similar things. "How can you be so sure?"

"I can read it on your face. Yesterday at lunch, every one of you had the same look. I have seen it daily since I was acquitted. I can't change everyone's perception of me. It isn't even worth trying. I only hope to be able to survive long enough to graduate and leave.

"I can't honestly say I am looking forward to it. It may be the most difficult thing I ever do, but it is necessary if I want to live a life of any kind. The only other option I have is to lock myself away.

"I know I said that I hated you. I probably even thought that I did myself. I know deep down I never really did. I may have taunted and tortured you because of your lineage, but I don't think I did it out of hate. I did what was expected of me.

"Truth is, I think it was because I was intimidated by you. You never seemed to be afraid of me, no matter what I did to you. When you smacked me in third year, I actually was afraid of you for a while. I could sense those intense feelings of hatred you had. Feelings that strong never just go away. I just want you to know I am sorry. I can't change who I was back then, but I hope to be able to become a better person, even if it means becoming a Muggle."

The students that had returned to complete their unfinished year were settling nicely into a routine. Most spent the mornings reading and reviewing course work. After lunch they practiced the practical aspects of their classes. Evenings were devoted to question and answer sessions from the other professors along with instructions in Charms, Potion and DADA.

Since McGonagall was overseeing their reviews, she was always available to help with Transfiguration. Most of the students were surprised to see that she kept up with most of the rest of the subjects as well.

Malfoy arrived every morning while his classmates were at breakfast. He was always the first to their shared classroom. He rarely spoke unless asked a question, though he seemed to relax when studying with Hermione. The only professor that would even look him in the eye when he spoke was McGonagall.

At lunch, he would grab a sandwich and then go outside to sit and eat, alone. If the weather was bad, he would read in the library. He joined the school for dinner. He sat at a table with a group of young Slytherins. On occasion, he would stay late to study in the library before returning to the Manor.

Working at their own pace definitely agreed with Hermione. By the end of the first week, she was already two weeks ahead of most of her peers. Malfoy and she had reached an acceptance of each other. He was still quiet around the other classmates, though he did speak periodically to her about class work.

Harry and Ron had both written back to her after her second letter. She told them both that she and Malfoy had reached a mutual agreement to help each other study. She didn't tell them what they would be studying. She promised Malfoy she would keep it to herself, and for now, she would.

Ron, of course, wanted her to stay as far away from 'the stinking ferret' as she could get. Honestly, they were adults now. He really needed to start acting like one.

Harry's letter was different to what she had expected. He told her that everyone needed someone to help them and be their friend, even if it was Malfoy. He was proud she could see past the bias everyone held towards Malfoy and his family. Well, at least one of her friends had matured.

Friday evening as she was leaving the library, she saw Malfoy sitting alone at one of the tables near the Restricted Section.

"Malfoy."

He looked up to see her standing next to him.

"I thought maybe tomorrow, we could meet to discuss the project you are working on."

He raised an eyebrow at her attempt at being subtle. He glanced around and noticed several students staring in their direction.

"Of course. What do you have in mind?"

"Well, why don't you meet me tomorrow at the Three Broomsticks, say ten o'clock?"

"Sure."

"And Malfoy, I brought you this for homework."

She leaned down to slide him a copy of a Muggle magazine called GQ. Lowering her voice, she said quietly, "I thought maybe this might help you to dress the part for our lesson."

She stood up, and with a smirk to rival any of Malfoy's, left the library.

Hermione was waiting out in front of the Three Broomsticks when Malfoy arrived. He was dressed like he walked off the pages of GQ. She stifled a laugh.

"Granger."

"Morning, Malfoy. I see you did your homework, though the dragon hide boots are not quite Muggle."

"Funny, I never knew you had a sense of humor. I did not need your magazine to learn how to dress. I am perfectly capable of doing that on my own."

"Yes, you look every bit a teenaged Muggle. All the boys your age dress like self-centered, vain pretty boys."

"I have seen Muggle London before. I have seen them dressed like this."

He was wearing crisp, black trousers with a sharp crease down the front and black. A black dragon hide belt to match his boots. His shirt was charcoal grey and would not look out of place on eighteenth century royalty.

"Yes, some people dress this way, if they are going out to a fancy dinner or a semi-formal party, but not for everyday wear. This," waving her hand up and down his body, "is why we are going shopping, and if you are a good boy maybe a little treat after," she said with a smile.

He allowed her to Apparate him to the Leaky Cauldron. From there they went to some stores on Regent St. and Oxford St. to purchase some jeans and shirts that were more appropriate for the culture he was hoping to adopt. She had even managed to talk him into a pair of trainers that were named for some Greek god he had once read about. They stopped by Harrods to pick up some slacks, dress shirts and shoes that better fit his personality and upbringing.

It was nearly four hours since they had arrived in London, and Malfoy's stomach was grumbling angrily. He should not have skipped breakfast this morning. Hermione was off to buy one last thing, and she had said they could grab a bite to eat before they headed off to something called a matinee.

They had lunch at a small café that Hermione said served excellent soup. She was right. Before he knew it, he was standing in front of a movie theatre, while Hermione quietly tried to explain what exactly it was.

"A movie is a series of individual pictures. When these images are shown in rapid succession, a viewer has the illusion that the motion is occurring directly in front of them."

The look of confusion on Malfoy's face prompted her to explain in simpler terms.

"Think wizard photography with a story."

That he seemed to understand.

"What is the purpose of a movie?"

"Purpose. I suppose it would be entertainment. Many Muggles go out to watch movies with friends or loved ones. Some even go when on a date. Usually they will go to dinner first. My parents go almost every Saturday night, date night."

"Is that what this is, a date?" He said with a hint of sarcasm.

"No, Malfoy. This is a lesson. Someday you may actually want to take a guy or girl to see a movie as a date. I wanted you to be prepared."

"A guy?"

"Well, I don't know anything about you or your sexual preference, so it would be unfair to assume something."

Damn, she is getting good with that smirk.

"Fine, what is this movie about?"

"Oh, well, I picked out... well, I have been wanting to see this one since I heard it was coming out. I read the book once when I was younger, and I just love the story. It was written by Alexandre Dumas, and two of my favourite actors are in it."

"Don't tell me, 'The Three Musketeers.'"

"You have heard of Dumas?"

"My mother read me some of his stories when she was still trying to teach me to be tolerant of others."

Hermione laughed, "Well, I promise not to tell anyone about your mom forcing you to endure Muggle literature. And no, not 'The Three Musketeers.' I have already seen that one. I have it on video."

"Video?"

"Never mind. That is a lesson for another day. Today we are watching 'Man in the Iron Mask.'"

Malfoy did not learn much about Muggle culture, but he did enjoy the movie. It was amazing to see the entire story play out before his eyes. He also liked the fact that for two hours not a single person glared at him.

He lost himself in the story. He forgot his problems and his worries. He was beginning to understand the simple pleasure of the moviegoing experience. It had been a long time since he simply enjoyed anything.

For the last ten years, he was always trying to prove himself to someone. First his father, then to Harry Potter and his friends, his fellow Slytherins, the Dark Lord, Snape, Dumbledore. The list seemed endless. The more he thought about it, the more he realized he had given most of his childhood up to please everyone else.

Hermione walked quietly beside him on their way back to the Leaky Cauldron. Malfoy was lost in thought, and she was unsure whether or not that was a good thing.

"Malfoy, I know you didn't learn much today, but I thought that maybe you should just experience something Muggle. I guess I just want to make sure that you really want to do this."

"Yes, I really want this. I know it is not going to be easy. Today, I was myself for the first time in a very long time. No one stared, glared or cared that I was Draco Malfoy. I was just another shopper. I needed today. Thank you."

A/N: Thanks to sempra for giving me a virtual shopping tour of London and for being a wonderful Beta.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of 7

After the Battle of Hogwarts, Hermione and several of her classmates return to complete their N.E.W.T.s. Draco Malfoy is among them. Draco has decided he is no longer welcome in the Wizarding world, so he looks to the only Muggle-born he knows to help him learn about the Muggle world. During their "Muggle Studies", Hermione tries to talk him into staying. Will he stay or leave in the end?

This is canon through DH, but I have made some changes mostly involving the relationships and completely ignoring the epilogue. Contains DH spoilers.

A/N: J.K. Rowling owns it all; I am merely manipulating it in a way that pleases me.

Hermione slowly made her way back to the castle. Her thoughts drifted to Malfoy... no, Draco. After spending the day with him, she realized that she could no longer refer to him as Malfoy.

He was just Draco, a boy trying to make his own way in the world. He went from spoiled brat to frightened orphan in a matter of months. It didn't matter that he was of age. No one deserved to have their parents taken from them that early in life. Harry hadn't and neither did Draco.

The castle was just beginning to come into view when Hermione realized that there was no school tomorrow and Draco would be home alone. She was worried for her new friend.

Wait, she thought, did I just refer to Draco as a friend? Ron is sooo going to kill me.

Draco Apparated back to Malfoy Manor. He looked up at the dark house and sighed. He knew the next thirty-six hours were going to be very long. He had very little

homework left to distract him from the memories of the last two years.

Sighing softly, he reached down and opened the front doors. The manor was very quiet and cold. A fine layer of dust had settled along all the surfaces of the dark wood furnishings.

There were no pleasant fires or wonderful aromas to greet him as there had been in the past. There were no warm greetings welcoming him home or inquiring about his day from the many Malfoy elves. Most had been killed when the Dark Lord had taken over the manor. The few that had managed to survive were freed by Draco shortly after Lucius died.

Only Nana remained, and she would be waiting for him in the guest house. Draco had tried to make her leave with the rest, but she'd stubbornly refused. Even after she was given clothes, she'd stayed claiming that she would never abandon her young master.

Every night Draco returned home, he would venture to the main house and up to his parents' bedroom. His mother's clothes still held her perfume. His father's cloak was draped across the footboard. He ran his hands across the duvet, stooping to pick up his father's cane.

Lying down on the bed, he began to tell his parents about his day, a habit he started just after going back to Hogwarts. He couldn't explain why he did it. Lucius and Narcissa barely spoke to him on a daily basis before, and yet he still felt as though they would want to know him now. Maybe it was just so he didn't feel so alone in the world.

Draco told them all about his excursion into Muggle London. He explained where he went shopping and everything Hermione had told him about the moving picture show they had gone to. The later in the evening it got, the more his words began to get softer until he slowly drifted off to sleep.

Draco woke in the early hours of the following morning to a frantic elf bouncing on top of him.

"Master Draco, Master Draco. Nana was so very worried. You not come home this night."

Narcissa Malfoy was a true Pureblood witch. So when it came to raising the Malfoy heir, she passed the responsibility off to the elves. Zaina was chosen for the task.

Zaina was relatively new to the Malfoy family, but she had experience raising children. Lucius had acquired her, along with several other more important items, in some shady back alley deal he had made with a gullible Davy Gudgeon.

Zaina instantly fell for the small infant with the fuzzy blond head. To some it appeared as if the little elf was just doing her assigned task in caring for the boy. But she knew it was more than that. She fell in love with him from the moment she saw him.

She moved into the nursery the first night, setting up a small pallet for herself in the bottom of the closet. She fed him, changed him, played with him and even taught him to talk and walk. The only time she was not with him was when one of the elder Malfoys would come and parade him in front of some important witch or wizard.

She saw his first steps, his first smile and heard his first word, Nana. The little wizard was trying to call out to her and had a hard time saying Zaina. The nickname stuck, and she was forever known by the boy as Nana.

Few others in the house ever called her by the name the boy had given her. Narcissa on occasion addressed her as such. When she came to read stories to him or to see if he was well, she called her that. The boy always seemed to smile proudly when she was addressed by the name he had given her.

The few times she encountered Lucius in the nursery, he did not speak to her. He simply allowed her to pass him the baby before sweeping from the room, only to return several minutes later to place a crying infant securely in her arms before leaving again.

Because she was favored by the boy, the rest of the elves in residence resented her. She was never punished or told to punish herself. She was allowed more freedoms than the others so that she may keep a constant eye on Draco. She learned to read, write and do arithmetic in order to help him with his studies.

The only elf that would speak to her was Dobby, but then the others all thought him to be a little strange as well. He proved them correct when he disobeyed their Masters' orders to help Harry Potter and wound up getting clothes. All the elves in residence were forced by Lucius to punish themselves for Dobby's crimes. Except Zaina. The boy never permitted her to punish herself.

She and the boy moved into the guest house after the fall of the Dark Lord. The boy claimed to want more freedom, and his parents permitted him. The elves knew the boy was trying to put as much distance between himself and his father as possible.

It was in the guest house that Nana had paced and worried all night when her young master failed to return home. He had told her of the threats, and she had seen the Howlers that came almost daily to him.

Draco looked at his little elf as a small smile crossed his face. His little elf always worried more than necessary about him. It was going to be hard to leave his little friend.

"My apologies, Nana. I fell asleep. I did not mean to cause you worry. I will join you in the guest house for breakfast as soon as I freshen up."

"Very good, Master Draco. On the terrace this morning?"

"Yes, that will be nice for a change."

Nana nodded and disappeared back to the guest house to prepare breakfast. Draco looked around his parents' room one last time before heading towards the door.

He made his way back to his own house and began his morning ablutions. After showering, he grabbed a pair of black breeches from the wardrobe and a white button down shirt. Dressing quickly, he pulled on his tall boots and headed for the terrace.

Once seated, Nana joined him as she did most mornings. The food was light: toast, fruit and cheeses. His little elf always seemed to know what he was in the mood for. He asked her about the affairs of the estate. Most of her current duties involved acting as the main caretaker of the manor. He told her about his trip into Muggle London.

It would amuse a great deal of people to see a Malfoy and an elf sharing a delicious breakfast and conversation. To Draco, it didn't seem that odd. This is how his life was. He grew up with Nana as his constant companion. She knew more about him than any other person in this world.

He excused himself from the table and headed out to the stables. A day spent in silent companionship with his horse seemed like a good idea. Riding his favorite horse through a series of courses always helped to clear his head, his only thoughts on the jumps and strides in between.

This was another of his well-guarded secrets. His time spent out here. Few people outside of his family knew of his passion for riding. His father tolerated it, as it was seen as a gentlemen's sport, however he had preferred him to partake in fox hunting instead of jumping. Draco had just ignored his subtle prompts to get him to join in the hunts.

To him, it was more personal. Something he had never shared with his parents. In his fourth year, after the imposter Moody had turned him into a ferret, Draco became obsessed with learning what, if anything, his Animagus form was.

He had succeeded in finding out in his fifth year. Turned out the rumors had been wrong. He was actually an arctic fox. Fox hunting didn't much appeal to him after that. He had yet to completely transform, only attempting when Nana was close by, just in case.

He let his thoughts trail as he began to adjust the course into a new configuration. He changed the spread on the Oxer, adjusted a few of the cross rails so that they formed a triple bar and checked the poles in the standards to make sure they were resting properly. Of the twenty-three jumps on the course, he had designed, painted and built every one. He was proud of his achievement.

In just a few moments, he would tack up his horse and enjoy the total freedom from his thoughts as he soared from jump to jump. He would be at peace for the next thirty minutes or so. Reality and the real world could wait until tomorrow.

A/N: Thanks to my wonderful beta for her support and guidance.