

Assimilation

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Books became Draco's gateway between the world that disowned him and the world he did not understand. Multiple drabble format ~ 100 * 24 = 2400 Words

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N:.. Entry for the weekly *dracoharry100* challenge "Books"; 24 drabbles total, 100 words each.

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Assimilation

Draco's hand shook. The dark fluid looked ominous under the harsh fluorescence of the kitchen light.

He felt Harry's fingers on his wrist, steadying the tremor and providing the sorely needed courage; lips bitten between teeth, he squeezed.

A drop of brown liquid made its fall, tainting the soft purity underneath. It spread, a network of bluish capillaries that pulsated like the Dark Mark under *Morsmodre*.

"Isn't that bad, is it?" Harry's voice was low and soothing.

Draco nodded.

Harry smiled as he returned the iodide to the First Aid cabinet and tossed the used potato into the rubbish bin.

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The idea had repulsed Draco initially.

He was a pure-blood, a promising Potions master; he refused to venture into Muggle Sciences, no matter what employment opportunities they could offer.

Harry had said nothing, but Apparated both to the gates of the former Malfoy Manor. It was surrounded with wards that blinked "Ministry Property" whenever a trespasser, or its previous owner, attempted to enter. He then seized Draco's forearm, a silent reminder of what hid under the warm hand.

It was cruel, but nothing compared to what could have been, what he had seen in the mansion before him.

He yielded.

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Harry came home with a mountain of books. As he hauled them up the stairs, he was greeted by a confused Draco, who could not fathom his negligence in using magic. He blushed and stammered over a tendency to detach magical from Muggle habits.

Draco demanded a reason. He couldn't answer.

That evening, as he guided Draco through the iodine experiment, he realized only actions mattered in the Muggle world; no incantations guaranteed success, nothing could be earned without blood and sweat.

He held his still shaken lover, wishing to share the fear of being exiled from the wizarding world.

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Draco used the spell *Wingardium Leviosa* and a Shielding Charm on the books before he brought them to the coffee shop around the corner. Soon, however, he fell in love with the way the heavy spine weighed on his thighs, the scent of fresh paper and its glossy smoothness that the spells deprived his senses of. He had giggled like a child the first time he spilled coffee on the pages and wished afterwards that there had been no witnesses. He would not have hesitated to cast *Avada Kedavra* on them.

As Harry had predicted, chemistry was his favourite subject.

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Harry became accustomed to finding Draco curled up on the sofa, absorbed in the text on his lap.

Draco had always been an avid reader; he had also been an animated one, his expression and movements mirroring the morphing illustrations before his eyes. These days his face remained still, his hand a motionless, firm extension of the book.

It was as if the stationary images on the page painted a permanent sanctuary that had no place in reality; it harboured him and brought him peace.

Sometimes, amidst the calm, Draco would fall asleep.

Harry would find him a soft blanket.

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As Draco copied the hexagons and zigzags from the book with painstaking precision, he remembered Professor Snape and wondered whether the Potions master knew Muggle sciences. For every molecule was his reflection—scrupulous and simple on paper, yet wondrously complex and unpredictable in actuality.

His favourite reaction, one he would love to see someday, was the fusion between sodium and water. The two had such an affinity, such a strong will to bond, that one tore apart the other to do so; sparks flew everywhere as it went.

He wondered if Harry would be willing to watch with him.

* * * * *

It was the small things Harry had first noticed.

A hand that absentmindedly flipped the light switch on the lamp rather than reaching for the wand to cast *Lumos*; notes amidst a sea of carbon chains and phenol rings written with a ballpoint pen; a book band left tied on his bicycle, still holding a textbook or two.

In the next shopping trip, he purchased a spectral reading light and replaced the golden Post-it pad with Draco's favourite green.

He also brought home a new bicycle and invited Draco to join him for a ride over the weekend.

Draco agreed.

* * * * *

Draco's first visit to a chemistry lab was accompanied by someone he'd thought he would never meet; Dr. Granger came to introduce him to a friend, a professor at a local university.

He could not utter a word. He wasn't sure what was more terrifying, the Muggles, who were looking at him with interest, or the army of gigantic electric machines, humming as they spun and spurt.

The professor just smiled. On the notepad, he began to draw the reactions, a mosaic of elements, structures and arrows that Draco knew so well.

Serenity restored, the blond set off to work.

* * * * *

The first time Draco misplaced his wand occurred on a Saturday.

Like other weekends, Harry opened his eyes to find Draco leaning on the pillow, a book propped against his thighs. Except that day, the blond was almost sniffing the paper; grey eyes strained to distinguish the text before him.

The truth was soon uncovered; Draco couldn't cast a vision recovery charm without his wand.

Harry offered his spectacles; with a pink blush, Draco muttered they were not strong enough. That afternoon was spent in an optometrist appointment and the mightiest effort not to laugh.

Draco wore spectacles ever since.

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Beady eyes stared, little mouths agape, as Draco closed the book, the hardcover levelling with a puff of dust.

Awakened by the faint *plop*, the young audience began to stir; Draco's vision was suddenly flooded with chubby arms, his ears drenched with "Why?"s and "How?"s.

For the first time, Draco could not distinguish wizards from Muggle-borns.

He answered them one by one and ended the story hour by playacting the hero. Amidst the children's giggles, he found Harry grinning at him.

He glared, but all malice was lost in the sweet "Bye bye, Draco"s that resonated in the library room.

* * * * *

A stray dog's barking startled Harry from his uneasy sleep. The room was dark.

Draco was late again; the blond had been working long hours, waiting until the streets were void of people before heading home. Volunteering at the library had opened him up slightly, but he remained mostly withdrawn, his heart fragile as the glassware he preferred as company.

Harry felt a wrapped package as he reached for his glasses. Soon he was blowing his nose at full volume above a book titled *Etiquette for Dummies*.

Manners be damned, for it was Draco's first purchase from a Muggle shop.

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Draco idly sketched nonsensical shapes in his lab notebook, heaving a bored sigh at the polymer that refused to dry.

He looked into the brisk dusk of September, his thoughts returning to Hogwarts where all he needed was a drying spell.

He didn't notice when his doodle began to morph into words. They told the story of he and Harry when they were children, innocent as those he'd read to. It began with Harry's introduction to the wizarding world.

Feeling his energy drained for the day, he scribbled an unimaginative title above the writing.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

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Harry found it worrisome that Draco was taking lab notes at home. The peace that had taken so long to attain had vanished, gnawed away like the cap of ballpoint pens, trodden by the endless pacing around the house.

Draco also demanded details about his early adventures with the Gryffindors. The reticent weariness that had come to define the blond gave way to a hint of haughty impatience that Harry had known so well.

He wanted to ask what was happening, but he missed the animated drawl, the eye rolls, even the disdainful question tags.

He indulged in them instead.

* * * * *

That year, Draco presented Harry's birthday gift as a stack of photocopies; bordered by diagrams of chemical reactions was the tale about a boy who was transported to a new world, who conquered the unknown with love and friendship. It was playful and above all, filled with courage and optimism.

Unable to detach himself from the pages, Harry read the chapters to a mesmerized audience in the library. The children wanted to know what happened next, whether there was indeed a Hogwarts.

Before Harry could answer, Draco interjected.

He said the wizarding world was whatever one imagined it to be.

* * * * *

Harry didn't dare to breathe as Draco, Glamoured as a woman, answered the questions with a cool politeness that only Malfoys could muster.

The literary agent could barely conceal his excitement; he inquired about Draco's background and how the plot was conceived.

The responding voice wavered ever so slightly. The author claimed she was a single mother, her family one she would build someday; the story had come to life when she was waiting for a train.

Harry closed his eyes. He remembered their last time at a train station.

King's Cross.

It was the day the former Draco died.

* * * * *

Draco wrote.

Harry on paper was exactly like Harry his lover courageous, kind, and occasionally, a stubborn git.

His conquest of Lord Voldemort was described in as much detail as Draco could gather from the brunet, who, despite being ill at ease at the prospect that the tales would soon become public knowledge, could not help sharing his past with Draco.

Draco on paper was no different from his true self either. He had thought about shedding a better light on himself, of course, until he realized one thing.

These books, despite their titles, would be Draco Malfoy's memoir.

* * * * *

Like every morning in the past few years, Harry fed the eagle owl and placed the delivery in a corner of their bedroom.

Goyle had written Draco everyday. His wording was pained, his script uneven, yet he never failed to send the same message. That he was sorry. That he should have kept his mouth shut.

That he shouldn't have told Skeeter about Harry and Draco.

Draco never even glanced at the pile of scrolls when Harry was around; yet everyday, before retiring for the night, Harry would notice the ribbon on the latest delivery shifted slightly in position.

* * * * *

The text had lengthened, veering to describe every detail of the magical world. It dragged like the feet of one who was soon to leave his homeland forever, eyes lingering on the scenes to consolidate them into memory.

The weight pained Harry, but nothing like those "minute omissions" Draco had mentioned almost too airily.

He should have seen it coming when Draco chose his perspective.

The missing detail was Draco himself. Draco simply faded into background as the story progressed, as if the blond wanted to obliterate his own existence before others could.

That night, Harry cried himself to sleep.

* _ * _ * _ *

Harry only asked what Draco had wanted all along. Further questions were quelled by sealed lips and hands that pushed the brunet against the sofa before shedding the clothes to expose their hearts.

The manuscript fell; paper fluttered like snowflakes on that autumn evening in their fifth year at Hogwarts, when the two bodies had first fused into one.

He claimed Harry with the same need, same passion. Harry screamed his release, the words silent yet vociferous as the capitalized writing in the background, white as the frosted grass by the Black Lake.

It was then Draco reclaimed his destiny.

* _ * _ * _ *

It was the way it should have been.

Harry would be the conqueror, loved and respected, who would then build a family and live a happily ever after.

He would not be ostracized and finally relegated to an outcast by defending his lover, to whom the public had shifted the blame and humiliated by stripping everything he owned. The hero would not have to leave the world he had saved for one individual, who was never deemed worthy.

It would be the way everyone remembered.

Draco might not be in the picture, but he didn't mind.

He *created* that picture.

* _ * _ * _ *

Draco had declared the novels' completion with a felt tip on the marble surface where he had written the final word.

Harry was about to criticize his ways when Draco pressed his fingers against his lips and whispered, "See it as a tombstone."

That evening, Draco stuffed the manuscript in a cardboard box, crumpled the notes and threw them all into the fireplace. When he dropped the box in the attic, he remarked the publishing date would be within six months, as he didn't feel like editing.

His voice quivered; then, after all these years, his tears began to fall.

* _ * _ * _ *

July 20th, 2007. 11:30pm

Draco squeezed through the crowd to enter the convenience store; he grabbed five Mars bars and managed to clear most of the coins in his pocket as he paid for them.

"Did you drive the cashier crazy?" Harry asked as he tore open the wrapper; he then tilted his head towards the extra sweets Draco was hiding in the pouch of his hooded sweater. "Another three for later?"

"Goyle," Draco responded, voice muffled with chocolate, "you have no idea "

He bumped into someone wearing a witch's hat. She glared at him.

"Sorry." He winked.

* _ * _ * _ *

July 20th, 2007. 11:59pm

Draco held his hand tightly as they watched the countdown at the storefront from across the street; he had become quiet as the time closed. For once, Harry hoped he knew Legilimency.

The assimilation was complete. It just wasn't how he'd imagined it to be.

It was even better.

"This is perfect." He sighed.

Draco shook his head, his blond hair fluttering in the summer breeze. "Not quite," he whispered as he reached into his jeans, "I just need one more thing."

He retrieved a small box and turned to face Harry.

"Would you marry me?"

* _ * _ * _ *

July 21st, 2007. 12:00am

The pavement was flooded with wizards, their flushed faces vivid with the brilliant illumination from the shop. They screamed and cheered, embracing one another as shouts of congratulations and well wishes filled the air.

Across the street, under the dim street lamp, a man in an oversized T-shirt was nodding to his blond companion, who subsequently threw his arms around his shoulders and their lips locked into a deep kiss. The arms then lowered to hold the well-worn jeans, and soon the first Muggle was laughing as he twirled in the air.

Nobody even noticed.

- *Finis*