

The Chocolate War

by pokeystar

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at dramione_awards, round 3.

First Shot Over the Bow

Chapter 1 of 8

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Part one: First Shot Over the Bow

Draco was passing Granger's desk on his way to the archives when he spotted a tiny flash of silver marring its pristine surface. Without a thought to consequences, his hand snaked out and grasped the shiny, oddly shaped object by the tip, taking care to avoid damaging the fragile looking tissue paper banner peeking out from the wrapper. *Did Granger **label** her chocolate? No, the tiny blue writing said*HERSHEY'S*, not* HERMIONE*.* A moment later, it was safe in his pocket.

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How could something so tiny be so... so... full of joy? So deeply satisfying? So fantastically delectable? It occurred to Draco suddenly that Dumbledore's fascination with Muggle sweets had not been the deplorable eccentricity of an old fool, but rather the passionate hobby of the most brilliant wizard in history.

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The librarian of the Ministry archives eyed him askance upon his third fact-checking trip that morning. After his fifth visit, Draco discovered a slip of parchment with

Creevey's Floo address on it, tucked in the file on toaster oven mishaps. *No more excursions to the archives today for you, Malfoy.* He shuddered at the thought of dating Potter's former most ardent groupie and current Ministry librarian. *As if.* Aside from being straight, he did have standards.

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It was a bit of a gratuitous detour, but Granger's desk was now *technically* on the way to the break room. He hoped the frequent coffee runs didn't lead the water cooler to believe he wanted a snog. It did try to engage him in conversation occasionally. And he was a Malfoy; irresistibility was an inherited trait.

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This escapade was verging on the ridiculous. He had ingested so much coffee that he sloshed when he walked. Was that luscious morsel a one-time fluke? The broad, unspoiled surface of the She-devil's efficient domain mocked the thin thread of hope still beating in his chest. Draco considered the possibility that Granger was torturing him on purpose.

Well, two could play that game.

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A/N: [Hershey's kisses are an American treat, click here for the info.](#)

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 1 prompt: stolen kiss.

Water Cooler Skirmish

Chapter 2 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at [dramione_awards](#), round 3.

Part two: Water Cooler Skirmish

Draco drew back his office chair to sit at his desk and froze, his pureblooded yet muscled derriere hovering above the pale green stain-resistant naugahyde.

He had to be hallucinating. Or maybe it was a dream. *Ow.* That pinching charm **really** hurt. *No, not a hallucination. Nor a dream, either.* The tempting little silver wrapped morsel was still there, perched on top of a stack of precariously listing file folders. The stack of precariously listing file folders that belonged in the archives. The archives, a place he intended to avoid until the Dark Lord's triumphant return from microscopic dust. *As if.* Draco snorted derisively. The teasing tidbit's tissue paper banner wavered in the resultant breeze, enticing Draco to indulge. He eyed the permissive candy with both impassioned longing and paranoid apprehension. *Where did you come from... Did you know I was looking for you, pining for you?* The chocolate did not answer. *I thought you liked Granger better than me.* The confection's foil coat prevented it from melting under the brilliance of Malfoy's pout. *Fine. Be that way.*

Draco resolved to ignore the fickle little slag and concentrated on his work. For five whole minutes. Until he realized his own mother would have him committed for conversing with a foodstuff. No matter how delectable. Oh gads, hadn't great great uncle Algernon been carted off to St. Mungo's after he tried to marry a treacle tart he named Eliza? No standards, either. Only nutters and unstable Gryffindors liked treacle. *Well.* He was sane. He would just eat the damn thing and be done with it. *Out of sight, out of mind.* The unintended pun made Draco cringe.

He gingerly reached for the bit of silver in an effort to preserve the leaning tower of archival folders. The chocolate shivered violently, blew a raspberry with its blue on white banner and launched itself toward the ceiling, hovering near one of the overhead candles. Ignoring the toppled folders, Draco gaped in astonishment at the frisky sweet bobbing above him in a taunting manner. He had just decided not to go after it when the candy hurtled down from the ceiling and bounced against the crown of his head repeatedly, leaving pointy impressions in his stiffly gelled coiffure. The confection floated just beyond reach before his eyes and snapped its banner straight so that Malfoy could read its message: TAG! YOU'RE IT.

Draco lunged for the chocolate and then ran after it, as the confection led him on a merry chase through the maze of cubicles inhabiting the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Department. He zipped by Granger's empty desk, straining for a glimpse of the elusive morsel. He was very near the break room when he paused to catch his breath and wondered why he had given chase at all. *Malfoys never pursue confectionery.* Algernon was the exception that proved the rule.

A shiny miniscule foil-covered object hovered over him and then darted into the break room. *Seeker instinct.* Draco impulsively followed. And burst noisily into the break room, disturbing Hermione Granger's quiet reading teatime.

Draco glanced at her irritated visage, muttered an insincere, "Sorry," and searched the room for his target. *Where has it gone?* He knew it came in here. *A-ha!* He finally spied it, sitting on top of the water cooler. It hadn't noticed him yet. *Or is pretending not to.* Draco stalked toward the infuriating little snack, intending to pounce.

"Malfoy, what **are** you doing?"

He froze. Keeping the candy firmly in his sight, he made a shushing motion toward the inquisitive pain in his arse.

Irritated further by that condescending gesture, Hermione opened her mouth, and then shut it abruptly, having followed Malfoy's gaze to the water cooler.

"Malfoy, why are you stalking Frank?"

The candy had a name? The water cooler bubbled nervously, as if clearing its throat. Draco looked at Hermione in puzzlement.

"Who is Frank?"

Granger rolled her eyes. "Only you, Malfoy. Been here, what? Three years, is it? And you still don't know the water cooler's name? One would think differently, the amount of time you spend in here."

"That's alright, Ms. Granger, " Frank giggled. "Mr. Malfoy is quite busy, I'm sure."

"Frank, " Hermione huffed. "What **are** you on about? It's not okay. You said yourself you wanted more respect!"

Uninterested, Draco recommenced stalking his prey.

Frank bubbled alarmedly and then exclaimed, "Mr. Malfoy, I'm sorry. Really. I won't do it again. I promise. I hardly ever gossip like that!"

What is that blasted cooler nattering on about? And then it sunk in. "You are the Frank that Zabini is always crowing about? His best source, as I recall." Draco stared at Frank with Avada-like intensity.

Little beads of moisture appeared on Frank's bottle-head and dripped uncomfortably down his rectangular metal torso. "I... might have told Mr. Zabini that you are a poofter and that Colin Creevey is your bit of fluff."

Hermione's helpless laughter rang in Draco's ears as he lunged at Frank, intent on bodily harm.

Frank had two things to be grateful for, as it turned out. One, that Malfoy did not have his wand with him, and two, the spirited Kiss launched itself into the air, engaging Draco's Seeker instinct. And Hermione Granger's undivided attention.

"Hey! That's MY Kiss! It went missing from my desk yesterday. Viktor owled it to me from America!"

"No it isn't, Granger," A distracted Draco replied. "I ate that one already."

"You! You! Kiss thief! This one should be mine, then!" Hermione pulled at his arms ineffectually, jumping to reach the bobbing chocolate.

Suddenly, the confection skidded sideways a short distance and dropped like stone to the floor. Hermione and Draco both dove for it and tripped over each other instead. Falling hard, Draco managed to twist around, landing on his nicely padded rump. Hermione landed seconds later, her face now intimately acquainted with the Malfoy family jewels (the only ones the Ministry had been unable to claim in reparation), with the wind knocked out of her.

An amused chuckle drew Draco's scattered attention to the doorway.

"It's a good thing you like boys, Malfoy," Zabini drawled. "Otherwise, I'd have to report this as fraternization."



Commission by nanthimus

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A/N: Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 2 prompt: playful kiss.

Winner in the 7 Kisses "Funniest Kiss" category.



banner made by alexia_drake

Slytherin Skirmish

Chapter 3 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at dramione_awards, round 3.

Part Three: Slytherin Skirmish

Hermione Granger was miffed. It had been two days since the Break Room Incident, and her life had changed. Her work, which used to please her and make her feel useful, had become disorganized and filled with errors. Ernie Macmillan, her supervisor, had actually returned her report on toaster oven mishaps. Returned it! Covered in red ink! *What was wrong with her?* She frowned at one particularly irksome comment. The mishap in Surrey had not been cited properly. *This was intolerable.* Hermione chided herself. *Focus, Granger!* She wrote Colin an interoffice memo enquiring if Malfoy had returned the archival file yet and sent it off. There was no way she'd approach **him** directly. Everyone had enough to gossip about as it was. *Damn that Zabini!* Hermione paused, contemplating her irritation, prodding at it with uncertain approbation. Yes. That was why she was unsettled. *Off her game.* She detested gossip of any sort. Hermione liked information to be accurate at all times. That Malfoy certainly appeared to have at least one positively *huge* asset had nothing to do with it. Her eyes glazed slightly. At least, she hoped her observations were accurate. *Hoped?* What a repugnant thought. This was the pureblood prat, who had reviled her in school, who was rumored to be gay. Not that she listened to gossip. *Though, she was female, right?* She hadn't detected any... interest... *Oh, my.* It was that size... inert? *Repugnant, Granger.* Do not go there.

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Draco Malfoy was miffed. *No, that sounded a little... poncey.* He was upset, irked, thoroughly outraged. Two days since the Break Room Incident, and his life had changed. His work, haphazard at best, had become fraught with anxiety and extended outdoor smoke breaks. *So he didn't really smoke.* Everyone knew cigarettes were macho. And it was a convenient way to avoid Colin's distressingly frequent memos. *Damn Zabini!* Between his pervasive brand of gossip mongering and Creevey's winged missives of devotion (all of which sat untouched on the leaning tower of archival folders), the rumors concerning his sexual preferences had not died off, as hoped for.

Malfoy, being a Slytherin and protégé of Severus Snape, was not unduly worried about the Creevey situation. A bit of finesse and blackmail should clear the air quickly. What gave him pause were the infernally persistent thoughts of a certain curly-haired know-it-all. He could not possibly be attracted to that Muggleborn swot. *No matter how lush and perky that bottom looked.* He was actually grateful for Zabini's timely intervention. One minute more and Pinocchio would have made a new friend.

His father's expression of disappointment swam through his conscience. *Gay or half-blood grandchildren?* It was hard to say which would get him disinherited faster. Not that there was anything to inherit, thanks to the Ministry. *A lushly perky bottom and swotty little nippers would certainly make **him** happy.* Besides, a gay partner would insist on equal bathroom time. His decision made, he sauntered forth to find his good friend Zabini.

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Hermione Granger's day had progressed to the point where she wished a returned report was the worst of it. Her brain persisted in speculating on the length and girth of Malfoy's... special purpose. Colin had not received the toaster oven folder back. At lunch, Hermione overheard some Unspeakables discussing her and Malfoy as if they were a couple. *Ten? Eleven? Four?* She bit her lip in an effort to distract her relentless curiosity and threw herself back into her work.

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Naturally, Draco found him at the scene of the crime. In the Break Room with Frank. *The bloody git.* Zabini's grin of welcome was best described as shit-eating.

"So, how is Pinocchio taking the news that Geppetto is gay?"

"Damn Pansy Parkinson and her big mouth to the ninth circle of hell!"

Zabini's voice transformed into a screechy falsetto. "Oh, look, Drakie, he grows so **big** when you lie!"

Frank tittered uncertainly. He had not forgotten his recent narrow escape.

Draco's fake smile became chillingly feral. "Trading old school stories, are we? Did you tell Frank about the time my reverse Aguamenti emptied the lake?"

A trickle of water slid from Frank's nozzle to the tiled floor.

"Who knew the Giant Squid wore boxers, eh, Malfoy?" Zabini chuckled lightly, even as his eyes narrowed slightly.

"Ah, yes. Boxers. Hmmm... dear old Hogwarts. Oh, Frank, did Zabini tell you the story about Mad-Eye Moody's boxers?"

"Alright, Malfoy. What do you want from us?"

"Well, if you're sure Frank wouldn't like to hear that Moody story... " Draco paused politely. It had been two days, after all. "No? I find I'm rather tired of my new reputation. You two are going to set matters straight."

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A giggle from the next cubicle broke Hermione's concentration. A murmured, "Hush... she's right there," chased it away entirely.

"But I heard it's her and Malfoy**and** Creevey."

"Riddikulus!" Hermione huffed loudly and quickly retreated to the Break Room. Perhaps that spell worked on gossip as well as boggarts. It was definitely time for a quiet read and tea.

She entered the room, tossing a falsely cheery, "Hallo, Frank," the water cooler's way and settled into her favorite chair. She pulled a dog-eared copy of *The Awakening* out of her pocket as a cup of earl grey tea popped onto the nearby table, a chocolate Kiss nestled on the saucer. She opened the book to chapter thirty-one and had almost lost herself in Edna's disquietude when Frank burbled loudly, yanking her back to reality.

"Ms. Granger... " he began tentatively.

"Yes?" she enquired coolly.

"I'm really sorry about what I've heard today," Frank replied in a concerned tone. "Everyone seems to think Mr. Malfoy is using you callously. It isn't true is it? Nothing ever happened before?"

"Nothing has **ever** happened, Frank, " Hermione gritted out.

"Well, no. I suppose not. But I tried to tell people that and about the Kiss. And now it's all confused. No one blames you, of course. You are the helplessly naïve and inexperienced shy bookworm. Malfoy is the pureblood, ruthlessly experienced seducer. Everyone knows you would never pounce on a man, let alone in the workplace. Why, Colin Creevey defended you too! He said you would die an old maid before you'd lay a hand on a tasty morsel like Malfoy," Frank burbled consolingly. "Lavender Brown agreed. I think she nodded her head and said, 'Poor Hermione, books will be her comfort'."

"Pounce! Old maid!" Hermione sputtered. "Poor Hermione?!" She gulped down the earl grey and distractedly unwrapped the little Kiss. "I'm not... Comfort!" She popped the confection in her mouth and gnashed it to mush, swallowing before proclaiming, "I'll show them!"

She carefully pocketed her novella and stormed out of the Break Room, leaving behind a fluttering tissue paper banner. Its message read: LET HIM HAVE IT.

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Colin Creevey read Hermione's latest directive guised as an interoffice folder request and sighed. Merlin knew he had tried *and tried and tried* to encourage Malfoy to return those folders. *Well, this mountain will just have to go to the magician.* He tittered and then wandered in the direction of Malfoy's lair. Maybe he would get a date too.

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Draco had just picked up a book of matches, and was headed outside, when a mass of curly hair attached to a pleasingly curvy body pinned him to his desk. Suddenly recalling a vicious slap from third year, he leaned back apprehensively and scattered the archival folders all over the floor.

Hermione growled at him and climbed his body with the skill of a mountain goat. *Oh, shit. Oh, shit.* Granger looked pissed. Maybe the handprint would wear off by Easter. Maybe he shouldn't have coerced Frank into helping. He braced himself for the sting and the resultant swarm of stars. Granger grabbed his tie and yanked his head forward. She was strangling him! He couldn't breathe! He opened his mouth to plead for mercy.

"Grang... mmmph!"

Her lips mashed onto his with the jet-propelled force of a Blast-Ended Skrewt. It was awkward. Painful. And over much, much, *much* too soon. *Oh, look, stars.* His mind hummed contentedly, at one with the Universe.

Hermione clambered back down his body, adroitly avoiding a mostly wooden part of his anatomy. *Are you the Blue Fairy?* Draco willed Pinocchio not to embarrass him. *I want to be a real boy!*

Granger eyed him with smirking satisfaction and muttered, "Poor Hermione, ha!" She turned to leave and almost ran smack into a gaping Colin Creevey.

"You hussy," he breathed.

She smiled and then spotted the toaster oven file. She bent over from the waist, thrusting out her bum in the process. Draco whimpered behind her. Straightening with a snap, she purred, "Never mind the file, Colin. I have it now."

And her hips swayed as she sauntered away.

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A/N: In Dante's *Inferno*, the ninth circle of hell is occupied by traitors.

Bend and snap borrowed from "Legally Blonde."

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 3 prompt: angry kiss.

To Sleep, Perchance to <i>Wet</i> Dream...

Chapter 4 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at [dramione_awards](#), round 3.

Part Four: To Sleep, Perchance to *Wet* Dream

Frank struggled manfully to stay awake. It was late Friday afternoon at the Department of Misuse, and most everyone had gone home. Not that it made a difference to him. In addition to compelling him to lie so outrageously to Ms. Granger, Mr. Malfoy had insisted that neither he nor Mr. Zabini could spread share gossip information of any sort for three whole workdays. No small talk. No chitchat. No tête-à-têtes. No palaver. No gabfest. Frank was, frankly, bored out of his bottle.

Mr. Zabini suspected (rightly) that Mr. Malfoy didn't really care about their gossiping, but had elicited the agreement out of spite. Frank was inclined to agree, but hesitated to say so because he didn't know Mr. Malfoy that well and because he was forbidden to... speculate. Having ruminated on his intolerable situation once too often for his weary brain, Frank was caught by sleep unaware.

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"Hallo, Frank. How was your weekend?"

"Wonderful, Ms. Granger. There was some trouble with exploding toilet seats in Bath, so a squad of Aurors held a tactical meeting here in the break room."

"How exciting," Hermione replied.

"Well, a bit more than Friday, anyhow," burbled Frank with a wry twist of his cap ring.

"But less than Tuesday," Hermione teased.

"Err... yes... well," Frank gurgled. "Have a good read, Ms. Granger."

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After her break, Hermione returned to her desk and got right to work. She felt completely rested and exceptionally focused. It was as if Malfoy never existed. Had she known kissing him would be such an effective way to dissipate her irritation and keep him out of her hair, she would have started doing it years ago. *That third year at Hogwarts would have been much less tense.*

Hermione neatly stacked the new report and accompanying files in the outbox on her desk. They promptly vanished to the inbox on Ernie's desk in his office across the department. She reached over to take the paperwork out of her inbox and hesitated, spying the Kiss resting on top.

Viktor must have owled it to her. Hermione was looking forward to visiting with him and his wife in Paris the weekend next. Their friendly meetings were rare, due to his traveling schedule as coach of the Bulgarian team. She sometimes thought she preferred Serafina's company to Viktor's; they had much in common and Flooed each other often. Viktor teased both friend and wife, saying repeatedly that offerings of chocolate were the only way to retain either lady's fond regard. *He wasn't entirely wrong about that.*

Hermione chuckled and picked up the little candy. She read the message: OOO LA LA, and marveled at the thoughtfulness of her favorite shy athlete. She popped the morsel in her mouth and perused the newest stack of paperwork in front of her.

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Malfoy leaned back in his chair and surveyed his domain, basking in the glow of his small victory. The stack of back files had returned to the Archive, as had a sulking Colin Creevey, and he was once again the Slytherin Seducer in the office grapevine. Which had slowed to a trickle due to his devious inspiration. Oh, he was still reeling from the force of nature known as Hurricane Hermione. But he had learned to savor the small wins and bide his time in the battles.

Also, he was scared absolutely shitless. He felt as if he was standing at the edge of a very tall cliff next to the ocean, looking down at a curly-haired man eating shark. He was profoundly sure that if he jumped, she would devour him whole. There would be no outswimming this one. He was caught between total avoidance and a leap of faith. Faith had never been Draco's strong suit.

He shifted a few papers around his desk to give the appearance of working and considered taking a smoke break. With any luck, his lads would be out there and the resultant ego stroking and arse kissing would be the boost he needed to take the leap. *Where did he put those matches?* He shuffled through the detritus on the far edge of his desk and uncovered a Kiss emblazoned with the message: OOO LA LA. Draco stared at it for a moment and then snatched it up, lounging back in his chair again whilst tossing the confection high in the air and catching it anew.

It had not been there this morning, he was sure of that. Was it Hermione's apology for her flagrant abuse of his lips? Or was it a sly compliment, intended to engage his lips again... *Screw the lads, he was off to jump a shark.* He popped the sweet in his mouth and smirked in anticipation.

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Well-pleased with her accomplishments, Hermione strode to the Break Room, intent on tea and a quiet read. She smiled at Frank, who was chatting with Lavender Brown, and sat in her favorite chair. Sipping her earl grey tea, she began to read chapter thirty one of *The Awakening*. Until the throat-clearing noise above her made it impossible to concentrate. She looked up, and raised an eyebrow. Malfoy.

"Oui?" She said curtly.

"Uh... bonjour, Hermione... comment allez vous?" He cringed. *That was... smooth. Not.*

"Pourquoi êtes vous Français parlant, Malfoy?"

"Je suis désolé. Je ne comprends pas le français."

"Ce qui vous a indiqué?" Hermione looked puzzled.

"What's going on?" Lavender interjected. "You sly things. Chatting in French so no one can listen in."

Hermione was indignant. "Je ne parle pas français. Malfoy parle français. Le git arrogant."

"How cute is that, Ms. Brown? Ah, l'amore!" Frank bubbled delightedly.

"Amour! Qui a indiqué n'importe quoi au sujet de l'amour!" Draco looked alarmed. Perhaps a tactical retreat was in order. Hermione grabbed his arm to prevent him leaving.

"Malfoy! Vous avez un de ces derniers?" She held up the OOO LA LA banner.

He looked at the banner in dawning horror and fished its twin out of his pocket. "Merde. Je pense que nous parlons français. Vous avez un stylo? Et un peu papier?" He made writing gestures in the air.

Hermione rolled her eyes at him and took her wand out of her sleeve. He gave her a Gallic shrug as she Accioed a quill and parchment. While Frank and Lavender watched with interest, they had an impassioned argument in *thankfully* written English.

Obviously coming to some sort of agreement, they shrugged Gallically at each other. Hermione wrote a note and held it up for Lavender and Frank to see:

WE'RE GOING TO ST. MUNGO'S

BE BACK SOON -- DON'T EAT SILVER

COVERED CHOCOLATES WITH THESE

And she pointed at Draco, who held up the banner and then gave it to Lavender.

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Frank and Lavender waited two whole minutes after they left before telling Blaise what happened. Next thing they knew, the entire department was in the break room, discussing the French Incident. Frank burbled happily, dispensing water to everyone.

Naturally, Blaise was the first to notice Lavender chatting away in French.

Then Ernie stood up and yelled, "Zut alors! Je ne peux pas comprendre n'importe qui ici!"

Everyone stared at each other in panic, and then Blaise pointed at Frank in horror.

Frank stared back at Blaise and bubbled in distress, "What is it? What happened?"

The bubbles dislodged more of the Kisses from Frank's neck, and they bobbed on the panicked currents to the top of his bottle head.

"Franck, vous nous avez empoisonnés tous!" Blaise accused passionately.

Frank bubbled vigorously in denial. He had not understood Mr. Zabini, but his tone was crystal clear.

"Go to St. Mungo's," he cried. "Save yourselves. I will survive... the froggy scourge has no effect on me."

Everyone filed out of the room. Blaise was at the end of the queue.

"Mr. Zabini," Frank burbled pathetically. Blaise turned and regarded Frank fondly. "Go where glory waits thee! But while fame elates thee, Oh, still remember me!"

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Frank woke abruptly, a little muzzy from sleep, with traces of condensation on his tall rectangular metal body and... was something sitting on the top of his plastic bottle head? *It felt like a... beret.*

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A/N (translations):

"Yes?" She said curtly.

"Uh... Hi, Hermione... how are you?" He cringed. That was... smooth. Not.

"Why are you speaking French, Malfoy?"

"I'm sorry. I don't understand French."

"What did you say?" Hermione looked puzzled.

"What's going on?" Lavender interjected. "You sly things. Chatting in French so no one can listen in."

"I'm not speaking French. Malfoy is speaking French. The arrogant git."

"How cute is that, Ms. Brown? Ah, love!" Frank bubbled delightedly. (L'amore is Italian for love; Frank needs French lessons.)

"Love! Who said anything about love!" Draco looked alarmed. Perhaps a tactical retreat was in order. Hermione grabbed his arm to prevent him leaving.

"Malfoy! Do you have one of these?" She held up the OOO LA LA banner.

He looked at the banner in dawning horror and fished its twin out of his pocket. "Shit. I think we're speaking French. Do you have a pen? And a little paper?" He made writing gestures in the air.

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Then Ernie stood up and yelled, "Oh my god (slang)! I don't understand anyone here!"

Everyone stared at each other in panic and then Blaise pointed at Frank in horror.

Frank stared back at Blaise and bubbled in distress, "What is it? What happened?"

The bubbles dislodged more of the Kisses from Frank's neck and they bobbed on the panicked currents to the top of his bottle head.

"Frank (Franck is the French version of Frank), you have poisoned us all!" Blaise accused passionately.

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A/N: "Go where glory waits thee! But while fame elates thee, Oh, still remember me!" --

From Irish Melodies by Thomas Moore (1779-1852).

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 4 prompt: underwater kiss.

The Battle of the Dry Erase Boards

Chapter 5 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at dramione_awards, round 3.

Part Five: The Battle of the Dry Erase Boards

Frank was still trying to wake up, uneasy from his nightmare. *So real*, he burbled. *No one able to understand each other*. The fuzziness was receding. *Gossip ground to a halt through lack of communication*. He shuddered, his metal body echoing eerily. *And himself, the unknowing carrier of the infection. What a dream!*

"Nice beret, Frank," Mr. Zabini's drawl interrupted his horrified thoughts. "Is that a joke, mate?"

"A joke, Mr. Zabini?" Frank burbled in consternation.

"It's not funny," Blaise replied. "You'll want to take it off before the bickering twosome gets back. They'll be less amused than I am."

"It wasn't a dream, was it?" Frank swallowed hard, and tiny bubbles shot to the top of his plastic tank.

Blaise arched an eyebrow at him and started to reply when an ever increasing cacophony of angry stomping and yelling in French intruded on their little têteàtête. Blaise yanked the beret off Frank's head and threw it in the rubbish bin just in time.

Hermione Granger stalked into the Break Room, Malfoy just behind her. Small dry erase boards hung around their necks, held up by twists of surgical tape. Ignoring Frank and Blaise, Hermione rounded on Draco.

"Je sais que vous avez fait ceci, Malfoy. Juste admettez-le, vous git!" She vibrated with frustration.

"Je ne vous comprends pas, Granger, mais je n'aime pas cette tonalité." Draco was the definition of blasé.

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him, and her hands tightened into fists.

"Déjà vu," Frank murmured, loudly enough to distract Ms. Granger from her intent of bodily harm.

When she focused back on the Slytherin slime, she realized he had written something on his board and was holding it up for her to read:

COME ON, GRANGER.

SLIP ME A LITTLE TONGUE.

LET'S JUST GET THIS OVER WITH.

She huffed at him and pulled her board over her head so roughly the tape left a burn mark on the side of her neck.

SO THAT'S WHY YOU DID THIS!

He had barely absorbed that before the words were erased and new ones took their place.

"Owwwwmmmmph." His mouth was filled with a swotty tongue. Its agile warmth ran like quicksilver over the backs on his upper front teeth and flicked against his own before withdrawing completely. *Did she just nip his bottom lip?* He opened glazed eyes and dazedly watched her lushly perky bum sway out of the restroom.

Blue fairy? Pinocchio stirred hopefully.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Hermione Granger sat down shakily at her desk. *Wow*. She stared into space, her lips still buzzing. *He had tasted minty fresh*. And played hard to get. That hurt hadn't been an act. *Who was sabotaging the Kisses?* She ran her tongue over her lips and shivered. *Who cares?*

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Draco Malfoy sat on the toilet in the privacy stall and tried for calm. He spied Hermione's dry erase board and picked it up distractedly, still picturing the lake in his head. *My special place... the safe place... where I feel serene...* He looked down at the board.

THE HARD WAY THEN

Pinocchio twitched with joy.

Draco groaned. *First, there was Pinching Pansy. No... that slap in third year had been first, really; then Pinching Pansy and now, Hurricane Hermione. Again. Next, you'll want spankings and leather cuffs on a four poster bed.*

Pinocchio twitched again and nodded happily.

Why is it always the violent ones? He sighed. And as Draco stroked himself, Pinocchio burst into song.

You've got no strings

Comme ci comme ca

Your savoir-faire is ooh la la!

I've got strings

But entre nous

I'd cut my strings for you

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

A/N:

(translation)

"I know you did it, Malfoy. Just admit it, you git!" She vibrated with frustration.

"I don't understand you, Granger, but I don't like that tone." Draco was the definition of blasé.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Dry erase boards are an homage to "Hush", a brilliant episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Joss is God).

Babel fish are from Douglas Adam's Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series

"Strong lips" -- Pretty in Pink

"Classic blunder... when [death] is on the line" Princess Bride

Lyrics from Disney's Pinocchio "I've Got No Strings" Performed by Pinocchio (Dickie Jones), Music: Leigh Harline, Lyrics: Ned Washington

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Many thanks to my fabulous beta, **elyaeru**: She's not the messiah, she's a very naughty girl! (Life of Brian)

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 5 prompt: french kiss.

The Covert Mission

Chapter 6 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at the [dramione_awards](#), round 3 and Quill to Parchment.

Part Six: The Covert Mission

"Their guards are up."

"Obviously."

"They won't eat these."

"Willingly."

"What's your solution then?"

"A covert operation."

"Brilliant."

"Indubitably."

"Who are you, Adverb Man?"

"Shut it, little brother."

A zipper appeared over the mouth of the younger freckled man. His brother rolled his eyes.

"Fine. What is it now?"

The zipper disappeared. "What are we going to do when they find out it was us?"

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Ronnikins wasn't wrong when he said she was scary. She's still scary. Scarier."

"Still think we should've used different test subjects?"

"Maybe, but I get that..."

"... they were the best choice? Least likely to get involved? The human equivalent of..."

"... oil and vinegar."

"These choccies will make us rich."

"What good is money when you're too busy watching your back to count it?"

"Stop worrying, wanker. The bookworm will forgive us. She always does."

"The baby Death Eater isn't a pansy."

The twins looked at each other and snickered.

"Rat-arsed Blaise tells the best stories."

"We could always blame it on the boss."

"You're a nutter. He's a god. We're already skating the thin edge with this little side project."

"Worst comes to worst... we take a little holiday..."

"... until things calm down."

They shook hands, grinning in agreement.

"Now, about that covert operation..."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Hermione Granger sighed and looked across the table at a flabbergasted Ginny Potter. The remains of the Leaky Cauldron's pea soup sat ignored in a pot on the dented wood between them.

"And then I stomped on his toes and shoved my tongue in his mouth."

"And?"

"I nibbled his bottom lip, Gin. My lips were still tingling two hours later." Hermione swallowed nervously. "I don't know what to do. It's impossible. I think about him. Malfoy! I think about Malfoy all the time."

Ginny studied her best friend closely. Especially the deep red mark on her best friend's skin. "Is that a love bite on your neck?"

"Damn, the charm wore off?" Hermione rubbed at the spot gently. "No, it's from that stupid dry erase board." Ginny gave her a Molly look. *"Really."*

"Have you ever felt like this before?"

"A pale imitation of this. With Ron. But I think that had more to do with the house-elves."

"House-elves are pretty sexy."

Hermione laughed, which turned into a groan that caused her to bang her head against the table.

"Just push him into a broom closet and snog him until he's out of your system," Ginny said calmly as she cast a Protego against the soup that was attempting to consume the head of her curly-haired friend.

"Sure thing, Gin," was the muffled reply. "Speaking of kisses..." Hermione looked up at her from the table's surprisingly comfortable surface.

"Do I think those are the twins' work?" Ginny quirked an eyebrow. "Does Harry love treacle tarts?"

"That's an answer."

"You know what they say, Hermione. Only nutters and unstable Gryffindors..."

"... like treacle, yes."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Draco Malfoy flicked paper clips into his *SLYTHERINS LIKE IT SNEAKY* coffee cup and blatantly ignored Zabini. Unfortunately, Blaise was ignoring Draco ignoring him and persisted in uttering uncomfortable observations.

"Not speaking French anymore, are we?"

Non, Blaise. Go away.

"She must have cornered you in the men's room."

Brilliant deduction, Sherlock. Ever tried to pee with a singing hard-on?

"I saw that flinch, Draco. She must be a good kisser."

Pinocchio and Draco sighed. *The best.*

"Stop moping, Malfoy. Most Slytherins have abandoned their principles for a lot less."

Draco glared at him. "I am not moping. I am ignoring you. There is a difference."

"You only flick paper clips when you're moping. And you know it's virtually impossible to ignore me, so cease putting undue strain on yourself trying to multi-task. It's not your forte."

"*She* multi-tasks. Brilliant, really, how she can avoid me and do her work at the same time." Draco sighed and rested his forehead on his desk blotter.

"Granger is not avoiding you."

"Is too." Draco's pout was slightly muffled by the folder on a possessed teakettle in Islington. "I've gone by her desk four times this afternoon. Never there. I'm starting to slosh again."

"She's standing right in front of you, prat." Zabini nodded at Hermione and sauntered away down the hall, heading towards the Archives.

"Ha ha, Zabini, pull the other one." Draco wiggled his forehead into a softer pile of folders and closed his eyes. Multi-tasking was tiring. Perhaps he'd take a bit of a kip.

"I can see you are very busy, Malfoy, so I won't linger." Draco's head came up so fast, dark spots danced a fandango in front of his eyes. Hermione was smirking at him. "I was just at lunch with Ginny Potter. She and I both think it's the twins that have been sabotaging the Kisses."

He shook his head a little to clear it. "Why are you telling me this?"

"Well..." Hermione sat in the guest chair. "I want to catch them in the act and thought you might like to help."

"Help?"

"Ginny said they're going to plant some more Kisses at my desk tonight. She overheard them discussing it at the shop. We can set up a trap and capture them. I was hoping you might know a good curse or two." *I was hoping we might have time for a snog or two.* She endeavored to look completely innocent.

Draco did not notice the effort, as he was trying equally hard not to look excited.

"Yeah, sure. I can think of a couple of family curses that might do."

"Meet you here at eight? We can hide the stealth detectors and Extendable Ears and be clear away by nine."

"Nine?" Draco inquired, calculating absently.

"When Fred and George intend to deliver the goods."

"That's a bit of a wait, isn't it, Granger?"

"They might be early. I wouldn't want our surprise ruined." *I wouldn't want our snog interrupted.*

"All right. Here at eight."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Their fireplace blazed bright green. Fred kneeled by the hearth and greeted his sister with a cheery, "Watcher, Red."

Ginny rolled her eyes at him and said, "They'll be there by eight."

"Thanks, Gin. That's a class friend you are, helping your mate find love."

"Well, Hermione did help me with Harry."

"That's right. I had forgotten the bookworm was the one who locked you two in the kitchen at Grimmauld."

"I hadn't." Ginny and Fred grinned at each other. "Of course, I'll expect ten percent of the Kisses' profit as well."

Fred beamed at her and mimicked wiping a tear from his eye. "You do us proud, Gin, you do."

"I love you too, Fred. Have fun tonight."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

"What time is it?"

"Eight thirty-two, Draco."

"Why are we in this closet again?"

"Because it has the best view of my desk." *And because it's a snug fit in here* Hermione shifted a little, trying to get comfortable.

"Stop. Wiggling. Granger," Draco bit out.

Her lushly perky bum, encased in tight black leggings, "stealth wear," she had explained to his protruding eyes and slack jaw, rubbed against the placket of his navy trousers. *Merlin. He couldn't stand much more of this.* His hands itched to grab her by the *shoulders* and spin her around for a blistering snog. He almost groaned out loud, remembering the feel of her tongue against his and the way she had nibbled his lip.

Her breath tickled his throat. "I said I have to go pee!" She hissed. *For the third time. Clearly, he wasn't interested. She had practically worn an embarrassing hole in her new leggings rubbing up against him for nothing. Nada. Zilch. Bupkis.*

"So, go, Granger. Disillusion yourself first." *Why was she glaring at him like that? He was just being cautious.*

"I'll tap three times when I come back," she replied in a whisper that made Pinocchio begin to hum.

"Whistle if you need help," he answered and groaned as the door creaked shut.

When you meet temptation

and the urge is very strong,

give a little whistle!

Give a little whistle!

Not just a little squeak,

pucker up and blow.

Shut it, puppet boy.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

"What time is..."

"... shhhh... did you hear that?"

"The... ummm... Disney song?"

"What?" Hermione craned her neck to look at him and brushed against his trousers again.

Blue Fairy?

"No. Something is moving in the hallway."

All three froze, nearly breathless, listening alertly. They heard it at the same time. A swish, then a faint buzzing noise. Draco flung open the door, and they both leapt out of the broom closet, mouths open in accusation.

The Disillusioned Kisses suddenly popped into visibility and buzzed straight into their mouths, melting instantly. The hapless duo was compelled to swallow, their eyes meeting in shared dismay.

A tiny incandescent blue and white banner caught their attention in the darkened hallway. NICE TRY, it said.

It was the last thing they saw before they passed out.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

A/N: Song lyrics from Disney's Pinocchio "Give a Little Whistle" Performed by: Jimini Cricket (Cliff Edwards), Pinocchio (Dickie Jones), Music: Leigh Harline, Lyrics: Ned Washington.

Many thanks to my beta, Elyaeru. (This statement is endorsed by the League of Peruvian Subtitling Llamas.)

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 6 prompt: secret kiss.

Friendly Fire or, the Choccies Hit the Fan

Chapter 7 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at dramione_awards, round 3.

Part 7: Friendly Fire or, the Choccies Hit the Fan

Colin Creevey tsked to himself. Some old biddy in Islington swore her teakettle was possessed by Tom Riddle, and he was called in two hours early to fetch the report to Deputy Chief Auror Potter's office. To top things off, the file hadn't been signed for properly. It had taken a complex combination of Revelios, Accios, Descendos, and Episkeys to discover it was on Malfoy's desk. Shirley, his sneaky little filing clerk, would be lucky not to be written up for this, Colin mused as he strode out of the Archives.

He wondered if Draco was playing some complicated Slytherin version of cat and mouse with him to attract Colin's attention. First, he checked out a bizarre series of back file folders. Then, he refused to return them until Colin was forced to come after them and saw Draco virtually attacked by Granger. Then, he checked out files during Colin's lunch break and failed to return them promptly. *Again.* Colin wiggled his head a little, confused by referring to himself in the third person.

This was why he avoided dating Slytherins as a rule. All this subterfuge was totally unnecessary. *Nothing like a good old-fashioned pounce to declare your intentions.* Deep in thought, Creevey tripped over a large object lying in the hallway in front of Granger's desk. He peered closely at the grouping of grayish lumps revealed by his *Lumos*. Actually, it didn't seem to be a large object. It was... two people! Colin Creevey, archival librarian, who was never very good in a crisis, panicked completely and sent up the red spark flare that put Ministry security and rescue on emergency alert.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Draco Malfoy was pulled abruptly from a pleasant dream state, mired in l'eau de Hermione, by the infernal caterwauling of a level two threat alarm. And a smack on the cheek that seemed endearingly familiar, though lacking in sting. He opened his eyes to see Granger hovering in concern above him. Over her shoulder, he spied Creevey and Deputy Chief Auror Potter. Fabulous. It was a nightmare. He sat up slowly, groaning a bit as he did.

"And then we passed out," Hermione said to Potter as Draco became more aware of his surroundings. *Ah, which explains the floor and the Granger.*

"Can someone shut off that infernal racket?" he muttered while glaring at Potter, who was clearly responsible. Who was nearly *always* responsible.

Potter signaled an underling, who immediately ran to do his master's bidding. Draco crawled over to Granger's guest chair and clambered into it, followed closely by his curly-haired witch, who perched on her desk beside him. *His?* Apparently so, if Pinocchio had his way. He looked up appealingly at her and whinged hopefully, "Coffee?"

"In the break room, Malfoy, where it always is," replied the hard-hearted vixen.

He sighed and attempted to achieve a vertical position. Success! After orienting himself, *Granger's desk, Archival hallway, broom closet of lust* he started to walk towards the break room. And almost immediately hit an invisible barrier. He put up his hands and pushed against it. No give. Over his head, free air. He jumped a little, just to test it.

"Look, Hermione, Malfoy's caught in a box." Potter smirked.

"Are you still loopy from passing out?" Hermione inquired solicitously, crossing to him. The barrier disappeared. He walked forward again, and Hermione stopped, looking at Draco in puzzlement as the barrier reappeared and he smacked his hands against it in frustration.

"I am going to kill the Weasel copies," he muttered. Turning, he caught Hermione's arm by the elbow and gently hustled her along behind him. "Right after I drink my coffee."

"Kindly unhand me, you git," Hermione hissed at him. "What do you think you are doing?"

"Shut it, Granger. I haven't had my coffee yet."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Draco continued to ignore Hermione's shrieking as he entered the break room. *Wonder if she'd shriek like that underneath me?* He crossed immediately to the coffee maker. Two mugs black, one sugar later, he deigned to acknowledge his audience. One huffy Gryffindor know-it-all, one chatty but nervous water cooler, one highly amused ex-best friend.

"Déjà vu," murmured Frank in sotto voce to Mr. Zabini.

"Only this time, they'll be yelling in English," replied Blaise, eyes twinkling.

"What the hell was that about?" yelled Hermione.

"Remember the Kisses last night?" Draco replied calmly. "They were charmed to prevent us from leaving each other."

"And you couldn't explain that sooner?" Hermione countered, bristling. "Instead of manhandling me down the Ministry hallways?"

"Not without coffee."

"You let her go on like that before coffee?" marveled his brilliant best friend Blaise. "And she's still in one piece?" His entirely too observant best friend visibly considered the implications.

"Not a word, Zabini," Draco warned.

Zabini just quirked an eyebrow at him and smirked.

A very frustrated Hermione muttered, "Blasted Slytherins and their super secret subtext," and tried to leave the break room. She hit the barrier. Hard.

Malfoy caught her at the waist as she bounced back toward him and murmured gruffly, "Easy there, sweetling."

Sweetling? Hermione melted into him a little before remembering herself. And Frank. And Blaise Zabini. The biggest gossips at the Ministry. Which was saying a lot, considering the competition. She pulled away reluctantly and folded her arms across her front.

"I'll kill them," she muttered.

Draco cleared his throat and replied, "I think not, Granger. I already called dibs."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

"You might want to start packing."

George startled with a yelp, and packets of Canary Creams, Extendable Ears, and Ton-Tongue Toffees flew all over the stockroom floor.

"Bleeding hell, Gin. You almost gave me a heart attack."

She regarded him coolly. "It wasn't the brightest move, putting a Closeness Charm on two highly intelligent and devious individuals known for their talents at retribution. They are planning revenge at this very moment."

George swallowed uneasily and said, "That charm filled a contractual obligation, Gin. We had no choice..."

Fred came down the stairs and stopped, staring at Ginny in surprise.

"What are you doing here this time of day?"

"Warning you two off. When I left the Ministry, Hermione was practicing her Bat-Bogey Hexes and Malfoy was muttering about a family curse that removes your sense of humor."

"That explains Lucius..."

'... and doesn't sound so bad," finished George, sounding relieved.

"They're just getting warmed up, Gred." Ginny grimaced. "Remember Marietta Edgecombe? And Umbridge's pleasant jaunt in the Forbidden Forest? She still startles at the sound of galloping hooves. Malfoy's no slouch, either. That was a complicated plan, getting those Death Eaters into Hogwarts. And after that, he spent a lot of time with *Snape*, on the run."

"Ah, those were the days," said Fred facetiously.

"Our employer won't be pleased either," said George. "The Closeness Charm should've resulted in snogging, not scheming."

"It's summertime in Australia, yeah?" Fred looked at George, who nodded in affirmation.

Ginny sighed and said, "I'm not sure that's far enough, boys. Besides which, Hermione has friends in the Magical Consulate there. If I were you, I'd think about Antarctica."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Blaise Zabini was on his way to the Archives when he noticed the strange little man in Draco's guest chair. The little man was hirsute and very surly looking. Not all that remarkable. This was the Ministry, after all. Lots of strangle little surly hirsute men running about. The bowler hat, and oddly cherubic facial features *under all that stubble*, coupled with the chomped-on Cuban cigar and pristine diaper, did give one pause, however. As did the wings.

"You, boy," the surly little man barked at him, "you know Malfoy?"

Blaise nodded, at a loss for words. The devil shivered and put on his pea coat.

"Where is he? I'm on a schedule here. Don't have time to mess around, waiting on his nobs."

"He and Granger had an errand to run. Ministry business." Zabini smoothed his robes, remembering himself. "Did you have an appointment?"

The hairy little man scoffed and chomped his cigar. "I'm a god. We don't need appointments."

"God?" Zabini shook his head, not certain he had heard correctly.

"Eros. Son of Aphrodite. Cupid ring a bell? Look, tell me where they went, okay? I have a huge backlog to get through. In fact, the Granger-Malfoy match was supposed to happen three years ago. America took longer than expected, even with the subcontractors."

"America?" Blaise was sure he was dreaming. *Ow*. That pinching charm *really* hurt.

"Yes, America. Have you heard about the divorce rate over there? I tried to tell her Sisyphus had better luck with that boulder, but you know mums. Forget a couple socks on the floor when you're five, and they think you're sloppy forever."

"I think the Weasley twins went to America last fall," muttered Blaise. He was still struggling to cope, caught between disbelief and visions of his picture on page one of the *Daily Prophet*. Or at least *The Quibbler*.

"You know Gred and Forge? They're two of my best subcontractors. Did a brilliant job at the Playboy Mansion. Bloke has three girlfriends now." Cupid grinned and chomped on his Cuban. "Now, why don't you tell me where Draco and Hermione went off to, hmmm?"

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy were in the stockroom of Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes, staring at the Kiss hovering in mid air before them and the note floating beside it.

SORRY WE MISSED YOU G

NOT REALLY F

EAT THE KISS G

YOU HAVE TO SHARE IT F

AND THE CLOSENESS CHARM G

WILL WEAR OFF F

CHEERS G&F

The little Kiss did a sort of bump and grind, shirking off its foil. The blue on white banner undulated in front of them. It read: ALL TOGETHER NOW.

Draco reached for the tiny bit of chocolate and slipped it into his mouth. He turned to Hermione and gently reached for her shoulders, pulling her to him. "My turn," he whispered as his lips lightly brushed hers.

Her hands settled on his waist as his crept up, one resting at the nape of her neck, the other lighting at her jaw. His fingertips brushed the rim of her ear, and his thumb stroked her cheek as his lips played over hers, encouraging them to part. She sighed, and he slipped his tongue into her warm mouth, sharing the sweet, creamy confection with her. Her hands wandered up his back, pressing him closer as he nibbled her lower lip and then delved his tongue back inside her warmth, seeking to slide its velvet against hers. He moaned, the sound echoing in her ears, and devoured her mouth, sucking her tongue into his.

They were both shaking at the knees and clinging to each other dazedly. They hardly felt the ping of the arrows in their respective backsides. But Pinocchio felt the sting with joyful recognition and began to sing in celebration.

When you wish upon a star

Makes no difference who you are

Anything your heart desires

Will come to you

If your heart is in your dream

No request is too extreme

When you wish upon a star

As dreamers do

Fate is kind

She brings to those to love

The sweet fulfillment of

Their secret longing

Like a bolt out of the blue

Fate steps in and sees you through

When you wish upon a star

Your dreams come true

~~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

A/N:

Some information on Sisyphus

Song lyrics from Disney's Pinocchio "When You Wish Upon a Star" Performed by: Jimini Cricket (Cliff Edwards) Music: Leigh Harline Lyrics: Ned Washington.

Many thanks to my beta, Elyaeru. She turned me into a newt! (I got better... but the mistakes are still mine).

Originally posted to the Live Journal dramionedrabbles community for the 2008 St. Valentine's Day 7 Kisses Challenge.

Day 7 prompt: romantic kiss.

The Really Ridiculously Long Epilogue (pt. 1)

Chapter 8 of 8

Much ado about tiny bits of confectionery.

What do a wooden puppet, a talking water cooler, a Greek god, archival folders, coffee, and magically altered choccies have to do with falling in love? Possibly everything...

Officially nominated at dramione_awards, round 3.

Part Eight: The Really Ridiculously Long Epilogue (pt 1)

Blaise Zabini set the possessed teakettle of Islington folder in his outbox and looked up to find Eros sitting in his guest chair. Unsure of the proper etiquette in addressing a god, he simply smiled in welcome.

"Well, the Granger-Malfoy matter is resolved," said Cupid cheerily. "You were such a help, I thought you might be interested in a sub-contracting sideline. Seems I'm shorthanded by two workers and I've got to get through this backlog." He held up a very thick list and flexed his wings. "Won't interfere with your regular job. Nice compensation package. Whadda say?"

"Who's next on the list?" Blaise enquired curiously.

"Colin Creevey and Blaise Zabini. You know them?"

"Hmmm..." Blaise regarded his manicure intently. "Can't say that I do. I regret I won't be of help to you after all." He looked at his rather expensive Cartier watch. "Is that the time? Oh dear, I'm late for an Auror meeting. Please do excuse me." He made an uneasy bow at the hairy little winged god and strode off purposefully.

Eros chomped on his cigar and gazed at Blaise's quickly retreating figure with twinkling eyes. "Very smooth, Mr. Zabini," he chortled around the masticated tobacco. "Next time, make sure to remove your work badge first."

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Antarctica had seemed like a good choice; no one would ever expect to find them there. Remote, somber and way too scientific a place to be for such as the Weasley twins. This was precisely why going there to hide was a horrible mistake. The French scientists had no appreciation of British humor, particularly Monty Python. They felt their national identity was being deliberately mocked every time Fred reenacted the battlement scene from *The Holy Grail*. This happened often as he was in charge of opening the air locked cargo doors at the supply warehouse. George had inadvertently alienated the cooking crew by requesting ketchup for his portion of the Tourtière de Charlevoix.

But the last straw, as far as the methodical scientists were concerned, was when the red-headed interlopers started chatting up Inga and Lucia, the beautiful Nordic lab technicians who processed the biological samples. Surely, these uncouth freckled limeys needed a lesson in proper BioBase etiquette.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Hermione Granger was sipping her Earl Grey tea and attempting to read chapter thirty-one of *The Awakening* out loud: *I feel as if I had been wound up to a certain pitch...too tight...and something inside me had snapped...* she read for what had to be the fortieth time in five minutes.

Hermione dropped her book to the table with a moan, and her head lolled forward in surrender. Draco brushed the hair up off the nape of her neck and placed teasing kisses there and along her shoulders. He let her hair fall through his fingers and again worked his hands across her shoulders and down her arms to the fingertips curling around nothing, taking care to brush against the outer swell of her aching breasts on the way.

She was just starting to melt, becoming *supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties* when Blaise burst into the room, saving Frank from horrible *juicy* embarrassment *gossip*. Frank glubbed miserably as Draco and Hermione groaned.

Zabini threw himself into the chair across from the frustrated lovers and yelled, "Hide me!"

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

Cupid chomped on his cigar in annoyance. Mr. Zabini was proving to be more slippery than the Weasley twins. *Put together*. Too bad he had done a runner, Blaise would have made an excellent operative. The surly cherub flicked a finger and held the resultant flame to the masticated Cuban he clenched in his teeth. He had definitely picked the wrong week to quit smoking.

"Pardon me." The voice was officious and patronizing. Cupid's hackles went up. He flexed his wings to their full span. The freckled prat blinked but put his nose in the air, not missing a beat. "You cannot smoke that inside the Ministry. Rule 1145, paragraph C-15. Smoking is allowed only in designated areas outside the building proper."

The cherub nonchalantly flicked some ashes on the floor. "I'm a god. I smoke wherever I want."

"I don't care if you're Lord Voldemort in a tutu," Percy gritted out, pointing his wand at the animated, flashing neon no smoking sign on the wall. "If it's written down, it's a rule. No exceptions."

The diminutive god smirked at Percy, but snapped his fingers to extinguish the cigar. No need to ruffle the natives' knickers when he still had business to conduct in the building. *When in Rome... I can smoke whatever and wherever the hell I want. My people know better than to flout love.*

The freckled arse smiled smugly at him, adjusted his wire-framed glasses and strode down the hall briskly.

Probably schedules when he takes a shit, too.

Cupid shook his head pityingly, perusing his list. He finally found Percy Weasley at the bottom. Furthermore, he noticed that Percy's original intended had been magically erased. Sloppily, since Eros could see faint traces of it under the substitute. The new name read *Dolores Umbridge* in what appeared to be Fred Weasley's messy scrawl. Cupid couldn't say he was surprised. He didn't see any reason to change it back, either. After all, if it was written down, it was a rule; no exceptions. The mildly annoyed cherub sauntered down the hall toward the break room. *Onto Mr. Zabini*, he thought. Time to have a chat with a bosom buddy.

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The fireplace in the Deputy Chief Auror's office flamed a brilliant green. Harry and Ron looked up from their usual ham butt and Ministry paperwork luncheon to see Ginny's head in the fire.

"Hey, love," greeted Harry with a crooked smile. Ron just nodded at her as his mouth was extremely full.

"Good lunch?" Ginny quirked an eyebrow at the bottomless pit otherwise known as her favorite brother. *Her favorite brother to tease, that is.*

He flushed a light red and swallowed quickly. "Seen Hermione lately?" he asked with feigned nonchalance.

Ginny wasn't fooled. "Any particular reason you want to know?" She was also a good deal more patient than Ron, who took after their mother in that respect.

Twenty-seven years on the planet and he still couldn't spot when she was taking the piss.

"Harry said there's something funny going on with her and Malfoy," he replied after a ten second pause, during which her darling husband had wisely kept silent *Although, the Molly look she gave him probably helped.*

"Don't you fret about that, Mollywobbles. I took care of it."

Ron turned a brilliant shade of puce and sent a stinging hex her way, which she neatly avoided. Harry clapped loudly, his eyebrow quirked in amusement.

"As much as I love watching you wind Ron up, Ginny love, we do need to get back to work soon. Is there something you need, besides a glimpse of the dead sexy savior of the wizarding world?"

"I work at Hogwarts, remember? I can see him in the Headmistress's office anytime I like." She rolled her eyes at Harry, but blew him a kiss. "Have either of you heard from Fred or George lately?"

"Nope," Harry replied as Ron shook his head, his mouth full again. "Aren't they at the shop?"

"Ah... well... they went on a little holiday. They've been Flooing me about Wheezes every day or so, just to keep in touch. But I haven't heard from them since Tuesday."

Harry swiftly added two and two, getting a sum of five. "Hiding from Hermione and Malfoy, are they? Good preservation instincts, those two have." He paused to look at his owl-a-day desk calendar. "So, it's been three days, then?"

"I'm getting worried," Ginny said as she nodded. "No one is answering when I Floo, not just Fred and George."

"Where are they?" asked Ron.

"Antarctica."

Harry and Ron shook with laughter, sending several incident reports to the floor.

"It was *my* suggestion. They wanted to go to Australia, the pricks."

Ron snorted derisively. "Hermione would have found them quicker than a Niffler can spot a Knut." Ginny grimaced in response.

"We'll check into it, love." Harry knelt on the hearth and gave his wife a tender kiss, massaging her shoulders briefly. "Don't let any Bludgers sneak up on you." His voice dropped low and he teased, "What does Snape got that I haven't?"

"A really big nose," Ginny giggled at Harry's puzzled expression. "You know what they say - big nose, big... "

"Oi!" Harry and Ron chorused indignantly, drowning Ginny's last word as she flashed out of sight.

Harry turned to Ron. "Your sister should have been sorted into Slytherin."

"The twins, too." Ron nodded. "Ginny's downright vicious, sticking Hermione with Malfoy like that. But she shouldn't have locked you two in the kitchen at Grimmauld."

Harry's eyes glazed over. "You won't hear me whinge about it."

"Oi! You better not do a bunk tonight. We're supposed to go to the Leaky with the lads."

"I'll be there," Harry muttered reluctantly.

"For five minutes, maybe." Ron's expression exuded suspicion.

Harry just grinned and mouthed: *Slytherin*.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

"Ow!"

"Sorry. Here, let me kiss it better." Hermione wiggled a little and Draco sucked in a breath. *Not of pain*, she noted. She smiled as her lips found his chin, soothing the scratch mark her fingernail had made. *It's his own fault, really, for insisting on the broom closet across from her desk* She sighed as he tilted his chin down and captured her lips with his, thrusting his tongue in her mouth for a dizzying duel. *She wasn't even wearing the leggings of stealth.*

He couldn't seem to keep his hands off her. He blamed Pinocchio. He blamed the broom closet of lust. He blamed the scent she wore and those irresistible sighs of hers. He loved everything about her. He could eat her up with a spoon, like the rich chocolate pudding Dobby used to make for him. Wait just a second there. Time-Turner, please? *Love? He... loved... her?* Pinocchio trilled a scale in affirmation. He mentally shrugged and shelved that revelation for later inspection. *Right now, he had a feel to a cop.*

Goddess above, who taught this man to kiss? Draco devoured her mouth as if it was one of those rich chocolate puddings that Dobby used to make, nibbling her lips and licking inside her warmth, seeking every bit of flavor. His hands had ceased gliding over her back from the nape of her neck to the fullness of her bum and were slowly, relentlessly, creeping toward her chest. Hermione's nipples, as swotty as the rest of her, tightened joyfully in anticipation. His clever thumbs had just flicked across those turgid crests, causing both of them to moan, when the broom closet door was suddenly flung open.

Colin Creevey stood there, slack jawed with amazement. He stammered awkwardly, "Get a room!"

Draco quirked an eyebrow at him as Hermione hid her blushing face in his chest. Tightening his embrace of her protectively, he drawled, "Can I help you with something?" He infused this enquiry with as much of the Malfoy condescension as he could muster on such short notice.

"Unh... I was looking for Blaise," Colin said, paling dramatically under the blast.

"And Zabini would be in the closet because?" Draco drawled again, ratcheting it up a few notches. Hermione giggled helplessly at his double entendre. *He was definitely keeping her.*

"Unh... well... I didn't know he was in the closet." Hermione's giggles erupted into whoops of laughter. She clung to Draco's robes, jiggling her breasts against his torso in a most distracting manner, of which Pinocchio thoroughly approved. "It's just that we had lunch planned, and he never showed up." *Creevey? Really, Zabini, I didn't know you'd scraped bottom.* Draco shuddered. He really hoped Zabini hadn't scraped this bottom.

Hermione stopped jiggling and calmed down enough to answer Colin, since Draco didn't seem inclined to. Pinocchio was extremely disappointed. Depressed, really. Deflated, even. "No, we haven't seen Blaise, Colin. There's barely enough room for us in here."

"Why *are* you in here?" Colin, over his awkwardness, was now intrigued.

Gormless Gryffindors, the three in the closet unknowingly thought in concert.

"Inventory," snapped Draco, and with a flick of his wand, slammed shut the door in Creevey's face.

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Fred waddled toward a break in the ice, attempting to ignore George's monologue of whinge.

"... I miss Mum's cooking. It's colder than Umbridge's tit out here. I think my nut sack froze and fell off two miles ago. A polar bear is probably using it for an ice cube." *Wrong continent, George. In fact, wrong hemisphere*, thought Fred. *And don't flatter yourself, the bear would probably mistake it for a mushy pea.* "Let's go to Antarctica," you said, like Ginny suggested. 'We can build pervy snowmen and rub noses with desperately lonely lab assistants named Inga and Lucia.' Ha. Raw fish is truly disgusting, mate. 'I'm bored,' you said, 'let's just play one little prank. Everyone will love it...'" George paused to draw in a breath.

"Who knew the froggy boffins were territorial? I didn't see a property stamp on Inga's knockers. And lacking in humor?" Fred shot back, tired of the endless whingey litany

"They revere Jerry Lewis as a national treasure." George flapped his wings uselessly and squawked. "Of course they lack a sense of humor."

Fred started to reply, but took a good look around instead. The air smelled dangerous, too still, as if it was holding its breath. *Probably can't stand George's stinky fish mouth either.* "Hey. Where did all the other penguins go?"

"I dunno." George stared at a rapidly approaching blob over Fred's shoulder. "Do you remember what the French prats said an emperor penguin's natural enemy was?"

"Erm... leopard seals... kind of look like Crabbe or Goyle, but with tons of black spots?"

"Slide!" yelled George in a panic as he flopped to his belly and pushed against the hard snow with his feet.

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

The sleek new espresso maker, all polished chrome and sexy black rubber trim, sat proudly on the counter of the break room in the Department for the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts. She shimmered with caffeinated effervescence. Her aroma was driving him mad.

Frank stared longingly at her out of the corner of his tap and sighed. He might as well face facts. *She was way out of his league.* Such a gorgeous creature would certainly sooner fancy an Italian panini-maker or at the very least, a souped-up digital slow cooker. She would never notice the likes of him, a mere water dispenser. He wasn't a postmodern cylindrical model, all tarted up in glossy candy-apple red paint. He didn't even have a chiller or the optional on demand hot tap some of the other *cooler* coolers did. He sighed again and risked another glance. Every once in a while, she perked a little, keeping her water hot. It was the cutest sound he'd ever heard.

A set of fluttering wings shook Frank from his reverie. *They were no longer alone.*

"Oh, dear," he said. "I'm ever so sorry. I didn't see you standing there. Would you like a cup of water?"

"Thanks, Frank. I'm parched," the little god croaked. "Picked the wrong week to kick the nectar habit. It is Frank, isn't it?"

Frank gurgled his affirmation as he watched Cupid cast a Muffliato with a flick of his wrist.

"So, Frank." He took a sip of water and continued, "Good water. Refreshing. You're friends with Zabini, aren't you?"

"Yes..." bubbled Frank, hesitantly. "But we haven't been properly introduced..."

"Cupid. Or Eros. I answer to either. I'm the god of love, damn glad to meet you." He tapped Frank's cap ring in a friendly way.

"Most honored, sir. Er, Your Highness. Unh... Your Holiness?"

"None of that now, Frank." Cupid frowned at him, chomping on his cigar. "Don't grovel! If there's one thing I can't stand, it's people groveling. Only Dark Lords with self-esteem issues like that crap." He paused to smile slyly. "Besides, I want to be your friend. So, no formality please."

Frank gushed, "What can I do for you, friend?"

"Well," the cherub replied. "It's not so much what you can do for me, as what I can do for you."

"What do you mean?"

Cupid's eyes glanced over at the espresso maker, though he spoke to Frank, "I can help you with the pretty little signora."

Frank had spent a *significant* amount of time with Mr. Zabini. "What do you need?"

Eros eyed the water cooler appreciatively. Him, I can work with. "Just a few hints regarding Zabini's possible whereabouts."

Frank thought of Blaise's stalwart friendship. He thought of the brainstorming session he and Mr. Zabini had with Ms Granger and Mr. Malfoy not more than two hours ago. The little espresso machine perked saucily.

"I'll draw you a diagram."

"Her name is Flo, short for Florence." Cupid nocked an arrow and took careful aim. "She's been trying to catch your attention all morning. This is just a little boost tipped with a Babel fish potion. Right now, she speaks only Italian."

Frank rippled worriedly. He was still having nightmares about the French Incident.

"Don't worry. You're getting one, too."

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It took four international Floo calls, a top level Magi-pol request, and two war hero autographs "for the kids" of the Antarctica Floo operator to find out what happened to Fred and George.

"Priceless," gasped Ron, wiping tears of laughter from his eyes.

"Ron, they barely escaped being eaten by a leopard seal," Harry said, biting his check to keep from laughing.

"I know... Hahahahaha... That's horrible!" Ron exclaimed. "I wonder if Yamagushi's House of Sushi delivers to Diagon Alley," he wheezed. "Do you think we could slightly modify some of their Canary Creams? Into Penguin Puffs?"

"They are *family*, Ron, show some concern." Harry was a skosh from losing it. If he got going, he was afraid he might never stop laughing.

"Harry." Ron sobered. "Those wankers turned my teddy bear into a spider. A *spider*, Harry."

Harry shrugged at his best mate and said, "Maybe we can cast glamors on their dates, to make them look like..."

"...leopard seals!" They finished together and nearly pissed themselves laughing.

"What's so funny, lads?" Dennis Creevey, assistant to Head Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt, stood at the door, bemused.

"Emperor penguins," Ron choked out.

Dennis contemplated Ron, not getting the joke. He shrugged it off, though. He was used to not understanding Ron.

"Chief Shacklebolt wants you two to go to Islington, stat. Seems there's a possessed teakettle you need to deal with." Dennis' voice dropped to a whisper. "You-Know-Who."

"We looked into that days ago." Harry was irritated. "The old biddy was lonely and confused, probably ate some moldy rye bread."

"That old biddy," replied Dennis, "is the great aunt of the Minister for Magic. She says he's back and she won't have anyone but you."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Better jump, then."

"How high?" Harry smirked. "On our way. We just need to go by the Department of Mysteries first."

Dennis nodded and headed back to his boss. *That went better than Kingsley expected it to* Usually, anything that smacked of toadying to the Minister resulted in a pig's tail for the messenger. Dennis resolved to tell a joke first next time he drew the short straw.

"Why the D.o.M., Harry?" Ron yelled over the whoosh of the Floo.

"Luna asked me to drop by," answered Harry. "She said she has something I'll need for Islington."

They stumbled out of the Department of Mystery's fireplace.

"When?" asked Ron.

"Yesterday," a dreamy voice replied. Luna blinked at them myopically. "Should I send someone to Transfigure Fred and George?"

"Er... Yes, Luna. Thanks," Harry said. She really weirded him out, sometimes.

"You're welcome, Harry," she chirped airily and turned to Ron. "The god of love is here."

"You don't say," squeaked Ron. He eyed the distance to the Floo. Harry was smothering a laugh. *The prat.*

"Yes," breathed Luna. "After he's finished with Blaise and Colin," she purred, edging closer to the twitchy redhead, "it'll be our turn."

Ron's freckles really stand out when paled like that Harry observed. He took pity on his frightened friend and cleared his throat, drawing Luna's attention.

"You have something for me, Luna?" he prompted.

"Oh..." She reached inside her robe and drew out a Black and Decker dustbuster mini. She caught Ron goggling and said, "Bottomless pockets."

"No. The Muggle whatsis." He gestured at the dustbuster. "Harry needs *that* in Islington?"

Her demeanor became icily professional. She turned to Harry, showing Ron her back. "This dustbuster is modified with the essence of a Dementor. It sucks bits of soul out of things."

Harry looked deeply into Luna's diamond sharp eyes. "Back then, is he?" She nodded grimly. "Works in the usual way?" he asked, taking the device from her. His aunt, Petunia, had made sure he was well-acquainted with this particular piece of equipment. *Amazing Dudley got as fat as he did, the amount of crumbs he left trailing is his wake.*

"Wouldn't recommend looking into it, though," she responded.

"Why not?" asked Ron. Luna just looked at him. She really weirded him out, sometimes. Then her eyes went dreamy again. He swallowed noisily. Why did those misty aqua eyes always make his stomach twist, like that time with the slugs?

"Come on, Spoon," said Harry, all business. "We've a date with the teakettle of evil."

Their pops of Apparition kept them from hearing Luna say, "Teapot of evil."

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A/N:

Monty Python and the Holy Grail excerpt (Fred is fond of reenacting):

GUARD: Of course not! You are English types-a!

ARTHUR: Well, what are you then?

GUARD: I'm French! Why do think I have this outrageous accent, you silly king!

GALAHAD: What are you doing in England?

GUARD: Mind your own business!

ARTHUR: If you will not show us the Grail, we shall take your castle by force!

GUARD: You don't frighten us, English pig-dogs! Go and boil your bottoms, sons of a silly person. I blow my nose at you, so-called Arthur-king, you and all your silly English kaniggets. Thppp!

GALAHAD: What a strange person.

ARTHUR: Now look here, my good man!

GUARD: I don't want to talk to you no more, you empty headed animal food trough whopper! I fart in your general direction! You mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries.

GALAHAD: Is there someone else up there we could talk to?

GUARD: No, now go away or I shall taunt you a second time-a!

~~*~*~*~*~*~*

I feel as if I had been wound up to a certain pitch...too tight...and something inside me had snapped; supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties From chapter 31 of The Awakening by Kate Chopin.

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He had definitely picked the wrong week to quit smoking./ To kick the nectar habit [bastardization] From "Airplane".

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Boffin - 1. A person involved in scientific/technical research, usually associated with the wearing of white laboratory coats, glasses, and carrying a clipboard. (source: <http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang/b.htm>)

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Damn glad to meet you. From "Animal House"

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"Don't grovel! If there's one thing I can't stand, it's people groveling." From "Monty Python & the Holy Grail" (again!)

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Signora lady (Italian)

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Moldy rye bread- a reference to [Ergotism](#)

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I was recently informed that a television show called "Reaper" (now cancelled) features a dirt devil soul sucker. I had never watched, nor had knowledge of the series, but their use of said object does pre-date my independent use. No plagiarism or theft was intended.

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To my beta, Elyaeru, for making me feel as old as the guy in the Bring Out Your Dead cart (I feel happy! I think I'll go for walk!) when she asked who Jerry Lewis was. [Click to find out: Why do the French love Jerry Lewis?](#). [Click for: A clip of Jerry Lewis in his prime.](#)