

When the war is over, you can read the paper

by SS Lupin

Auror Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts to teach and realizes the war still needs to be fought within the castle's heavily warded walls.

Part One.

Chapter 1 of 2

Auror Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts to teach and realizes the war still needs to be fought within the castle's heavily warded walls.

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August

It was a picturesque Sunday Morning in England. Not a cloud in sight, a bright expanse of blue sky was all that Harry could see until he looked down to the trees that dotted the fields in front of his house.

Harry took it all in, muttered a curse and shut the curtains to block the outside view from his window.

"Explains why you haven't answered my letters."

Harry winced. *Not now.* "I've gotten them. I just never bothered to read them."

"Dammit, Potter. Would you turn around?"

Harry considered it for only a second. Having your back turned to Severus Snape could never be thought a good idea.

"You look like shit."

"Brilliant observation, Professor."

"You're not sixteen anymore."

Harry pressed the heel of his hand into his forehead, attempting to somehow force his pounding headache out of his skull. "I can't."

"You won't." Snape sighed. Then he pulled out his wand so fast that Harry just heard the hiss of *Legilimens'* before he was thrust into memories of the explanations and

words of wisdom that he only received after he was left injured and scarred year after year.

The wall went up with a speed to match Snape's so that the only thing in his mind's eye was a bowl of lemon drops.

"It's our choices."

Harry glared at Snape. "Then what's mine?"

"You're expected to report on the thirty-first at eight o'clock in the morning."

Snape Disappeared so noiselessly that Harry had to wonder if the man had been there at all.

~*~

"So you're going to take it?"

Harry shook his head. "I didn't quit my old job to jump straight into another."

It was Ron's turn to shake his head, which was disconcerting, as he was talking to Harry via Floo call. "You've been out of work for four months now. Isn't that enough?"

"Not all of us have to work everyday to live comfortably."

Ron smiled. "You're just saying that to rile me up. But if teaching isn't your thing"

"I never said I was teaching!"

"You could try out for the Falcons. They'd give you a spot on the reserves easy, and after some time training"

"No Quidditch."

"It was only a suggestion."

"Suggest something else."

"Don't work. Grow out that beard you've already started, and keep up your excellent hygiene."

"That bad?"

"Mate, the smell's coming through my fireplace."

Harry stared at the threadbare hearthrug. "Visit me in Hogsmeade?"

"Every day that I can." Ron grinned.

"Bloody liar. You've got to spend some time with your harem."

"Shhh! I've got a girl here now!"

"See you soon then."

"Bye, Harry."

~*~

Dressed in worn jeans and a dress shirt too big for him, Harry climbed the steps leading up Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. As he pressed through the entranceway, Harry could feel layers of wards wash over him in a rush of protective magic so strong that he almost staggered from its weight.

He breathed easier when they ebbed away from him and back into the stone walls.

"Potter why are you here so damned early?"

"It's the twenty-ninth. I thought most professors come in early to you know, set up shop and all that." Leave it to Snape to criticize him for doing something responsible.

Snape rolled his eyes. "Some do... others milk their vacations for all it's worth and don't show until the very first day of school." Harry could've sworn he heard Snape mutter 'Lupin' after that.

"I have to set up syllabi and lesson plans for seven classes, don't I?"

"To plan something so detailed would take you the whole summer or longer. How would you accomplish this by Thursday?"

Harry tried to respond, but Snape held up a hand.

"Never you mind. The last professor left her old parchmentwork with me. You can use them."

Harry nodded. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet." Snape's lips thinned into a smile as he headed toward the Great Hall. "I still have to renew the wards here. And since you came here so willingly..."

"Bastard."

"So I like to think." Snape took out his wand and set Harry to work without any other preamble.

~*~

Harry arrived at the staff meeting five minutes before it began, mentally listing the last few things he needed to get done before the students arrived tomorrow. Granted, he technically had another day, as they were no actual classes taught during the Welcoming Feast...

Harry shook off the temptation to take the night off and instead took one of the two empty seats left on either side of Snape.

"Glad you could join us, Potter."

Harry nodded and gestured to the empty seat. "Who's missing?"

"The Potions Professor," Snape said dismissively.

Harry was about to ask who that was exactly, since Harry hadn't seen any other staff members, but Snape rapped his wand against the table and called the meeting to order.

"A few announcements. First, our new Defense Professor is Harry Potter." Some applause from the other professors began, but Snape cut it off with an impatient gesture. Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

"Next, I've seen to strengthening the wards on the school over the summer. With that in mind, remember to remain..." Snape winced. "Vigilant. Any questions?"

The Muggle Studies Professor, Robbins, if Harry wasn't mistaken, asked a question about the computer that was supposed to be installed over the summer for the N.E.W.T. level class. Harry tuned out the answer, a creak at the door catching his attention.

A white blond head of hair ducked into the room, followed by a thin body in charcoal robes. The head rose and Harry saw the person's face, pale and pointy and drawn.

Draco Malfoy took the seat opposite Harry, not looking at anyone except Snape, listening to his every word like the kiss up he was in their Potions classes. Only his jaw was more pronounced with the absence of childhood roundness, his hair cut shorter than it had been during their Hogwarts years. Harry continued to study Malfoy's face until the meeting ended with another tap of Snape's wand. The sound of it didn't alert Harry as much as Malfoy's standing, bringing Harry to gaze upon the silver fastenings on Malfoy's robes.

Harry waited for the other staff members to cease their idle "What did you do over the summer?" conversations and file out of the lounge. Once Pomona Sprout had left, only Snape, Malfoy, and Harry remained.

During the staff room conversations (*Welcome back to Hogwarts, Harry! Pity you didn't stay on with the Auror career...Is it really you? Look a bit shorter in person... What on earth happened with that pretty fiancée of yours...*), Harry had ended up on the other side of the room, watching Snape and Malfoy talk and trying to read their lips in the process.

"You're making a pathetic attempt at espionage, Potter."

"I just have to get information from you, sir."

Malfoy inclined his head. "I'd best be going."

Snape said goodnight to Malfoy, who replied in kind.

Harry didn't speak until Malfoy slipped out of the doorway. "You should've told me."

"Told you what?"

"That Malfoy's teaching Potions."

"As I recall, I've never had to give a fully detailed report of our staff to prospective professors."

"You should've told me!"

"And you would not be here." Snape's eyes challenged Harry to say otherwise.

Harry rubbed his closed eyelids, the cool metal of his glasses bumping against his fingers. "I can't leave now."

"Goodnight, Potter."

"Goodnight."

~*~

September

Harry didn't think much of the Great Hall when he had been warding it with Snape, but when the four long tables gleamed from the floating candles and the nighttime sky glittered with cloud covered stars, Harry felt himself go back to another time, when all magic here was good and wasn't it so great that Hagrid took him away from the Dursleys...

The students began to enter the Great Hall in small groups, the seventh years standing tall and triumphant as they chose their seats, the first years waiting at the doorway for the Sorting.

Harry squinted at the back of the Great Hall. That couldn't be right at all.

"Er... Miss?" Harry addressed the professor sitting to his left.

She turned to Harry and corrected him with an impatient shake of her head. "Ms. Bryar."

"Oh. Sorry."

"Did you want to say something?" she asked, her spectacle-shielded eyes focused on the students once more.

"Yes," he gritted out, his own patience dwindling.

"Then, what is it?"

"The first years. They're so early."

"Oh no. They're right on time."

"But... the lake..."

The professor laughed, a short and sharp sound. "An outdated practice. They board the carriages like the other students."

"But that doesn't make sense. The tradition"

"Was old one that needed to cease. What if someone the squid, even attacked the students in the lake? Far too dangerous."

Harry rolled his eyes. "The Ministry is taking these safety regulations too far."

Ms. Bryar harrumphed and spoke with the professor on her other side with a flip of her head.

"Not too tactful there."

Harry turned to his right. The Muggle Studies professor was sitting there, even though Harry remembered the seat being empty earlier.

"Why would you say that?"

He leaned in and lowered his voice. "She helped put those laws into effect."

"She was on the board?" The woman didn't look much older than Harry, possibly in her early thirties.

"Yeah. Took over her husband's place while he was in his death bed."

"But she said"

"Took back her maiden name and her cut of his fortune after he died. Name's Craig Robbins, by the way." He held out his hand.

Harry shook it. "Harry Potter," he said, feeling stupid as he did so.

Craig didn't say "I know" or something sarcastic. He just smiled, the skin around his eyes crinkling.

"Pleased to meet you, Harry."

All conversation ceased when Snape stood and Professor Sprout ushered in the first years for the Sorting. Harry applauded for every new Gryffindor and noticed Craig clapping for the Ravenclaws.

Harry whispered, "You were in Ravenclaw?"

"Yeah. I started here a few years after you, I think. When you were Quidditch captain."

"That makes you..."

"Yeah, I'm a little young, but you don't need age experience to be a Muggle Studies Professor."

"So you're Muggle-born?"

"I guess you could say that."

They looked at the remaining first years waiting to be sorted. Harry lost interest quickly (Three Hufflepuffs in a row, honestly) and glanced at the other staff members along the table. Harry didn't recognize most of them, smiling at Remus Lupin, who, as Snape had predicted, had arrived that afternoon. Snape sat as stony faced as ever as he surveyed the Great Hall, and then there was Malfoy, seated at Snape's left.

He watched the proceedings with a bored air, his hands resting on the table. His fingers tapped the table in a strange pattern, his right hand mirroring whatever his left had started. It was as if Malfoy was playing the piano... or tapping out a code.

"Our new Defense Professor, Harry Potter..."

Craig nudged him to stand, which Harry did for a short moment. The applause and whispers that came after brought him to sit just as fast.

Harry turned to look at Malfoy one more time before tucking into the feast.

A jolt ran through him when Malfoy's eyes met his.

Stop staring at me, the look said.

Harry did so, but not before an unexpected thought fluttered through his mind.

I don't want to.

~*~

When arranging the schedules for the upcoming school year, Snape made sure not to baby Harry on his first day. On September second, Harry's first class consisted of seventh-year N.E.W.T. students, many of them Slytherins.

Bastard was an understatement.

They filed in with all the ease and bravado that came with students in their last year of schooling, only quieting when they saw their professor standing in front of his desk.

Harry cleared his throat.

"Good morning, and welcome to the Defense Against the Dark Arts, N.E.W.T. level."

Grasping the edge of the desk, Harry continued. "Because you are in the advanced class, you'll be studying the history of the Dark Arts" Several groans echoed. "Defense spells, and, finally, about the Dark Arts themselves."

Some gasps and whispers followed this, as Harry expected; the last part wasn't in the curriculum Snape had given him.

"It's not to train you all into future V-Dark Lords," Harry amended. "But the Dark isn't so easy to detect, and with awareness comes true defense." Harry wanted to add "Constant Vigilance" to the end of it, but he told his students to open *Esoteric Examinations of Evil Enchantments* to page seven.

There were some lessons they would have to learn themselves.

~*~

By the end of the week, Harry decided his favorite classes to teach were the first and third years for their enthusiasm for the spells and magical creatures Harry introduced them to. He would probably enjoy teaching his N.E.W.T. class later in the year because history was quite boring but at least he could look forward to bringing in a grindylow to show the third years next Friday.

Thinking of the creatures brought Harry to roll up the lesson plans he had been studying and push his chair into the desk.

I should've asked him earlier.

Harry found himself in front of Malfoy's office shortly after that, raising a fist to the dark paneled wood.

"To whoever is hovering in front of the door: enter or get out."

Harry twisted the doorknob and entered Malfoy's office, squinting from the sunlight streaming in from wide panels of windows high up on the dungeon walls. Bookshelves full of ancient texts and clear bottles filled with viscous liquids, not unlike the relics in Snape's old office, lined the three walls away from the door. They framed Malfoy's desk, set in the center, and Malfoy sat behind the desk, his hands clasped and his mouth set in a line.

"This looks nothing like Snape's dungeon of doom."

"Did you come here solely to admire my interior design?"

Harry bristled but pulled out the parchment describing the potion he needed for the arriving grindylow. "I came to ask a favor."

The tapping began as soon as Malfoy unclasped his hands. *Tap tap tap. Tap tap tap.*

"What are you staring at?"

Harry coughed. "Nothing."

Malfoy's expression remained impassive, but the tapping stopped. "What's the favor then? If it's about the fifty points I took away from Lucy Brannigan, you can forget it."

"I'm not Gryffindor's Head of House."

"You mean Lupin still has the post? That furry-faced dolt is so incompetent"

Harry closed the distance between him and Malfoy's desk in a few angry strides. "Don't insult Remus that way."

Malfoy tilted his head up. "What are you going to do, Potter?" Harry flinched at the familiar sneer of his name. "Bring in Shacklebolt and the gang to arrest me?" Draco leaned into the desk, his palms flat against the surface as if he was to push himself up.

"I've earned my place here, and I don't need people like you demanding to see my left arm."

Harry threw the parchment to the floor. "Take your Order of Merlin and shove it," he said, marching out of the office and slamming the door behind him.

~*~

The next morning, Harry finished his breakfast just as the flock of owls flew into the Great Hall. Pushing his plate aside, Harry watched as three owls presented their offerings to him while pecking at the food around them.

"You're popular this morning," Craig said over his *Daily Prophet*.

Harry mumbled a reply and perused the mail. The first was the latest issue of *The Quibbler*. He set that aside, along with a heavy letter from Hermione. The last thing came from an owl that scratched Harry's fingers with a talon as he removed the package from it.

He passed a hand over the package, relieved when no harmful spells were present on the object. Tearing the paper wrapped around it, Harry gasped when he saw what was inside.

No note accompanied the small violet bottle containing what Harry knew to be the potion he needed. The label wrapped around it was filled with words written in Malfoy's elegant longhand, the potion's name, maker, and brew date all noted.

Harry turned to thank Malfoy, taking in a sharp breath.

He wasn't there.

And when Harry scanned the Head table for that blond head of hair at lunch and supper, he realized Malfoy never was.

~*~

October

"And that's why the Falcons don't have a chance where are you going?"

Harry looked back at Craig and smiled sheepishly. "I'm sorry, but I've got something to attend to"

"Not a problem, Harry. Talk to you later?"

"Yeah. Later." Harry left the Muggle Studies Professor's office and headed for the nearest staircase. Craig was nice and had a good head for Quidditch stats, but Harry needed to speak to Snape. Now.

He approached the gargoyle and whispered the password.

After reaching the door to the Headmasters' office, Harry knocked and almost fell back when the door opened, Malfoy behind it.

"What are you doing here?" they both asked.

Harry shook his head. "None of your business."

"How trite. Step aside, Potter. Some professors actually do work after their classes end." Not even waiting for Harry to move, Malfoy pushed past Harry and left.

"Come in," Snape said from within the office.

Harry entered the office and shut the door.

"Before you enumerate the many abuses you have suffered from Professor Malfoy, I'll remind you that I will not have you engaging in unprofessional behavior on school grounds. Is that clear?"

Harry wondered if Malfoy received the same lecture.

"Yeah."

"Have a seat."

Harry did so, taking in the absence of strange silver devices and the addition of two portraits. Professors Dumbledore and McGonagall both occupied the latter's frame as

they played Wizard chess.

Snape followed Harry's gaze. "Those two hardly ever feign sleep."

Harry's eyes prickled for a moment.

"What brings you here? To reminisce about old times? To chat about the weather over cups of tea?"

"Saying things like that makes me wonder why I ever..." Harry sighed. "I want to know about Draco Malfoy."

"I'm sure you know all about him."

Harry groaned. The man would talk circles around him unless he didn't say what he wanted. "Why doesn't he eat with us?"

"He is a vampire who drinks human blood every evening at moonrise."

"Come on, Snape. Give me a straight answer."

"That is impossible." He smirked.

"That's disgusting."

"Not all of us are buff young things. Some are old professors. Or ex-Death Eaters."

Harry's eyes widened. "You can't mean"

"I do." Snape's face changed. "While you're here, Potter..."

He reached under his desk and pulled out a glowing wooden box. He pushed it across the desk to Harry.

"I wouldn't suggest opening it, but you can run a diagnostic spell on it."

Harry placed his hand over the object, sensing hatred, anger, and dyed parchment. "This is full of Howlers!"

"One point to Gryffindor for that excellent observation." Snape put the box back under the desk.

"Er... shouldn't you use a box that isn't so flammable?"

"I obviously placed protection spells on it. I take that point back."

"But... why do you keep them?"

"I cannot forget who I am and what the world still thinks of me. The Ministry barely tolerates my position here as it is.

"If you're going to keep an eye on someone, let that someone be the Ministry sycophants in this school. As long as they are here, Hogwarts will never be safe. And if you want to pursue Malfoy, do that on your own time."

"I am *not* pursuing him."

"Goodnight Potter, and don't ogle my arse on the way out."

Harry made a retching noise as he left.

~*~

When he tried to sleep that night, Harry's mind was a jumbled mess of memories. He fell into uneasy dreams of auburn hair and broken promises, sweating and thrashing on the bed.

He opened his eyes. Sheets tangled around his legs, Harry sat up and put his mental shields in place. All thoughts were blocked, leaving behind nothing but the sensation of cold on Harry's skin.

In search of a t-shirt, Harry got out of bed by moonlight and put it on, facing the window.

The sky was clear and cloudless, allowing the moon to shine its light upon the dark grounds. Harry imagined the tall gold hoops on the other side of the castle standing opposite each other on the Quidditch pitch.

It was a night made for flying.

Harry grinned and focused on his broom and wand. As they flew into his hands, Harry cast a spell to open the window and flew off into the night.

~*~

Harry let out a whoop of delight as he flew up and around the spires of Hogwarts, then shooting ahead to reach the pitch. The wind ruffled his fringe, welcoming him back into the air.

Gripping the broomstick's handle and turning it left, Harry prepared to faint when a flash of gold caught his eye. It was a little blurry around the edges, but Harry pursued the Snitch anyway. His lack of glasses wouldn't stop him from catching it.

He dived to follow it but lost sight of the gold and only saw the grass quickly approaching him.

He pulled out of the dive, skimming the grass as he flew straight and looked up. The stars shone brightly, white glimmers of light that contrasted with the flutter of golden wings by Orion's belt...

Harry shot up and leaned right until he was level with the Snitch, reaching for it and suddenly realizing that wasn't a good idea.

He closed his fingers around the Snitch and heard nothing but the buzzing sound in his ears. It didn't feel cursed, only the spells that kept the Snitch in the air and always flying humming in his fist.

But common sense caught up with Harry, and he wondered why a Snitch would be left out to fly in the pitch at night.

"A passable catch, Potter, but I would like my Snitch back."

Harry examined the Snitch and found the Hogwarts seal inscribed at its base. "Doesn't look it."

Malfoy removed one hand from his broom and held it out. "Give it back."

Harry felt a surge of mischief go through him. "Sure I will."

"Now, Potter."

Harry let go of the Snitch and caught it again. "But I was having so much fun."

"I have to return it."

"You will." Harry let his broom back away from Malfoy.

"Give it now!"

"Okay. Now." Harry released the Snitch and watched it flit away.

"Let's get it," Harry said, flying next to Malfoy and nudging his broom.

Harry heard Malfoy utter a curse before he sped away. He followed Malfoy for several yards, then slowed to circle the pitch.

Malfoy was flying below him at a faster speed, a blond blur that zoomed to the other side of the pitch...

Harry dove down until he was flying side by side with Malfoy. He looked straight ahead for the gold but saw nothing but darkness.

A laugh sounded next to him. "I got you."

"What?"

Malfoy stopped his broom. Harry did the same, squinting to see Malfoy hold out the Snitch in his fist.

"I won."

~*~

"Do you play out here often?" Harry asked, his broom slung over one shoulder as he walked with Malfoy to Hogwarts.

"Upon occasion, and always fully clothed."

"I'm wearing clothes." Sure, he wasn't wearing any shoes, but the grass felt cool against his bare feet.

"You'd give the students an eyeful."

Harry blushed, remembering what Snape had told him earlier.

"Why are you nice to me all the sudden?"

Malfoy inclined his head. "I think the question is why are we both being nice to each other." Malfoy opened the doors of the school with a flick of his wand.

"Thank you for the potion."

"The sun will rise soon." Malfoy took the steps to the dungeons and melted into the shadows.

~*~

November

"Professor, my Patronus doesn't look right," Elizabeth Johnson, a Hufflepuff fifth year, called out.

Harry weaved his way through the students and their Patronus attempts until he was at Miss Johnson's side. "Are you focusing on your most happy memory?"

The girl nodded. "My first visit to Hogsmeade," she said wistfully. "My aunt is taking me there during Christmas hols I've been dying to go all year."

Harry plowed ahead with his instruction before Miss Johnson spoke again. *Why are Hufflepuffs so damn chatty?*

"Then focus it into your spell. And remember to pronounce it properly."

She closed her eyes, took a breath and said, "*Expecto Patronum*," letting out a shriek of delight when a silvery frog leaped out of her wand and hopped around the room.

"Excellent. Keep practicing, and you can join the others who have produced one in a practice test. Have you got your chocolate ready?"

"Honeydukes finest, Professor."

"Good."

Harry walked off to the other side of the room to monitor his students' progress when he heard a knock at the classroom door.

"Hullo, Harry," Remus said in the doorway.

Harry waved to Remus and addressed his class. "I'll be right back. Continue working."

He made sure to stand outside the door in a way that gave him a good view of his students. "What's wrong?"

Remus smiled. "What would give you that idea?"

Harry shrugged. "Used to assuming the worst, I suppose."

"I guess we all have. Severus wants to see you immediately."

"My classes..."

"Not to worry. That's why I'm here to cover for you."

"Oh."

Remus peered into the classroom. "Working on Patronuses, I see. Should be able to handle that, right?"

"Yeah. I've set up a practice test for them. Since the boggart won't work, I've set up a spell..."

Remus patted Harry's back. "Don't worry, Professor. I'll take care of everything."

Harry nodded and ran to the Headmaster's office, hearing calls of delight for the Transfiguration Professor behind him.

~*~

"Professor?"

Snape looked up from his desk and waved his hand in the direction of the chairs opposite his desk.

Harry sat and leaned forward. "What's wrong?"

Snape straightened and held out his fists. Opening them revealed two black pieces of wire attached to nubs with small holes on them.

"Do you know what these are?"

Harry would have laughed if it wasn't for the look on Snape's face. Surely he had seen one spy movie in his lifetime. "It's a bug."

"Don't joke with me, Potter."

"No, not an insect. It's a Muggle spying device that records what someone says."

"Electronic?"

"Yes."

Harry could already see Hermione in his mind's eye reciting *Hogwarts: A History*. "It doesn't matter," Harry added. "They can't work"

"Yes, they can." Snape put the wires down. "There's a magical field around the Muggle Studies classrooms to permit the use of Muggle electronics. I installed it a year ago so that Robbins could demonstrate some basic things. A toaster. A lamp. Anything needed electricity."

"But it's only in the Muggle Studies department, right?"

"I found these in my office."

Harry shook his head. "The magic is too strong here."

"I don't know if they're actually able to spy on me. But these are a threat." Snape cradled his head underneath his palm. "It has to be Robbins."

Harry sputtered. "It can't be"

"His father is on the board. How do you think he got the job?"

"It doesn't make any sense."

"Do you have any evidence to prove otherwise?"

It was like being in Shacklebolt's office again. "No."

"Robbins it is, then." Snape looked around the office. "Watch him. Try to probe the truth out of him." Snape turned to the portraits. "And I better not have any gossips up there. Understood?"

"Yes," Harry and the other portraits grumbled. He noticed that Dumbledore and McGonagall were not in their frames.

"Good. You have most of the morning off. Use it wisely."

"But... Remus"

"He'll be fine."

"He has all of Friday morning off?"

"Perhaps."

"Ugh. Is that your time to take"

"Out of my office, Potter."

As Harry shut the door, he saw Snape make an expression that could have been a smile.

~*~

The headache Harry had ever since he had talked with Snape continued throughout the day so relentlessly that he doubted sleep would come easily that night.

His suspicions became truth as he lay awake that night, unable to think of anything else but the threat against Snape, Craig's involvement in it, and long reddish-brown hair.

Even Occlumency wasn't going to work this time. Not with his headache.

Then he remembered. With a flurry of excitement, Harry made sure he had his robes, trainers, and glasses on before he flew out the window.

Harry wondered if Malfoy was going to be at the pitch like last time. He hadn't spoken to Malfoy since then. Merlin, that was almost *a month* ago and his absence in the Great Hall during meals made an attempt at conversation even more difficult. Harry had considered sending Draco an owl, but his letter writing skills were minimal at best, and that was when he was writing to his friends.

Harry frowned when he had arrived at the empty pitch. In that case, he would have to

"Still looking for that Snitch?" a low voice said from behind him.

Harry turned his broomstick. "Malfoy! I thought."

"Well, you thought wrong." Malfoy flew so that he was in front of Harry, the smooth line of his back visible through the dark robes he wore.

Harry looked away. "You released the Snitch?"

"It's already flitting about, waiting for us." Malfoy looked over his shoulder, silver blond hair framing his face.

Harry grinned. "You're on," he said, flying under Draco and into the center of the pitch.

~*~

"Admit defeat, Malfoy."

"Never. My flying was excellent, my technique"

"But who caught it?" Harry held out the Snitch between his thumb and forefinger, laughing all the while.

"I can still fly circles around you anytime."

"Anytime?" Harry lay on the grass, looking up at the stars.

Draco eyed him speculatively. "That's what I said."

"Tomorrow."

"Do you lack the ability to form complete sentences?"

Harry took off his glasses and rested his forearm on closed eyes. "Will you play tomorrow afternoon? With me?"

Harry could hear Draco let out a deep breath. "Potter"

"Oh, right. One of the House teams must be practicing for the start of the season"

"There is no Quidditch."

Harry flung his arm aside. "What do you mean, 'No Quidditch'??"

"Safety measures. Remember all the times you were hexed in the air?"

"Yeah. Something about a pointy-faced git dressed up in Dementor robes."

"Piss off. The Dark Lord had also been involved."

"He's gone. Problem solved."

"No, it's not. The Ministry"

"Sod the Ministry. No Quidditch teams?"

"No flying lessons either. Surely you must've noticed why Hooch never got a replacement?"

"It's ridiculous, bureaucratic bullshit!"

"Don't tell me that. Tell the board."

Harry smiled into his shoulder. "I will."

"What?"

His headache long gone, Harry sat up and opened his eyes. Draco's hair looked fuzzy around the edges, almost like a halo.

"Have you gone mad, Potter?"

As Harry Summoned his broomstick, he realized that he had spoken aloud. "Yeah. I think I have."

~*~

He slept.

~*~

Draco had eventually agreed to play on Saturday in the evening. When Harry approached the field on his broom, Draco greeted him with a Quaffle to the face.

"Shit, Malfoy," Harry said as he barely caught the ball. "You could have knocked me out."

"You'll do as a Keeper," Malfoy said, flying up to the northern set of hoops.

"What game are you playing at?" Harry shouted as he flew after him.

He could feel Draco's smirk when he spoke. "Same game we've always played with a twist.

"You take the posts, and I'll take the penalty line. Every time I score, I get to ask you a question."

"About?"

"Anything but the war."

Harry nodded.

"If you successfully block, then you ask a question. Same terms."

"Let's start." Harry threw the Quaffle back to Draco and settled in front of the center hoop.

Draco flew right and threw left. Harry missed the Quaffle because of the fake.

"Point for me. Fetch the ball while I think up a good question."

Harry grumbled as he flew after the Quaffle and returned with it.

"Took you long enough."

Harry threw the Quaffle at Draco. Hard.

Draco caught it deftly. "Not my fault you Keep worse than Weasley. Why is Snape nice to you?"

Gets straight to the point, this one. "He taught me Occlumency during the war."

"After sixth year?"

"Yeah," Harry answered. "Hey, stop trying to filch extra answers out of me."

Malfoy didn't respond, instead hurling the Quaffle straight ahead. Harry caught it easily.

"You gave it to me."

Draco held up his hands. "I was looking to injure."

"Why don't you eat with us?"

"I'm shy."

"Truth."

"I'm working."

"On what?"

"My ball."

Harry threw it back and waited for Draco's next throw. He flew high and fast, throwing the ball at a curve. Harry blocked the wrong hoop.

"Why are you nice to me?"

"Your hair's pretty."

"Shut up."

"I don't know. Why are you nice to me?"

"Make a save, and I'll tell you."

Harry retrieved the Quaffle and tossed it to Draco.

He didn't throw easy this time, and Harry stretched so far for the Quaffle that he almost fell off his broom, the red leather knocked off its course.

"Why are you nice to me?"

"You didn't catch it."

"I blocked it anyway."

"Your hair's horrible, but your Quidditch is satisfactory."

"I'll show you satisfactory." Harry prepared for another dive for the Quaffle, but Draco held up a Snitch-filled hand.

"Show me."

~*~

Harry was a man who hadn't fucked for awhile. It was only natural, then, that his knees were spread wide, his boxers were around his ankles, and he was jerking off rapidly, a book of defense spells lying forgotten on the other side of his bed.

His throat tight and cock throbbing, Harry let out a ragged breath as his release spilled over his fingers. He cursed and muttered a cleansing spell, closing his eyes and waiting for sleep to claim him.

Because fantasizing about soft blond hair in his hands as he pushed a willing Draco Malfoy onto his cock was not natural at all.

Part Two.

Chapter 2 of 2

Auror Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts to teach and realizes the war still needs to be fought within the castle's heavily warded walls.

December

During midmorning break that Friday, Harry decided to talk to Snape. He had wanted to earlier in the week, but he'd had to oversee detentions, grade a pile of essays set aside for too long, and see to the boggart he'd kept in an old cabinet for the third years' test. The bugger was not shy at all, jumping out and scaring the children during class.

Harry knocked on Snape's office door with apprehension, but he was relieved to see only Snape writing on his desk.

"I don't mix work and pleasure, Potter." Snape set his quill down. "Why are you here?"

"Quidditch."

Snape stood and looked up at Dumbledore's portrait, who shrugged and resumed its midmorning nap. "I was wondering when you would bring that up."

"This school needs Quidditch."

"It has done well enough without it since the school's re-opening."

"For seven years?"

"The board believes it promotes violence and discord among the students."

"Malfoy said something about that before"

"You're talking to him now?"

"A little."

"Defending your virtue like a Victorian maiden, I see."

"Who said I still have it?"

"Touché, but don't hint at that again."

"And the Quidditch?"

"Bring it up at the staff meeting this month."

Harry made his way to the door. "Thanks."

"I can't guarantee anything. And Potter?"

Harry turned back to the Headmaster, who was seated once more.

"Try to keep your eyes open for something other than the Snitch."

~*~

That night, Harry put on his heaviest cloak and flew to the pitch. He swooped over the overgrown grass, circled the hoops that needed to be polished to their former shine. Harry flew next to the stands, unable to count all the spider webs that congregated on the unused structures.

How could I have missed it before?

Heading back to the Northern hoops, Harry searched the pitch for Draco, seeing nothing but the moonless sky and the ghostly puffs of air he released after every exhaled breath.

Draco wasn't there.

~*~

It doesn't matter, Harry reasoned, sitting on the front stoop of Hagrid's hut on Saturday afternoon. Snape had informed him that the Ministry paid for the Maintenance Magi to attend to the school during the summer months, making the hut another relic on Hogwarts grounds.

It doesn't matter that he didn't play Quidditch with another person last night. That said person was Draco Malfoy. That he'd had another inappropriate dream featuring Draco the night before.

"Bollocks."

"I could have sworn someone was over here."

Harry looked up. Craig was standing in front of him, arms crossed and smiling.

"Hello," Harry said.

"Hello to you, too. Haven't seen you for awhile. Well, there are meals..."

"Yeah." After a moment, Harry added, "Let's get out of the cold. We could have tea in my office."

"Only if you admit the Falcons don't have a chance this year."

"Never."

~*~

If Craig was really out to get Snape, Harry thought, *then he has the chance to do it right here. He could harm me somehow and a few conjures later, Snape could be incriminated for attempted murder within a snap of a house-elf's fingers.*

"Sorry for the mess," Harry said as he Banished the papers on the chair Craig was to sit in. "I've been grading"

"It's fine," Craig said, sitting down. "I decided this year that the O.W.L. students and up should learn how to write their assignments with a ballpoint pen they've gotten used to it now, but the essays I had to read in September..."

Harry laughed and made an attempt to organize the surface of his desk. He found several back issues of the *Quibbler* he had already read and handed them to Craig.

"You read this?"

Harry shuffled some more parchments to a corner of his desk. "Yeah... the editor and owner sends me them."

"But this rag is"

"They always publish the latest Quidditch stats and latest goings on at the Ministry, and they report with honesty and integrity."

"Honesty, Harry? They write about... dragon and Crup crossbreeds and other nonsense. Why not read the *Prophet*?"

Harry deposited some scraps of paper and other rubbish into the bin under his desk. "It's not a reputable news source."

And it never will be until this war ends.

~*~

They had talked for awhile after that, and their continual debate over the success or failure of the Falmouth Falcons reminded Harry to write a letter to Ron after Craig left.

Once the letter was folded and sealed, Harry extinguished the candles in the office. He also spelled the boggart's cabinet shut in case it decided to wreck havoc upon Hogwarts at night.

Arriving at the Owlery, Harry chose a brown owl to send his letter. After fastening the parchment to the owl's leg, he watched the owl fly off into the darkening sunset.

"Didn't you have an owl before?"

Harry turned away from the window, even though it was Draco who spoke.

"She died during the war." Bringing him a Horcrux from Snape, Hedwig was spotted and fatally wounded by Death Eaters on her way to number twelve, Grimmauld Place.

"I've always assumed you had one yourself," Harry added.

"I used to." Draco removed an envelope from his robes and selected an owl from the other side of the room, murmuring something into its feathers as he tied on the envelope and led the owl to the window near Harry on his arm.

"I didn't know you were so good with animals."

"As long as said animal cannot tear me into shreds..."

"Why didn't you come last night?"

"I was working."

"At midnight?"

"The holidays are coming up. Working through them would defeat their purpose."

"So you won't be here for Christmas?"

"I didn't say that."

We already mailed our letters. We should be leaving.

"I'm going to speak at the next staff meeting."

"About the Quidditch games?"

Yeah."

"I'll be sure to attend."

"I never thought you were one for following rules."

There wasn't much space between them before, but now there was only Draco, his robes radiating warmth to Harry's chest. He faced him, blond hair so close Harry could touch it.

Harry swallowed.

"There are rules about this sort of thing, too," Draco whispered, causing Harry's breath to quicken.

"What exactly do you mean?" Was this what Snape was talking about before? Was Draco affirming it?

Why couldn't Slytherins just say things clearly?

"I meant"

The sound of laughing children interrupted Draco's words, and suddenly, he was on the other side of the Owlery, striding toward the exit.

Harry breathed deeply and left behind him.

~*~

"Any new business?" Snape gave Harry a look.

"Yes." Harry unfurled the notes he had put together while his second years took a written exam and glanced at the professors around the table, all paying rapt attention to him.

"I'm putting up a proposal to reinstate Quidditch at Hogwarts."

"That's an excellent idea," Professor Sprout said. "My Hufflepuffs have been clamoring for it all year."

"And my Ravenclaws as well," the Arithmancy professor said.

Draco also spoke. "The Slytherins, too, wish to play."

"And I'm sure Remus would agree that the Gryffindors feel the same," Sprout added.

Professor Bryar coughed, and the room fell silent. Harry steeled himself for her upcoming words.

"I've never heard my Charms students say anything."

"That's not a reason to keep Quidditch from Hogwarts," Sprout said.

Bryar lowered her glasses. "Then I should make my point clearer. What would Hogwarts gain from the sport?"

Harry looked at his notes. "The players would gain a sense of unity from a playing on a team."

"That's what the Houses are for."

"In addition," Harry went on, "they will increase school spirit, which is lacking."

"How can you say"

"What does Hogwarts have to be proud of, besides education? For Merlin's sake, even that's compromised, with the smaller curriculum we offer. Besides that, our grounds aren't well kept. There are weeds growing all over, and the school itself is falling apart because we have no caretaker"

"The school is taken care of in the summer."

"Yeah," Harry spat, standing, "so I've heard.

"And what about the students?" Harry went on, his face heating. "All they have to look forward to now is holidays, when they don't have to be here, where there are no Hogsmeade visits, no Quidditch games... and when you enter the school, the wards are so heavy that you stagger in!"

"There are many indoor activities the students can engage in the Gobstones Club"

"Do you honestly think that can accommodate the entire student body?"

"Do *you* think, Mr. Potter, that the board will agree to this? My husband"

"We are all aware who your husband is, Professor." Snape looked at Harry, prompting him to sit. "Let us not forget that a reluctance to face certain truths helped cause the Second War.

"I will send Potter's proposal to the board tonight with a majority of the staff's vote. Whoever approves of the game, please raise your hand."

As Harry raised his hand, he saw that most had done the same, with the exception of Bryar and the Ancient Runes professor.

"So off it goes."

"No one else is against this... perversion of school policy? Do you have the werewolf's vote as well?"

"Professor Lupin was informed of the proposal before the moonrise and gave his full support to it." Snape took out his wand and tapped the table, his hand shaking. He wasted no time in leaving, almost at the door before Harry could speak.

"Snape," Harry called out.

"Yes, Potter?"

Harry reached him. "Thanks."

"Save it for when the board makes their decision. Goodnight."

Harry looked for Craig, spotting him talking with Bryar in a corner of the room.

Shaking his head, Harry stepped back from the door, bumping into someone.

"Oh," Harry began to say. "Sorry"

Draco turned Harry to face him. "Not bad, Potter."

Harry pushed up his glasses. "Thanks."

"The moon is full tonight."

"You'd be up for playing?"

Draco chuckled. "Yes, that too."

And in true Slytherin fashion, Draco left the staff room before he could get an exact answer.

~*~

The winter holidays came, and Hogwarts did its best to celebrate. The Great Hall looked as festive as it had in years past, though Harry noticed the fairy-lighted trees were much smaller, and there was less holly and mistletoe throughout the castle than before.

Perhaps, Harry reflected as he passed the suits of armor decorated with garland, that was a good thing.

Harry entered the Great Hall for the Christmas feast, well aware he could have spent the hols with Mrs. Weasley's substantially smaller family that would always include Hermione and himself.

But Snape wanted Harry to watch, and watch he did, settling in between Remus and a Slytherin sixth year at the table and tucking into his meal.

"Happy Christmas, Harry, and thank you for the old Rolling Stones forty-fives. How did you know I liked them?"

"I was looking through the picture album you had given me for my seventeenth birthday there was one of you and my dad, and you were wearing a t-shirt with them on it."

Snape snorted from his place on the other side of Remus, and Harry thought he was threatening Lupin not to turn the record player on that night.

"Well, thank you all the same," Remus said.

Harry smiled in return and piled more food on his plate. He was refilling his goblet when the quiet chatter of those around the table silenced.

"Please move over, Miss Flint."

And then Draco was sitting next to him, putting a roll on a fresh plate as though it wasn't the first time Draco was eating in the Great Hall since September.

Harry grinned. "Happy Christmas."

"Happy Christmas." In a lower voice, he added, "When you're finished eating, come to my office to receive your present."

Harry swallowed his food, took a swig from his goblet and wiped his lips clean, soon making a quick exit and waiting outside for Draco.

"You could have stayed," Draco said from the Great Hall's entrance.

Harry shook his head. "Needed to get some air." He would have had an embarrassing reaction to be so close to Draco's warmth, to having their thighs touch under the table.

They began taking the stairs to the dungeons, silent until Draco spoke again.

"The magazine where did you get it?"

"Around."

"It's just that I've been looking for the first issue of *Quidditch Quarterly* for ages. When I was in Hogwarts, even my dad couldn't"

Draco breathed through his nose sharply. "Thank you," he said once they had rounded a highly decorated part of the dungeon by the Slytherin common room.

"You're welcome oh!" Harry stopped and looked up at the archway above him.

"What is it, Potter? I haven't got all day."

Harry said nothing and waited for Draco to look up at the mistletoe hanging there.

He then lowered his gaze, his eyes locking with Draco's. Time slowed while his heart raced and his breathing quickened. Draco was so close to him now, not even air between the press of their chests, Harry's chin almost fitting into the hollow of Draco's neck and his fists at his sides, itching to finally touch that blond hair.

"Oh, so you want to follow the spirit of the holiday?"

Harry nodded once and closed his eyes with a tilt of his head.

A swish of fabric later and Harry was aching and cold.

He opened his eyes.

Draco was walking away, headed for his office once more. Looking over his shoulder, he smirked and said,

"Come and get your present. And for Merlin's sake, Vanish that mistletoe."

~*~

Harry wanted to tear into the gold wrapping paper as soon as Draco handed him the small gold box, but Draco shook his head.

"Open it when you're alone."

"What's in it?" Harry held the box to his ear and shook it. He heard no sound.

"I'm not telling you."

"A hex in waiting?"

Draco looked at him sharply.

"So if I have to open it alone... something exciting for Christmas?" Harry asked with a suggestive lilt to his voice.

Draco straightened in his chair. "Don't be absurd."

"Do you fancy me or not?"

Draco stood up so fast his chair fell to the floor. "Get out of my office."

He was sick of Slytherins and their untruths. "Fine!" he gritted out, exiting Draco's office and taking the stairs two at a time to reach his rooms.

It was only when he was seated on the edge of his bed, his head still spinning, that Harry realized that box was still clutched in his fist.

He raised his hand to throw it, but he caught himself and decided to open it instead.

Within the box and wrapping paper lay a silver case, and within that, a golden ball, its wings retracted.

Harry removed the Snitch with his thumb and forefinger and saw that the bottom was engraved with his initials.

His smile came involuntarily as he put both Snitch and case on his dresser and picked up the box and wrapping paper to throw away. The paper fluttered in his fingers, revealing a small white card. Harry took it, and read the single word written on it.

Practice.

~*~

"The last time I saw you, new leaves were growing from the trees." Ron brushed the snow out of his hair with the sleeve of his jumper and sat across Harry at the table.

Harry winced, remembering. "Wasn't my fault your team actually started doing well last season," he said, mustering a smile.

Ron grinned and set his cloak on the back of his chair. "So, Harry, how's the teaching going?"

Harry shrugged. "Everything's good. You've read my letters."

"Yeah, but" Madam Rosmerta appeared at their table and took their orders.

"But," Ron continued, "you've been leaving things out."

"I have not."

"You write about classes and Quidditch and that Craig bloke, but what about the other teachers?"

"Nothing to say," Harry said, drumming his fingers against the tabletop. They made no rhythm, not like Draco's steady beat.

Harry ducked his head.

"Come on, there has to be *something* about Snape, at least. Is he still a great murderous git?"

"Not so sure on the murderous part..."

Ron shrugged. "As long as you believe it. Bastard still probably hasn't showered in years, no wonder he's never gotten any..."

"I'm not so sure about that."

"Ugh! Not that I want to hear about Snape, exactly, but you never write about anything interesting. I mean, I tell you"

"Now, *there's* ugh. Your letters read like a *Broomshed* magazine. Have you caught anything from these girls you..." Harry made a rude hand gesture.

"No," Ron said in an affronted tone. "But you're changing subject again!"

"What subject?"

Ron clasped his hands and leaned across the table. "Tell me about Draco Malfoy."

Harry sipped the beer that had arrived. "What do you want to know?"

"Everything."

"There's nothing really to"

"Bollocks. Hermione has been writing to me"

"Shit"

"And she told me you were playing Quidditch with him at night"

"Why did she tell you?"

"You didn't even want to play with *me* professionally"

"I don't tell *her* about your sex life"

"And she reckons you fancy him"

"What?"

Ron practically leered at him, and Harry knew he had lost.

"You know what."

Harry sighed, wrapping his fingers around the pint's handle, and began his tale.

~*~

Harry staggered into the castle, thankful that he didn't pass out from the castle's wards. Ron's encouraging words and the beer he had consumed brought back some of his Christmas spirit, and he made his way to the dungeons carefully with jumbled apologies forming in his mind.

Only when he knocked on the door of Draco's office, no one answered.

~*~

Harry was sure Ron was partying somewhere on the continent, Hermione was spending New Year's Eve at a fundraiser party for her cause du jour, and that Snape and Lupin were...

Best not to think of any of them right now.

Not with his bed sheets tangled around his feet, his hair sticking to his sweaty forehead and neck, and his cock hard and heavy in his hand as he stroked it.

It was best to think of nothing but the sweaty sounds of sex as he wanked, to another body fitting against his, matching him in thrusts and moans and kisses, another cock rubbing his own on the bed, another face pressing on his, lips grazing his jaw, foreheads touching, blond hair meeting black

Harry came with a long groan, let his breathing even out and surveyed the mess around him, caused by a man who wasn't even there.

"Happy New Year," Harry muttered to himself, cleaning up and falling asleep.

~*~

January

He woke to a scratching sound at the window.

Harry left the bed to let in the owl and remove the envelope in its beak. Rubbing his eyes, Harry opened the letter, holding it close to his face so he could read it.

Potter

As a late Christmas present of sorts, the board has allowed us one game.

Fuck this up and I'll have you regret every time "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" has been playing in my chambers.

The letter was unsigned, but Harry knew which surly Headmaster to thank as he found a quill and scratched out a "Thank you" as a reply.

~*~

Snape decided the particulars of the game and explained them at the impromptu staff meeting held after the holidays.

The match would be played by combined House teams Hufflepuff with Ravenclaw and Gryffindor with Slytherin. When asked by an amused Remus about the hateful Houses joining forces, Snape replied, "I might just have a little Dumbledore in me."

The Heads of House were responsible for the try-outs and practices of their teams, Remus asking Harry to take over his duties.

Harry ignored Bryar's complaints about the game at this staff meeting and also paid no attention to Craig's concerned glances.

When Snape called it to an end, Harry caught Draco by the door.

"Why didn't you stay at the castle this Christmas?"

Draco started at the corridor. "Working."

Harry's mind scrambled to find something else to say, but Draco left the staffroom in a sweep of charcoal robes.

Harry was about to follow him, but a hand fell upon his shoulder.

"Anything wrong?" Craig asked with a frown.

Harry shook his head, staring at the doorway. "No. Everything is fine."

~*~

He taught as he had before he hols, assigning essays and perfecting his students' defense spells. At meals, he would converse with Craig or Remus, refusing to look at that empty seat in the Great Hall.

When Harry chose and coached their combined Quidditch team, Harry and Draco did so from other sides of the pitch, avoiding conversation unless it was about the team.

And when Harry woke at night, restless from a fitful sleep, he looked at his broomstick, closed his eyes, and tried not to dream of flying.

~*~

February

"They're coming on the twenty sixth and want to see the match during their visit."

"But that's two weeks away. Our normal teams would have almost three months of training before"

"You forget, Potter, that this isn't a normal Quidditch game and that the teams aren't normal to begin with." Snape looked at the other coaches in his office. "Be ready by the twenty sixth."

"Severus?" Pomona stood. "What should be done with the uniforms?"

"It's already been handled," Snape replied with a scary looking smile.

~*~

"Merlin," Harry said as he saw the red and green robed team fly above him, "They look like oversized Christmas decorations."

"Snape must have been laughing his arse off when he ordered them."

Harry kept a steady grip on his broomstick as he faced Draco. "After a month, he declares it ready to speak to another human being."

"Just because I wasn't speaking to you doesn't mean"

"Professor Potter!" shouted Ryan McCormack, a Gryffindor fourth year, from the posts. "We've been flying for almost four hours!"

"Fine. Practice is over, but you'll be making up for it tomorrow."

The Slytherin players turned to Draco for confirmation and cheered with their Gryffindor teammates when their Head of House nodded.

"Good," Harry said as he backed into the stands, hidden. "Now we can finish this."

"Finish what?" Draco said, remaining where he stood.

"This." Harry grabbed Draco's arm, pulling him up against one of the wooden pillars holding up the stands.

"Answer my questions and I'll answer yours without a Quaffle."

"Let go of me and I might."

"Will," Harry said, his fingers still wrapped around Draco's arm.

"Fine, Potter, I will. Now let go of me!"

Harry let his hand fall. "Where were you during holidays?"

"I was working. On gaining my inheritance."

Harry stepped back. "That's it?"

"Did you think that I was finding a way to destroy Hogwarts? Bring all former and suspected Death Eaters together for a third war?"

"No I"

"You think my spying was a sham? My Order of Merlin undeserved? Because I did my part just as you"

"Shut *up*, Draco! I believe you, okay?"

Draco narrowed his eyebrows. "You do?"

"Yeah." Harry took in a breath. "Snape's been telling me about the threats at the school. Out of all the people here that would do it, you're not even on my list."

"Then why do you bother?"

"With what?"

"Trying to talk to me. Playing Quidditch with me. Taking liberties with my first name."

Harry's face heated. "You're not a suspect to investigate, if that's what you mean." He leaned on his broomstick. "I was going to apologize while you were away."

"Were you?"

"On the twenty-eighth. Of December. I knocked on your office door, but you didn't answer."

"I had left after Christmas." Draco's eyes flickered for a moment.

"Why did you try to kiss me?" he asked.

"The mistletoe and you were *there*"

"Do you even know my sexual orientation?"

"Snape he said something"

"And then you just ask me if I fancy you"

"I'm sorry I assumed"

"I do."

Harry stopped. "You do?"

"Yeah," Draco breathed. "I mean, yes."

"Always have to speak proper."

"Especially since you don't." Draco smiled, tilting his head low, blond hair falling into his eyes.

"Dammit. I haven't gotten it cut in ages"

"Don't," Harry said, letting his broom clatter to the floor as he reached up to touch it.

Harry felt the mood change again, from anger to understanding to uncertainty. As his fingers brushed Draco's fringe behind his ear, he didn't know how to proceed. Not when Draco was with him, speaking, breathing, puffs of air mingling between them and fogging Harry's glasses.

Draco ended the pause by lifting Harry's chin with glove-covered fingers, smooth leather gripping his jaw as their lips touched.

It started slow and soft, Draco's fingers still holding Harry in place, Harry rising on his toes so that the other man didn't have to hunch as much. Harry's tongue pushed past his lips and into Draco's, gaining entrance, and Harry closed his eyes, fisting his right hand into Draco's hair, the other finding purchase on his waist.

And then it became hot and fast and loud, Harry pulling away for air, harsh gasps echoing in the stands and a moan escaping Draco's lips when Harry slid his thigh in between Draco's legs.

"We...can't. Not here."

"Why not?"

"It's too bloody cold," Draco answered, a real wide smile forming on his lips. Harry could see that his bottom front teeth were crooked, and he wanted to run his tongue over them.

"My rooms then. The dungeons don't get much heat either."

"That's what Warming Charms are for."

Harry kissed Draco. "We'll be too busy for that."

~*~

Harry would never have guessed that post coital chat with Draco Malfoy would include Quidditch. Then again, he would have never guessed he'd be having coital anything with the blond, who was discussing the faults of Puddlemere's latest captain.

"Well," Harry said, "maybe they'll come to their senses and choose Leafley next season."

"But she's Muggle-born."

"So?"

"They won't pick her. Inferiority and all that."

"I'm a half blood."

"That's different."

"Sounds like you're making an excuse not to feel bad after fucking me."

"It's not like that." Draco rubbed his forehead. "I grew up with my beliefs. You grew up with yours. And no matter what, they are going to stay with me for the rest of my life."

"And the war?"

Draco cringed. "My reasons for leaving him had nothing to do with blood politics."

Harry didn't know if he was referring to his father or Voldemort.

"I won't curse your Granger or kill Muggle-borns in their beds. But I also won't open my arms and declare equality for all, because there isn't, and it's not all by my hand."

"Seems fair enough," he said, pushing Draco into the bed and huddling with him under the blankets.

"Good to know I have your approval," Draco muttered as they fell asleep.

~*~

Harry, wishing the team a final good luck, sent them out of the changing rooms. He waited until they had reached their flying positions until he left himself, finding Draco conversing with Professor Sprout at the sidelines.

"Everything set?"

Draco excused himself from the Hufflepuff coach. "The teams are out here, and so are Snape and the board members young enough to climb the stands." He jerked his chin over to Bryar, who was sitting stiffly at the end of the Headmaster's box.

"Brilliant!"

Draco raised his eyebrows. "Someone is excited."

Harry leaned in and whispered, "In more ways than one."

A blush suffused Draco's cheeks when he pulled away. Looking up, he frowned.

"He wants to speak to you."

Harry looked up with Draco and saw Craig flying towards them.

"We're almost ready to go," he said once he landed. Turning to Harry, he added, "You'll need to be careful."

Harry gave him a questioning look. "Of course I will."

With a nervous glance around him, Craig kicked off into the air.

The game began.

~*~

The Hufflepuff-Ravenclaw team was ahead by thirty points when a Slytherin Chaser was slumped on her broomstick.

Within seconds, Harry was in the air, almost perpendicular to the ground as he shot up to catch her in case she fell. He heard the announcer call a pause to the game as he reached the girl and made sure she was secure for him to bring her down. But as he pushed her hair aside to check for Bludger marks, he saw unbruised skin.

A flash of red light and a sharp pain erupted in his gut, and Harry saw no more.

~*~

March

There were glimmers of light in the darkness. Harry looked for each one, disappointed by what he found, hopeless images flashing before him and fading to the dark void once more. The Order of Merlin ceremony, his medal cold on his palm, the only remembered warmth being Voldemort's blood. Ginny storming out the door, tears spilling from red-rimmed eyes. Snape scowling at him with no emotion in his face, calmly handing him a dirt encrusted cup. Auror training. Headaches at night. Letters replacing hugs and conversation. Betrayal from a man with false dimples and long auburn hair. An empty Hogwarts. His students laughing, Remus and Snape communicating in their silent language. Quidditch talk and playing and flying and God Draco I'm coming, I'm with you, I'm with

Harry opened his eyes.

"I was hoping the year wouldn't include a hospital stay starring you." Snape stood over Harry's bed in the infirmary, his arms crossed.

Harry found his voice after several attempts. "You were praying for the day I would get injured."

"You'll never know for sure."

Harry looked around, seeing no one else. "Where's Draco?"

"In the bed next to yours the curtains are drawn."

Harry tried to sit up, but a pain in his stomach kept him lying down. "Is he"

"Just sleeping. You've been out for over two days, and I couldn't have him trying to rest in that chair."

"What happened?"

"Miss Johnson, the Gryffindor who you so heroically tried to save, was hit by a modified Stunner, most likely to get you up in the air for an open attack."

"What did they use on me?" Merlin, even breathing agitated the pain.

"A nasty cutting hex. The nurse spent most of the night healing you, as you had several organs damaged."

"Good... ah... to know."

"You're not the least bit interested in who your attacker was?"

"Whoever it is should be caught by now."

"Indeed she has."

"She? Please don't tell me"

"Ms. Bryar was reckless for someone so invested in the Ministry. She could have had someone else cast the spells at least"

"I think she tried."

"So the Boy Wonder managed to notice *something* this year."

"Snape"

"But I suppose you were useful for other things." Snape glanced at Draco's bed and left the infirmary.

The curtains beside him rattled. "Harry?"

"Yeah. I'm here."

Draco came to his bedside, his robes wrinkled and his hair flattened from sleep. "He's finally gone."

"How long were you awake?"

"Since he came in." Draco, raised his hands, fingers outstretched. Harry arched into the possible touch, but Draco's hand lay on his pillow instead. "How's the pain?"

"It could be worse." Harry closed his eyes and sighed.

"It could." A sudden warmth enveloped him, and Harry realized that Draco was embracing him, fingers cradling his shoulders.

"Draco?"

His chest hovered above Harry's now, the warm weight gone. "Yes?"

"Who won?"

"Our Seeker caught the Snitch while you started flying. She didn't hear the time-out."

Harry frowned. "But since she didn't get it during actual game play..."

"And the match was canceled after the attack."

"Then there's no clear answer."

Draco's lips found Harry's forehead. "Then we'll have a rematch."

~*~

Harry insisted on getting back to work that Thursday, sick of being the infirmary oddity, though he had smiled when his Quidditch team visited with assurances that they would kick the other team's arses next time sorry for the language, Professor and that Charms was a horrible class with her anyway.

But enough was enough when Hermione had returned to check up on him and patted his head and smirked whenever Draco entered the hospital wing to "bring salves to Madam Fucent."

Harry finished teaching his last class of the day and was approaching his office when he saw Craig waiting outside the door.

"I should have warned you better."

Harry went still, his hand inching toward his wand.

Craig's eyes widened. "No! I didn't know anything about what she was up to it's what I told the Aurors, I swear!"

"Then what happened?"

"Bryar kept cornering me, ranting about Hogwarts changing back for the worst and how people like you and Snape shouldn't be allowed here. Then she'd go on about keeping the new order... I guess she thought I'd help her because of my dad, but I declined I just never thought"

Harry observed his gesturing hands, the earnest focus of his eyes. "Will you be willing to say this under Veritaserum?" he joked.

Craig shuddered. "I already have."

"Oh." Harry reached for the doorknob. "Would you like to come in?"

"No, I still have exams to grade from earlier in the week. Maybe another time?"

Harry pushed open the door. "Yeah."

"Okay. See you then."

Harry was about to sigh and set his parchments down when a shadow fell across the doorway.

"Harry."

"Hello," Harry said to Draco. "What brings you here?"

"Snape allowed for us to have practice today."

"But we"

"Can shag later."

Harry blushed. "That's not what I meant. Do we have approval for the next game?"

"It's yet to be seen. And one more thing."

"What?"

"Keep a seat empty next to you for supper." Draco moved to exit the office, but Craig stuck his head in the doorway.

"Oh, Harry, I forgot to ask you. Do you have anymore issues of the *Quibbler* on you?"

"Sure. I can pile them up and have them sent to your office."

"Thanks. They are a highly reputable news source." And with that, Craig smiled and left.

"What was that about?" Draco asked.

"When you show at supper, I'll tell you."

- end.