

A Chance Earned

by pokeystar

How does a wizard woo a reluctant witch?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The day after the Potter wedding reception, he sent her a dozen long-stemmed red roses with a note.



She fed his owl a treat and quickly wrote her reply.



She thought the scorched flowers made a nice post-script.

The next day, his owl delivered a box of Honeyduke's premium chocolates.



She kept the chocolates to prove her sanity.

After that came a ruby and gold cuff bracelet. *So predictable.* She wondered if there was an official Malfoy Wooing Manual or if he had simply absorbed the technique via osmosis.



The nerve. She was annoyed at the arrogance of the man. He was right, of course, but that was irrelevant. She sent the bagatelle back directly to the jeweler.

It had been awkward at first, having to interact with him at the whirl of parties that comprised the lengthy Potter-Parkinson engagement. The fact that they were both members of the wedding party—as traditional symbols of acceptance between the betrothed couple—made it impossible to avoid each other. After several stiff, barely civil exchanges at various functions, Malfoy cornered her at *yet another party* in the Parkinsons' gazebo. He formally apologized for his many transgressions against her, and she accepted, in the interest of Harry's happiness. It cleared the air between them. By the time the actual wedding rolled around, they had become relatively friendly.

He escorted her during the recessional and stood by her in the receiving line, entertaining her with a scathing commentary delivered in a lightly flirtatious manner. They sat together at dinner and swapped horrifying tales of traveling mishaps. After cake and ice cream, the dancing started. He was a wonderfully skilled partner, but she had to take a break after the seventh number.

"I see Ginny and Oliver by the punch, and I'm very thirsty," she said breathlessly. "Would you like some?"

He nodded, and she started toward her friends at the drinks table. She had just turned to ask him if he wanted anything stronger, when she saw Zabini talking with him, and overheard Draco—*no, Malfoy*—drawl indifferently, "...well enough for a Muggleborn."

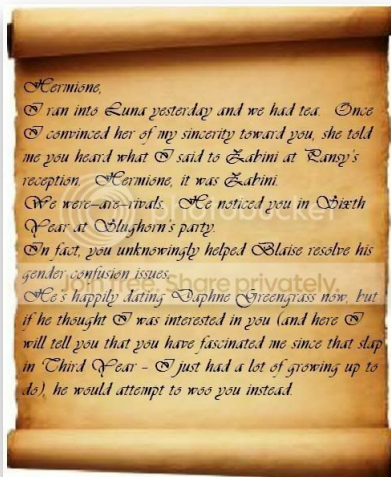
Hermione changed direction abruptly, seeking refuge in the bathroom as her eyes filled with tears. Thank Merlin Luna was there. She poured out her pain and confusion to her sweetly placid friend and was able to return to Malfoy's side mostly composed, if a little distant. She'd be twice-damned before he knew he had hurt her.

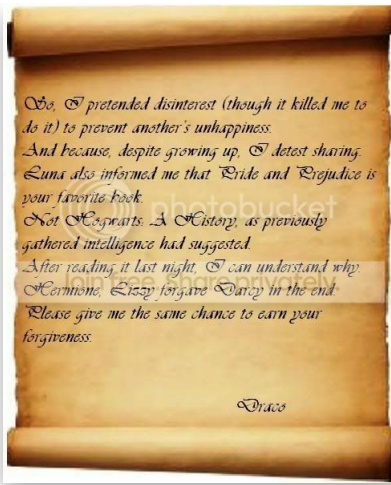
He accepted the punch and enquired concernedly, "What took you so long? I didn't see you talking to the Woods."

"Oh, well... I had to go to the bathroom and I ran into Luna," she replied, not-quite-airily.

He looked at her oddly, but at that point, a series of well-timed interruptions—Dean and Seamus, Neville and Hannah, Blaise and Daphne, Harry and Pansy, all subtly sent over by either Luna or Ginny, who had been recruited into the scheme, Hermione found out later—kept Malfoy from re-establishing their previous intimacy and from realizing Hermione's withdrawal. She was able to escape to the girls-only overnighter, also a post-wedding tradition, with her pride intact.

The cuff bracelet had been sold to another customer and several days passed before Malfoy's owl arrived with a note attached to a small, plainly wrapped package. She set the missive aside and unwrapped the gift. It was a gently worn first edition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, spelled to open to the ball room scene where Lizzy overhears Darcy's curt appraisal of her "lacking" charms. *How did he know?* She opened the two page note and read:





It was her favorite book.



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Many thanks and hugs to my beta, Floorcoaster. Baby, you're the best!

An excerpt of this fic submitted to live journal community dramione_idws under the title "A Little Distant"