

# Ruffled Fathers and a Lot of Grousing: Harry and Draco's Halloween

*by dracontia*

Can two divorcees, having been costumed against their will by their offspring, both attend a Halloween party without driving each other crazy? Let's hope not.

## 1. The Grumpy Hippogriff and the Lonely Veela

*Chapter 1 of 7*

Can two divorcees, having been costumed against their will by their offspring, both attend a Halloween party without driving each other crazy? Let's hope not.

Disclaimer: Ana and the costumes are mine, and that's about it.

NOTE: Forgive me, but I upped the rating on this. The first two chapters will not go above PG-13, but the final two might push the envelope into 'R,' so I have been advised to give the story uniform rating in accordance with the potential of the later chapters.

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### Chapter 1: The Grumpy Hippogriff and the Lonely Veela

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Behind his bedroom door, Harry Potter was engaged in fierce combat with an altogether too-well-tailored pair of leather trousers. Regrettably (from Harry's point of view), the trousers won. At least, that's what it felt like when they abruptly slid the rest of the way up his legs and promptly molded themselves to his bum. He was left with no real choice but to negotiate the arcane-looking front fastening since he couldn't bring himself to face the tedium of reversing the process.

As he stood in front of the mirror, cautiously evaluating whether the promised non-chafing lining really worked, he found himself thinking...not for the first time...that he really needed to learn to say 'no' to his children a bit more often. The youngest was, oh, nineteen, but it was never too late... right?

"This is so wrong on so many levels," he remarked, addressing the sentiment to the mirror. It was a perfectly ordinary non-charmed one, so it simply mimed the words comfortingly back at him. The last thing he needed out of life was false cheer...or badly concealed snickering...about his appearance from an inanimate object.

"Having trouble getting into them, Dad?" Albus Severus yelled through the door.

"No, I'm in them. Be a good son and get me the hell out of them? Immediately?" Harry called back, fairly certain that he sounded more dangerous than desperate.

"Merlin's b...never mind, we're coming in." Al pushed his way into the room, his fiancée/permanent shadow Anastasia trailing behind. Harry resisted the powerful urge to hide behind something. It would look absolutely silly considering that he wasn't naked, even though he felt as if he was. If they could make the damned trousers 'chafe-free,' couldn't they have designed them so that he could wear pants underneath?

"Wow." Anastasia seemed impressed, as if she had forgotten what she and Lily had designed. Harry thought that it would have been nice if it had been forgotten before it had been made into something that he had to wear.

"You could say that. And I could say, 'No, thank you. I don't think I'll be going to this charity thing.' They can keep the price of my ticket and I can stay home and keep my dignity. It sounds like a brilliant solution all around." Harry spotted Anastasia's disappointed expression in the mirror and braced himself for a guilt trip.

"But Great-Auntie Tatiana and Cousin Luna will be so disappointed. They aren't just doing this to raise funds for the conservation effort...Tatiana loves her American Halloween celebrations, and she will be so happy if this one goes well."

Harry wished that Luna would stick to discovering obscure magical creatures and leave off importing random American relatives. He was feeling especially poorly disposed towards the one with the son-nicking niece and a penchant for fancy dress parties. "Why don't you two go, then?"

"We've been over this. Someone had to go to Aunt Hermione's party. With James bringing the baby to visit Mum, it's up to us to go and run interference for Lily and Scorpius."

While Harry envied James his judgment on picking up his family and fleeing the jurisdiction to avoid the choice of debacles and debated which of those left behind was heading into a more fraught situation, Al continued in his most reasonable tone of voice. "It's been almost three years since Mum left. Your most meaningful relationship in that time has been with a set of free weights."

"They're better company than the dumbbells I'm liable to run into tonight. Besides, I thought that the spotting and all was bonding time for us," Harry drew on the long-suffering tone of voice that still occasionally worked to dislodge Hermione from his back.

"It was...is...but you still need to get out and **do** something. Mum has." Albus was probably trying to sound encouraging as he advanced with the rest of the costume, his air of determination eerily echoing his grandmother. Harry was not encouraged in the least by the scanty excuse for a garment that was being offered as the only adornment for his bare torso. And what was the deal with the feathers?

"Not dressed like this! I think I'm perfectly justified in worrying that my baby girl saw fit to design a costume for me that includes a-a..." He gestured vaguely in the direction of his crotch and belatedly wondered if even that was perhaps an overly crude thing to do in the presence of his future daughter-in-law.

"It's called a codpiece, Dad," Albus supplied helpfully.

"If it makes you feel any better, Lily didn't design the trousers," Anastasia added.

"No, it doesn't, really. I'm still uncomfortable." He shifted, frowning at the mirror and trying to figure out what this outfit reminded him of, ignoring the wings for the moment. There was an image that included a cowboy and an Indian bothering the edge of his consciousness...

"They don't fit?" Al sounded almost hurt.

"I wasn't talking about physical discomfort." Truth to tell, Harry was rather *too* comfortable in the skin-hugging, butter-soft leather. He felt as if he was swimming in warm velvet...which threatened to make that damned codpiece fit even closer than it already did. "I do too get out," he muttered. He made sure that it wasn't loud enough for them to hear, because he didn't fancy revisiting the 'Having drinks with Uncle Ron and some of the people from work once every other month doesn't count' argument.

"Oh, Mr. Potter...Dad," Anastasia quickly corrected. Harry wondered for possibly the millionth time why his children were so eager to get engaged so young, considering how it hadn't worked for Ginny and him. Amicable divorce was still divorce. He really was fond of Anastasia, but he couldn't help hoping that she and Al would draw out the engagement...let's say, another three years or so...to be sure. "You look positively wonderful. We just need to top it off."

"Good. You mean there's something to cover my chest?" Harry felt like an exotic dancer in some sordid club for witches with his lower half encased in clinging leather and his torso bound by a supple black harness that seemed too little by far to keep his impressive black wings attached. A few fine strips of leather with a fringe of tiny black feathers wound down his arms without really concealing anything, ending in gleaming little black claws over his knuckles.

"No, your forehead." Al fitted the feathered cap over Harry's hair. The thing must have been charmed to gently embrace the tangled pile, because the next thing he knew, it had settled almost against his scalp. Black curls limned here and there with a bit of silver slipped through the lightweight framework, blending perfectly with the iridescent black feathers. "Between the costume, the contact lenses, and covering your scar, we've met all your requirements for anonymity without being buried in a million layers."

"Being buried in one or two layers wouldn't be so bad." Harry realized that he was muttering again.

He hated to admit it, but the obsidian gloss of the thin, beak-like projection that covered his scar was nothing like the ridiculous, face-sticking-out-of-a-Hippogriff's-mouth-effect that he had envisioned when the kids had told him about the costume. He looked as if he was wearing a sleek, shimmering black helmet. He looked fierce. He looked... aerodynamic.

As if reading his thoughts, Albus said, "Come on, try the wings."

With whispered command word, Harry activated the charms that put the wings under his conscious control. They were lightweight, but responded slowly, almost majestically to his thoughts. They arched proudly, looking ready for flight, then curved in elegantly, closing without significantly diminishing their impressiveness. His shoulders and chest flexed automatically in response to the small shifts in balance caused by moving the wings. Anastasia applauded and squealed. Albus smiled proudly.

Harry closed his eyes.

*There must be some way to get out of this.*

"Look, Dad...there's a pouch for your ticket and maybe another small thing or two here in the harness. There's a holster for your wand in the side seam here. Oh, and don't forget the boots!"

Al's voice practically quivered with excitement, and Harry knew that he'd lost. Even if he managed to sneak out after an hour, he'd be attending a Halloween party... (barely) dressed as a black Hippogriff.

*I'm so fucked.*

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"Come now, Father. You promised that you would actually spend some time in the outside world for a change," Scorpius coaxed.

"Please, Papa, your costume is ever so elegant. Try it on." Lily held out the shimmering pile of fabric like some sort of offering. Her wide, guileless, green-eyed stare was worse than the Imperius Curse, making Draco wonder if it really oughtn't be illegal to sort Potters into Slytherin.

Draco slouched in his favorite moping chair and sighed tragically. "Nowhere I could go and nothing you could dress me in would mitigate the utter catastrophe that is my life." He had quite convinced himself that he didn't want to be convinced to go to any parties, thank you. Though of course, he would feel terribly neglected if they didn't try.

Scorpius sighed. "Oh, Father. You really must stop taking daily Drama Potions."

"Drama? It's not 'drama' when everyone abandons me. Your grandfather... your grandmother... your mother... my hair."

"We haven't abandoned you, Papa. And your hair is beautiful." Lily knelt by his chair and curled a strand of it around her finger in admiration.

Ignoring a snide little voice in his head that was telling Draco it wasn't just his hair she was wrapping around her finger, Draco gave her what he knew was his saddest smile. "What's left of it is, I suppose."

"Grandmother is only off on another of her little holidays, and honestly, a slightly receding hairline is hardly the end of the world." Draco wondered if he ought to be at least mildly affronted that his son and his future daughter-in-law were coaxing and scolding him as if he were a cranky toddler. "Your high forehead looks intellectual." Considering the blasted boy had managed to get himself sorted into Ravenclaw, Draco supposed that was praise.

"Will you at least try it on, Papa? The silk was selected to perfectly complement your skin tone, and we spent ages collecting the peacock moltings." Lily slipped the fabric under Draco's fingers, and he wavered at the softness and shimmer. Trying to escape the powerful gravitational pull of the shininess, Draco made the mistake of looking at Lily's face. *Bother emerald eyes.*

Draco employed his long-suffering sigh. "If it means that much to you, I suppose I can try it on." He rose and headed for his room, taking care to keep his downcast posture without actually being so gauche as to slouch.

"Stop moping along and put it on, then," Scorpius said. Draco shot him a wounded look.

"It's not 'moping along;' it's 'progressing tragically.'" Scorpius snorted; Draco sniffed.

Lily, dear, sweet, manipulative, child, seemed to appreciate his plight of being subjected to an unsympathetic son and plied him with one of her smiles as she handed over the costume. "We'll just go get the accessories while you dress. Remember, no socks, no shirt, and no pants. Just these."

"Wait...what?" Lily and Scorpius might have disappeared faster by Apparating, but Draco doubted it. He clutched at the tactilely interesting bundle for a moment before retreating into his room.

He almost balked at the trousers, which were obscenely tight. (No pants...how uncouth! What were the children thinking?) The flattering way in which the iridescent feather trim framed his backside to perfection and clung and flared around his legs in exactly the right places to make them look, oh, perhaps a mile long, almost distracted him from the fact that the 'robe' was a wispy bit of silk that had only a single fastening slightly above his navel, leaving most of his chest and abdomen exposed.

"What in the name of Merlin's millennium-old arse am I dressed as?"

"An utter ponce, by the look of it," his reflection said consideringly. "But at least you still have lovely skin, and your stomach would make a twenty-year-old cry."

Lily and Scorpius took this as their cue to waltz in. "You'll be a brilliant Veela, Father. Hold still while I fit your wings," Scorpius said, with far more enthusiasm than the situation warranted.

"I thought that Veelas don't have wings unless they've turned into animal-thing. I don't even know if male Veelas have them at all." Draco felt that his tone was very effectively conveying his grave doubts about the entire costume concept. Judging by the fact that Scorpius was enthusiastically threading the straps of an oversized pair of iridescent white wings through the slits in the so-called robe, the lad was very effectively ignoring said tone.

"Artistic license. You wouldn't want to look exactly like one of those shrieking chickens, would you?" He and Lily continued their two-pronged assault on his dignity by fastening sparkly little sandals to his feet and a trailing headpiece of feathers that began (disappointingly) at his hairline and cascaded down his back, blending with his surviving hair. Draco contemplated admitting to himself that he could, just possibly, do with a haircut but dismissed self-honesty in favor of pouting that they'd not hidden the depressing evidence of his Amazing Shrinking Follicle Population.

"It's far too cold to wear something like this," he protested. *And I look far too much like a girl.* Draco was not quite willing to voice that thought; but really, between the way the filmy sleeves played up the slenderness of his arms, the little claws that looked more like dainty, manicured nails, the vaguely feminine outline of the opening in the so-called 'robe,' and the bloody sparkly sandals, he felt that the costume said it loudly enough.

"Warming Charms are built into the robe, Papa," Lily said sweetly. "Could you take a few steps so we can see if the wing attachment works?" Draco obliged, shivering as Scorpius uttered the charm that gave him control of the wings.

"Brilliant! Now, mind your wings; they don't open terribly far, but you still need to take care not to crash into any doorways." Scorpius' enthusiasm slowly reduced Draco's resistance to the tensile strength of mint jelly.

*Bothersome child. One smile and he can achieve what sometimes used to elude me after multiple, elaborate temper tantrums.*

"That's about all they cover, unless you count any evidence of masculinity." Draco did a slow turn, noting that the robe split in the back. Between the feathers and the drape of the silk, everything looked disturbingly... curvy.

Lily sighed happily as if she hadn't heard him. "Oh, the effect is more graceful than we'd imagined! You really haven't an ounce of fat on you, have you? Get the camera, love, we have to have a photograph."

"That isn't really necessary," Draco called weakly after Scorpius' retreating back.

"Since you're not attending the party, I just have to have a little something to remember it by...I mean, the only time you wore the outfit and all. It fits so beautifully it's a shame that no one will see it." She made with the green eyes again. Draco could have sworn he heard the mirror whimper. It gave him sudden insight as to why every occupant of the manor...from Snape's portrait to his only son...seemed helplessly gaga around Lily.

"I can't. I really can't. It's... What if someone recognizes me?"

"I suppose you could wear a mask. But I haven't one that's designed to go with the costume, so a last-minute Transfiguration job might clash. In any event, I would so hate to cover up your features."

*Trust her to pick an argument I can't refute.*

"Scorpius! Never mind the camera, dear; go get those little jewels that were supposed to go on version one of the trousers and my silver eyeliner." She shouted down the corridor.

Draco was almost relieved that the camera idea was off until he registered the key word in that sentence. "Eyeliner?"

The next thing Draco knew, Lily was painting Merlin-knew-what manner of designs around his eyes and eyebrows, and Scorpius was leaning over her to fix little sparkling things to his forehead and cheeks with temporary Sticking Charms.

"I think we'd best Apparate to the Lovegood townhouse. You don't want to muss your feathers in the Floo," Scorpius said, beaming as though his father had done something admirable. Somewhere in there Draco must have given permission he honestly didn't recall granting because Lily hugged him, and the next thing he knew, he was being squished painfully through the creepy non-space of Apparation.

"Have fun, Papa! We've our own party to attend." Lily kissed him on the cheek, and she and Scorpius left him on the steps of the strange house in what appeared to be a rather nice Wizarding neighborhood. Before Draco could contemplate escaping, the door opened and a house-elf costumed as a Crup, complete with two wagging tails,

took his ticket.

*I might as well have used the Floo. My feathers feel quite thoroughly ruffled.*

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Yes, I'm invoking an Odd Couple vibe with the summary. Um... does it get more appropriate than that for these two?

I would be so grammatically lost without SeverusLovesUs. You don't want to know about the punctuation.

And now, I can also thank Red Orchid for this gorgeous [fanart of Harry and Draco in their costumes](#)! Leave a comment if you have a moment--these are hot :D

## 2. Come As You Aren't

*Chapter 2 of 7*

Can two divorcees, having been costumed against their will by their offspring, both attend a Halloween party without driving each other crazy? Let's hope not. (Although in this chapter, they each appear to have a different designated driver...)

Disclaimer: Only the costumes and some random characters are mine. If I owned the house, I'd really have something.

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Harry was ready to hex his own wings off about five minutes after Al and Ana shoved him through the front door of Tatiana's townhouse. If he raised the feathered monstrosities, they spread out and bumped into things. If he closed them, the edges framed his arse in a perfect, heart-shaped outline of black feathers. He had the bloody Hall of Mirrors that lined the entrance to thank for his awareness of that particular feature and was fuming that he hadn't noticed it at home.

*Why didn't they tell me about the problem in the back? How was I supposed to know? I mean, who checks out their own arse in a mirror?*

Once upon a time, it would have been Ginny's job to make sure he was dressed correctly before they went out. It had also been her job to do most of the ~~talk~~ talking on such occasions, but that seemed reasonable to Harry considering that going out was usually her idea to begin with. She'd given up trying to coax him out of his shell after about a year of marriage, which meant that she'd mercifully stopped sarcastically asking if he needed to see a Healer about his neck when he responded to most greetings with no more than a stiff nod.

Dwelling on the past made Harry feel like hiding behind his wings. The attempt showed up an even worse problem than the heart-shaped arse...bringing the wings forward pointed a handful of suggestively long feathers at his crotch. The only good thing about the bloody costume was that, true to Al and Anastasia's promise, no one had recognized him. Yet.

"Glad you could make it, Harry."

Harry was so badly startled he cursed at...well, he could really only think of one person who would attempt such an elaborate Crumple-horned Snorkack costume, even at a charity event that was partly aimed at preserving their habitat.

"Bloody evil children! They promised that no one would recognize me!" It was not often that he cursed around Luna, given she usually had a curiously calming influence on him, and he felt rather badly about it.

The Charms work that went into the costume must have been incredibly complex. The creature's mouth was perfectly synced up with Luna's curiously wandering cadence to the point of being unnerving. "I didn't recognize you, I recognized the costume. They put it together in my parlor. I've been finding black feathers in my sofa all week."

*And right you should for aiding the enemy.*

"Well, I suppose that's all right, then."

"But, I'm glad I caught you. There's been a slight change of plans. We're having an unmasking at midnight, so we need to make doubly sure that no one can recognize you before then. That would spoil all the fun!"

"Of course," Harry said. *So, I have until midnight to get my overexposed arse out of here. Good to know.*

"Hold still while I fix your face."

Harry presumed that the costume's eyes were functional as well, since their glassy depths eerily echoed Luna's wide, distractedly intent stare. That didn't mean that he felt comfortable with having something that, to all intents and purposes, looked like a badly deformed bipedal goat covered in dreadlocks, point a wand at his chin. "Fix... What's wrong with my face?"

"I want to make sure that even someone who happens to spot your usual clean-cut heroic profile will think twice about guessing that it's you. Though that Hippogriff beak is a stroke of genius."

"So my children keep telling me."

"*Hyperpilosa*!" Luna ran her wand along his jaw. "There. That's just enough stubble to complete the bad-boy look."

"I think I left 'boy' behind a while ago." *And we're going from bad to worse.*

"Nonsense, you look spectacular. If you were one of the stud Snorkacks on the preserve, we would make sure you had access to all the best breeding females to pass on those genes."

"Um... thanks?" Over a quarter of a century of friendship with Luna still wasn't quite enough to inure Harry from the sheer peculiarity of her compliments.

"I'm not the only one who thinks so. People have been staring at you ever since you walked in the door."

That was Harry's cue to edge a little farther into the corner. *Maybe I could actually get behind one of the mirrors?* "I haven't noticed. People tend to stare at me pretty much all the time."

"Yes, but for one, they can't recognize you right now... and for another, I don't believe that it's quite the same sort of stare you're used to. I could be wrong." Luna waved one hoof-paw around the room amiably.

Harry looked around in search of evidence supporting her assertion.

He was indeed getting stared at almost as often as he was used to. But Luna was right...instead of variations on the 'Wow, is that Harry Potter?' expression, it was a little more... primal. Harry had a nervous suspicion that it translated into something like, 'Hungry. Me want.'

"Oh, shit," he whispered. For a fleeting moment, he dearly wished for Ginny back, if for no other reason than her exceptional skill at chasing off his unwanted admirers.

"Cheer up! After all, it's time that you moved on. I mean..."

"...Ginny has. Yeah, I think I've heard that somewhere before." Harry felt a little bad about grumbling at Luna, but getting it twice in one night just wasn't on.

"You certainly can have your pick. Just like the best stud Snorkack in the herd. In fact, you probably wouldn't have to pick. More than half the room has been checking you out," she continued blithely. Either she was oblivious to his bad mood or choosing to ignore it. *You can never tell with Luna, and does that statement ever cover a multitude of sins...*

Harry was so caught up in relief that he hadn't disturbed Luna's pleasant mood that it took him a few moments to register the implications of her last statement.

"Luna... 'more than half' the people in the room would include a fair number of men."

"Absolutely. What can I say? When you're hot, you're hot. I bet you could get some threesome action going...though I suppose if you weren't interested in pursuing it with Ginny, you're more of a one-witch-or-wizard sort of fellow."

"Threesome?" It came out as a squeak. Harry desperately scrambled for the correct octave for his voice before he continued. "Ginny wanted to? Where did that come from?"

"Oh, she'd been hinting at it for years. I guess she should have just asked outright."

"WHAT?"

"Breathe, Harry." Luna captured a passing tray of champagne flutes and snagged a few. "Here, have a drink."

"I hate champagne."

"Maybe, but it looks like you need it." She did something mysterious around the mouth of her costume and a bit of champagne disappeared, presumably being conveyed to Luna's mouth. The charms needed to accomplish that had to be wicked hard.

*I think I need something stronger, actually.* Harry took the glass anyway and emptied it with a grimace. Luna promptly replaced it with a full one. After another sip, he managed to pull himself together sufficiently to articulate a question.

"Luna, what are you on about?"

"Every time we met, she made it fairly clear that she was interested in some three-way action."

Harry had an awful suspicion that this wasn't one of Luna's random delusions. "How was she hinting?"

"Little comments here and there. Three not being a crowd, if it was all right with me, of course." Luna paused thoughtfully. "I suppose it would have been, but I should have liked to watch."

"Watch... Wait..."

"Well, yes. I'd say that the 'spit roasting' comment made it fairly clear that she wanted Rolf to join you two. Though I expect that I would have been welcome enough, if that's what it took to get things moving." Luna took a meditative sip of her champagne. Harry took a medicative gulp of his.

"But... but... what made her think I would be willing to do something like that... with another guy?"

"To be honest, I didn't think it was that odd. You always seem very liberal in your appreciation of human beauty, Harry. I'm not the only one of our friends who's noticed you giving a good-looking wizard the once-over when we're out together. I always figured that you were bi."

One glass of champagne was not enough to make the room spin so. Hell, even a typical Luna conversation wasn't enough to do in Harry's equilibrium. "Where was I, again, during all this?"

"Harry, your attention to detail is unparalleled on the job. Your oblivion when it comes to interpersonal relationships is... almost as impressive."

"I love you too, Luna."

"I know. Look, we're sort of cluttering up the entrance, and there's an entire house full of party beyond this. Want to hit the bar?"

"As hard as possible if you're buying."

"We can't sell alcohol, but generous tips to the bartender, all going to the charity of course, are strongly encouraged."

"I'm not on duty tonight, you know."

"Which is why I'm trusting you to believe that none of it goes to offset the cost of the alcohol." Luna charmed a notice on one of the mirrors informing new arrivals of the unmasking policy, as if Harry's acquiescence was a done deal.

*She knows me too well. Why didn't I propose to Luna before Rolf snapped her up?*

"While we're there, I'll tell you all about the last time Rolf and I were out in the field. We camped right amidst the Snorkack herd for almost three months!" Luna sighed. "Poor Rolf. He'd be here tonight in the matching costume if he wasn't still nursing an injury from a run-in with a female protecting her calf."

*Oh. Right.*

Harry gestured resignedly with his empty glass. "Lead the way."

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Between the Crup taking invitations and the outlandishly cheerful message on the mirror reminding him that 'the masks come off at midnight,' Draco was thoroughly out-of-sorts by the time he was properly in the foyer. At least there were plenty of mirrors handy for him to check his appearance...though he was highly displeased to note that his wings framed his backside with a soft, feathery heart shape.

*Oh, bollocks. I should have checked my arse one last time before leaving. I know the girl is a Potter, but how could she have designed something this tacky?*

Draco's definition of 'tacky' was completely re-written a few minutes later when the first thing he saw upon entering the ballroom was a man dressed as a nursing Jarvey with a plushie pup, charmed to swear, hanging off each teat.

*That settles it. I'm in fancy dress hell.*

His chances of knowing anyone at an event such as this were practically nil, and he couldn't use any of his typical attention-getting tactics if he wanted to keep his identity under wraps. Or under glitter, as the case may be.

*When Astoria and I used to go to these things, I could always amuse myself by devising new ways to nudge her into interacting with people, if there was nothing else of interest to do.* Of course, that had backfired as often as it had worked. Sometimes Astoria could be coaxed out of her natural reserve and convinced to have a good time, and the rest of the time, she simply pulled into herself, declared in a frosty tone of voice that she needed to be excused, and then Apparated home from the nearest Ladies' Room. She wouldn't even have a proper *fight* with him and get it all out; for the next few weeks she'd treat him to a passive-aggressive snit of Hufflepuffian proportions.

With a start, Draco realized that he was in deep brooding mode. The last time that had happened had been when the divorce papers arrived at the Manor at the exact moment Scorpius and Lily were announcing their engagement, and well... Draco liked to pretend that his alcohol-induced-actions were lost to memory. He vowed not to touch a single drop of the stuff tonight.

His resolve lasted exactly until the first charmed tray full of glasses of cheap champagne floated by.

*I'll hold one and sip from it. Just for something elegant-looking to do with my hands. It's too vile to drink more than a glass.*

Roughly halfway through his second glass, he resolved to leave it at two glasses. At this miserable affair, the chances were surpassingly small that someone as chivalrous and lumpily comfortable as Potter...Harry, of course, since his spawn were too busy sucking their respective mates' faces to notice anything short of the end of the world at The Engagement Debacle...would catch Draco when he fell down, pissed stupid. And this time he wasn't in his own home, with the safety of his own bedroom close at hand.

"Oi, what's with the drag, Draco?"

Draco jumped about half a foot and found himself face to...well, not exactly face...with an extraordinarily well-endowed female covered in garish feathers.

"Shit! How did you recognize me?" He envisioned all sorts of embarrassment stemming from an early unmasking. Maybe a quick Obliviate, and he could find a Floo to escape from?

"Your eyes and your arse, luv, in no particular order." A disturbingly large smile flashed under the witch's beak-like, rhinestone-encrusted mask.

"Good God, you're crude, Millie." Draco relaxed fractionally. Millicent Bulstrode (she hadn't bothered taking either of her first two husbands' names and probably wouldn't break precedent should there be an unlucky number three) was probably one of the few friends...and certainly the only Slytherin one...who wouldn't expose him to that kind of miserable situation. Part of it was because they worked together and his reputation impacted hers, but a **really** dedicated Slytherin pain-in-the-arse could always find a way around that.

"How else would you recognize me?"

"Not by your costume. Honestly, a Phoenix?"

"What can I say, I look hot in red." She flashed him another grin and waved her wand. Tiny flames sprouted from the red feathers on the top of her head and from approximately the nipple area of the orange feathers covering her breasts.

"Classy." If it had been anyone but Millicent, Draco's dry tone would have either made them blow up or sent them packing in a huff. Millie just grinned again.

"At my age, seeing as I've still got it...might as well flaunt it." She let her fires flare a bit.

Draco flinched. "Don't point those things at me!" *Damn it, she knows I don't do open flame!* Still looking askance at the damped-down incendiary devices, he remarked, "I fail to recall an age at which you didn't 'flaunt it,' dear. How did you end up at this debacle?"

"Didn't you hear? We're all pulling together to save the Snorkack habitat."

"Because we all know that you can't resist trying to save something that looks like a house-elf pulled it out of the drain and then hit it with *Engorgio*."

"If your house-elves pulled anything the color of a Snorkack out of the drains, I'd have to conclude that the carpet doesn't match the drapes in Malfoy Manor."

"It always comes back to sex with you, doesn't it?"

"If I can at all manage it. Speaking of which, when was the last time you..."

"None of your business."

"Holy shit. Not since she left, then!"

"I don't need to be reminded one more time of how my supposedly loving wife abandoned me with one rotten letter, as if we'd just been shacking up. Why she couldn't have divorced in a civilized manner is beyond me."

"Because, Draco dear, she probably decided that completely breaking contact with you was the only way to end it, considering your obsessive ways."

The only way to deal with such a bald misstatement was equally bald denial. At least, the way Draco saw things. "I am NOT obsessive!"

Millie coughed into her hand. Draco had never heard a cough that sounded more suspiciously like, 'Potter.' "Draco, you're only slightly less persistent than a very severe case of broom rash."

"How? Give me one example!"

"Theo's still deaf in one ear from your constant rants about the Falmouth Falcons..."

"He WOULD support Wimbourne, just because of his father..."

"...when you wanted to take Divination but didn't want to do so alone, you wore us all down to nubs until everyone but Blaise went with you..."

"Anyone could develop an Inner Eye; he's such a slacker."

"You smothered Pansy in guilt until she practically had to live with her fingers in your hair in order to have any peace..."

"I thought I only asked you for one example?"

"And if I got started on you and POTTER, I'd be here all bloody night. In the time you devoted to...whatever the fuck you were trying to accomplish with him...you could have discovered a thirteenth use for dragon's blood."

"Leave Potter out of this!"

"I'll try, but *keeping* him out usually requires a stout Colloportus and wards the likes of which you don't see outside Gringotts."

Draco attempted to melt a hole through the sequins on her mask with his glare.

"Fine." Millie sighed and dropped a heavy hand on Draco's shoulder. He tried not to stumble; Millie wasn't what he'd call overweight. She was just built like an industrial-strength public Floo. "Anyhow, why she did it isn't that important. What's important is that you're better off this way. I mean, your interests and personalities weren't all that compatible, the constant cold war between you must have been a right pain in the arse, and I know that it upset Scorpius to see you two put on a polite face in public and then retreat to separate wings of the bloody manor as soon as you got home."

"Well... I suppose it is more peaceful with all that drama gone."

Millie gave an even more suspicious cough than the first time.

"You might want to see a Healer about that."

"I'm done with seeing Healers. Last one only wanted to play God."

Draco didn't want to do it, but he cracked a smile.

As he feared, it had the undesired encouraging effect on Millicent. "Hey, speaking of moving on, I saw this fucking sexy black Hippogriff earlier, somewhere near the bar. Wanna help me find him? We can check out his arse."

"How many times do I have to tell you, I'm NOT gay...I'm sophisticated."

"Uh huh. It was very 'sophisticated,' the way you used to chase Potter around, trying to get his attention..."

"We were children, and I'll thank you to stop bringing up Potter! Any Potter! That female child of his seems bound and determined to count the souls of all my family amongst her minions."

"...and the way you twist the pretty office boys around your little finger."

"Don't bring work into this. And it's called charm and diplomacy."

Millie didn't bother faking a cough this time. She doubled over with hearty laughter.

Draco folded his arms over his too-bare chest. "You're being horridly insensitive."

Millie sighed and patted him...gently, this time...on the shoulder. "Have it your way, luv. Personally, I reckon you're bi, if anything."

Draco twisted his lips, and it was**not** a pout.

She gave his arm one last squeeze. "Well, I'm going to go try my luck with Mr. Gorgeous Arse the Hippogriff. Personally, I think he's probably the only one in the room sexy enough to begin to be a good match for you, what with him being so built and raw compared to you being slim and elegant. Hell, his costume even complements yours with the black feathers/white feathers thing. Join me if you want to."

It was still thoroughly annoying to Draco that yet *another* person was leaving him, but at least she was doing so in an attempt to get laid. He could sympathize more than he would have liked. "I'll pass. What **is** it with you and arses, anyway?"

"Tits don't do it for me," she deadpanned.

Draco managed to snort rather than laugh. "Hysterical. Still not gay."

"Yeah, but what about bisexual?"

"Millie..."

"Suit yourself. If you change your mind about the sexuality thing and want a part-time fag hag, I'm your man."

"No doubt. Luck with the Hippogriff's arse," he called after her wagging tail.

"Don't I just wish."

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Notes:

The plot...thins? Is that even possible? If you notice this turning into crackfic, you're probably very observant.

SeverusLovesUs, I apologize for the abuse of punctuation and sentence torture in this chapter. It was so bad I think my husband started to notice.

### 3. Mating Call of the Black Hippogriff and the Veela

# Courtship Dance

## Chapter 3 of 7

Can two divorcees, having been costumed against their will by their offspring, both attend a Halloween party without driving each other crazy? Let's hope not. Oh, and have your passports ready, amigos. I do believe we've just crossed the border into crackfic.

Disclaimer: My costumes, my Tatiana. The rest is on unauthorized leave from The People with All the Money.

Notes: Have your passports ready, amigos. I do believe we've just crossed the border into crackfic.

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### Chapter 3: Mating Call of the Black Hippogriff and the Veela Courtship Dance

The first thing Harry noticed upon escaping to the friendly dimness of the bar area was the large blue dragon...clearly recognizable as Tatiana. Harry had somewhat mixed feelings about Luna's cousin. On the one hand, Tatiana Lovegood was the guardian of the dread Anastasia, alias 'The Lovegood who stole my favorite son.' On the other hand, she knew how to mix some seriously mood-enhancing drinks. Harry had a profound appreciation for that brand of Potions-making under uncomfortable social circumstances.

"I didn't realize there were any dark-blue dragons." Harry couldn't look away from the mesmerizing peacock iridescence of the scales and the wicked gleam of the metallic wings. He caught himself leaning over the bar to watch the charmed tail swirl gracefully just above the floor.

Luna sighed profoundly. The tendrils drooping from her Snorkack snout gave a doleful wave. "There aren't anymore. The Bourbon Blue has been extinct for over a century."

"That's never been confirmed, sugar. I maintain that one of these days, ~~we~~**will** find the Lost Alsatian Colony," Tatiana piped in as if she'd been part of the conversation all along. "Once we have your Snorkacks squared away safely, I'm mounting an expedition."

"We can always hope. What have the tips been like so far?"

"Absolutely terrific! Or, 'brilliant,' as you like to say." Tatiana's American accent was probably the least objectionable Harry had ever heard, though her habit of adding 'as you like to say' when she used a Briticism wore on the nerves eventually. "So, what'll it be?"

"I'll have a gillywater, and H..."

"For heaven's sake, don't introduce your delicious friend! I want to guess who people are and check my guesses at midnight with everyone else." Turning to Harry, Tatiana asked cheerfully, "What's your poison, darlin'?"

Which brought Harry to Tatiana's other slightly grating habit: calling everyone some variation of 'darling,' 'honey,' or 'sugar.' "Um, whatever you suggest, as long as it's pretty strong. And on the sweet side."

"Can't imagine that I've got anything as strong or sweet as you, sugar, but I'll see what I can do." Harry gulped when he felt her eyes practically scorching his skin as she assembled splashes of several different kinds of alcohol, topped off with some sort of colorful juice.

Harry took the drink with some hesitation and nearly dropped it when Tatiana announced it as, "A Scorpion, for the hottie in feathers and leather." He mumbled embarrassed thanks, wondering how awkward it was going to be when Tatiana finally figured out who she was hitting on. She gave him a wink and went back to pouring.

*Awkward for me, anyhow. I don't think Lovegoods have any capacity for embarrassment, damn them.*

"You're really out of practice," Luna said placidly, sipping her gillywater.

"At what?"

"Flirting."

Choosing to ignore the possibility that Tatiana was actually flirting with him and not simply being her usual irrepressible self, Harry made a deep dent in his drink before answering. "I don't think I was ever in practice."

"A shame, that," Tatiana said, bustling back over. Her appraising look was beginning to make Harry jump.

"Look, I'm a grandfather, for Merlin's sake. I'm nearly bloody fifty."

"Hmm, congratulations, Grandpa. You certainly don't look it on first examination...and besides, fifty's not quite middle-age for a wizard." Tatiana made herself comfortable. Harry shot a 'Help me!' look at Luna, but she was either ignoring him or conducting business in her rich internal world.

"It's still a little late to learn how to flirt."

"It isn't that difficult. Just sit up so that squishy bit in the middle doesn't hang over your trousers, and don't choke or try to run off when people compliment you." Tatiana gave him a friendly pat on the cheek and went about her business, giving Harry hope that it was less flirting and more exuberance.

Harry straightened up and was promptly annoyed at himself for doing so. "What squishy bit?" he asked Luna. She stared critically at his midsection.

"You can build all the muscle you want...in fact, you've built enough muscle that everyone else seems to want it as well...but a Weasley-fed middle is still going to squish if you slouch."

If anyone but Luna had said it, it would have sounded insulting or patronizing. As it was, Harry simply knew it for the truth that it was. "Next thing you know, you'll be telling me to dye over my gray."

Tatiana caught the end of Harry's remark and shouted over to them. "Don't let him, Luna, honey! He looks fabulous with those little, white curls. And I don't want you to give anything away, but one question about your handsome Hippogriff... Is he single?"

"The feathers and leather aren't spoken for at the moment," Luna said, eliciting a delighted laugh from Tatiana and leaving Harry choking on a mouthful of high-octane, sweetened drink.

"Luna!" he gasped, grateful that a sudden influx of customers distracted Tatiana.

"You need to relax...or, as Tatiana likes to say, 'loosen up.' When was the last time you had a conversation with someone other than Ron? One that didn't start with, 'You



have the right to owl an advocate before questioning?"

"I talk to people! I see the kids all the time. And we...um..."

"I hate to break it to you, but the last time you and I really had a good talk was the engagement party."

"Oh, don't remind me." *Merlin, the situation is dire. I need backup.* Harry flagged down Tatiana. "Can I have another? A double?"

"Sure, honey. Just a sec." She floated another large Scorpion over and turned her attention to a guest who was trying to make change in the donation box.

"Is that wise?" Luna's mask looked worried; whether it reflected her expression, or if that was just how Snorkacks looked, Harry had no clue.

"The kids marrying so early? No. They should wait till they're twenty-five, at least. And until Scorpius has found someone other than my baby girl."

"Harry, you know that you like Scorpius well enough. He's a very nice young man. Besides, I was talking about the alcohol."

*One Scorpion or another... both deceptively sweet and probably destined to cause me significant discomfort at some point!* I know when I've had enough."

"I seem to recall a little incident at the engagement party..."

"That was Malfoy, not me."

"Your children are getting married in less than two months and you're still calling Draco 'Malfoy?'"

"I... er... kind of want a little distance after that incident. I mean, I feel sorry for the bloke and all, with his wife up and walking out like that, but you didn't see what he did!"

"Then tell me." Luna's voice was altogether too innocent.

"Ma...Draco...is apparently a," Harry coughed, "cuddly drunk."

"Wow. From my angle it looked like a hug. He groped you as well?"

Harry spit a fair amount of alcohol across the bar and well into the area behind it. Tatiana brushed off his apologies for the damage to her tail.

"He didn't **grobe** me," Harry whispered. He could feel his entire face about to catch fire. "He... er... apologized for fourth year."

Luna stared. Waiting.

"He may have... stuck his nose in my ear and said something like, 'I take it back. You don't stink, Harry. Smell-quite-nice-actually.'" Harry could almost feel the nose in his ear as he slurred the last bit together as quickly as possible, just like he could feel his blush spreading down his neck and across his chest. He could even almost pretend Malfoy's hands had been... somewhere other than where they'd been when Harry got him out of the room before he embarrassed himself or the kids further. "Well? Aren't you going to say something?"

"I think Draco could use a little help relearning how to flirt, too."

Harry's forehead hit the bar, beak clacking against it impressively. He was feeling rather tipsy and he didn't really want to end up back at a conversation about bisexuality with his critical thinking skills impaired. "I want to go home."

Luna sighed again. "We need to find something fun for you to do."

"Going home sounds fun," he mumbled against the cool, polished bartop.

"You're not cooperating, so I'll have to pick something."

"You sound like Hermione when you do that."

"Maybe. But at least you can trust me to pick something that's actually fun."

"Why, Luna?" *Damn it, this just isn't fair.* Harry had become somewhat deaf to Hermione's nagging and various Weasley forms of fussing. But Luna almost never asked anything of Harry, so he found it next to impossible to resist her when she did.

"Because I love you dearly and want you to be happy." Luna wrapped one of her paw/hoof-things firmly around his arm and steered him out of the room. "What do you know about Karaoke?"

"Enough to be pretty sure that it won't make me happy."

---

It took a few minutes for Draco to gather his resolve once Millie left.

*Think, man! You can own any social event, even without revealing your identity. In fact... do something you enjoy that Astoria never would have cooperated with!* With a new prop champagne glass in hand, Draco threw back his shoulders and marched into the ballroom. He could **do** this.

*A Malfoy need not invoke the impressive powers of their name to command a room. Especially one who can dance as I can.*

He swept the room with his gaze, letting one lip quirk in amused interest. Admittedly, it had been a while since he'd danced... or made small talk at a party... or used any non-business related social skills. Perhaps he would start out small and simply dance with the first young lady to catch his eye, just to warm up. Especially since his confidence took a hit about four steps into the room, at which point Draco realized that it was far more difficult to achieve an impressive stride when one's clothes lacked tailored shoulders and a full, billowing hem. *One might go so far as to say they rather lack any resemblance to clothes, in fact.*

Undeterred, but slightly off balance, Draco switched from Masterful Stride to Confident Pose. He leaned one hand against the wall and casually cradled his champagne...which he genuinely wasn't going to drink this time except for, just possibly, a sip for effect...in the other. He experimented with shaping his wings, attempting to get them into the most elegant arch possible since the bloody annoying things refused to fold up enough to let him lean a shoulder nonchalantly on the wall.

*How does one make wings look elegantly nonchalant?* Draco studied that thought and came to the conclusion that he would have to avenge himself on his son and future daughter-in-law for putting him in a position where his best hope of receiving practical fashion advice would be to consult an owl. He was deep in his contemplation when a high-pitched, slightly giggly voice caught his attention.

"Hello. I couldn't help noticing you, and...well, those wings, your costume." A marginally articulate young woman entirely coated in some shocking, blue substance...Draco hoped all of it was a very clingy fabric and feared that much of it was makeup...stood before him. "Are you supposed to be a Veela?"

*Hmm... My thoughtful expression belongs to the Third Ring of Sexiness: Making Others Approach You. Good to know. Though, if it draws the intellectually challenged, I*

may want to reconsider it.

"Naturally. And you would be...?" He looked her up and down. Between the young lady's extreme scrawniness and her extraordinary blue-windmill-like headdress, the object she most resembled was a cocktail stirrer for a very flamboyant drink.

"A Billywig." She struck what he presumed was meant to be an alluring pose that involved a lot of elbows and jutting hipbones. "So, what do you think?"

*Have you eaten at all in the last month?* Draco thought promptly. But, slamming down his hard-won filters between brain and mouth with decisive force, he cleverly manipulated the situation into a lead-in to dance practice. "I think that your costume requires an in-depth analysis. If you would oblige me by letting me see it in action..." He Vanished the half-empty champagne glass and held his left hand up invitingly. She gave it a puzzled look.

*Does no one learn the social graces anymore?* Valiantly restraining himself from rolling his eyes (at least, not too blatantly), Draco put it in words of few syllables for her convenience. "I can offer more of an opinion if you would permit me to have this dance."

"Oh. Okay." Finally grasping the concept, and his hand, she let Draco steer her onto the dance floor.

"The fog begins to lift," he murmured.

"What should I lift?" she asked, glancing down at the presumed location of her bosoms.

"Your other hand." Miss Billywig ran her hand tentatively up his arm. Draco was sure she was wrinkling the silk *That blue shit had better not rub off on me.*

"Look, your hands go **here** and **here**." Draco seated one of Insect Girl's hands on the top of his shoulder and gripped the other firmly in his left hand, flexing his fingers to leave the regulation, egg-sized space between their palms. "Keep your feet to the outside of mine!"

"This is hard," she whined, staring down at their feet. He would have insisted that she look up, but he frankly didn't trust her not to step on his vulnerable, sandaled toes if she did. "And is this how you're supposed to dance to this song?"

*Bloody Merlin's Hat! It's an open box step, you insipid wench, not advanced Arithmancy!* This is a standard dance step that can be adapted to a variety of musical types." For the first time, Draco was beginning to seriously regret dancing for its own sake. And that was saying something, coming from a man who'd managed to pilot Pansy around a room without wrecking.

"So, about my costume..." She made a motion that could have been a shimmy, a seizure, or a very lewd lower body gesture. Whatever it was it did not belong in any dance being led by a Malfoy. *Bollocks. If my idea of dancing involved vulgar gyrations, I'd ask Millie. At least I'd get a decent...strike that, witty...conversation out of the experience.*

"You may stop thrusting your pelvis at me at any time, my dear. I already have an heir who is satisfactory in every regard."

"You... huh? An heir?"

"Well, using vocabulary that you can comprehend...a son. A likely lad poised to carry on the family name and guard the family fortune. I'm flattered that you don't appear to think me old enough for such things, but, there it is."

"Wait, wait. Yeah, okay, you're old enough to have a kid, I'm sure...but you mean you're not gay?"

Draco was almost offended enough to stop dancing, but he refused to look awkward on the dance floor. Even a dance floor populated by people who thought that 'Lawn Gnome' was a great costume idea. "I don't know what you're playing at, but I am not gay and I daresay I can't imagine why you think I am." *And while I'm at it, screw you, bitch, for calling me 'old.'*

"But you're dressed as a Veela. Aren't they girls?"

*Do not, I repeat, do not demand that she submit blood for a paternity potion to determine if she is some heretofore unknown bastard descendant of Crabbe!* Unless Veelas all spontaneously arise from beneath cabbage leaves on warm summer nights, there must be both male and female Veelas." Draco wondered for a chilling moment if she would fail to understand the reference he was making and begin looking for baby Veelas in some unfortunate neighbor's vegetable patch. "And I'm very curious as to why you wanted to dance with me if you thought I was not inclined towards women."

"Well, everyone knows that gay men know everything about how to dress, and I wanted the best opinion possible on my costume! I mean, I wanted a magical creature costume that could look sexy on me, and I wanted to know if I've actually got...you know...the look."

The music paused, and Draco dropped her like an overripe bubotuber right in the middle of the dance floor. He managed to hold his outrage down to a faint tremor as he deliberately raised his voice to carry as far, at least, as the surrounding dancers.

"As to your costume, if a Billywig resembles a blue Murtlap growth perched on a hatpin, congratulations...you've nailed the look. I think your success chiefly stems from the fact that you also impersonate an eleven year old boy flawlessly, seeing as you've both the wits and the tits of one." With that, Draco left her gaping in the middle of the dance floor and headed off to the bar to find something incredibly heterosexual to drink.

He would have needed the drink a lot less if he believed for an instant that she was in shock because she actually understood his insults.

---

Harry did his best to study the book of available music. It was a little difficult to concentrate with a witch belting out a lusty rendition of 'Respect' not more than ten feet away, to the obvious delight of the spectators. It didn't help that he had tucked himself into the darkest corner of the room to avoid notice and could only just make out the print. "There's nothing in here that I know."

Luna ducked under his wing and cast 'Lumos' to get a better look at the list. "You just don't recognize the titles. I've heard you sing along with the Muggle wireless on this one and this one, for certain. And you sounded just fine."

*This from a person who thinks that Thestral mating calls constitute mood music.* "What if I forget the words?"

"The words show up in there." Luna pointed to a crystal ball off to the side of the stage.

"She's a tough act to follow." Harry jerked his shoulder in the direction of the witch in the brilliant feathers, who had recruited twin pixies from the audience for backup singers. Harry couldn't figure out why the karaoke diva (whose hair, disturbingly, appeared to be on fire) bothered, as she bulldozed their timid 'Oohs' with a lung-stretching:

*"All I'm askin' (oo)*

*Is for a little respect when you come home!"*

"I'll go first and soften the crowd up with something nice and easy."

"Um... can I have another drink while I'm waiting?" Harry had visions of sneaking out to the bar and forgetting the way back.

Luna found a convenient tray of champagne and handed him another glass. "One more drink, and then I get to hear the call of the Black Hippogriff. Promise you won't leave while I'm singing?" It was Luna's earnest voice that did him in.

"Oh, bollocks."

"It's settled, then."

---

"I need a good, stiff drink." Yes, that was the thing to say. The **manly** thing to say. And the bartender was a dragon. How much more testosterone-charged than that could you get?

The dragon nodded, probably impressed by the sheer masculinity of the demand. "Firewhisky all right?"

*Okay, so she's a girl dragon. But girl dragons are really tough.*

Draco paused. He preferred to have nothing to do with magical fire, if he could help it. *Now, how to decline without sounding gay.* "Well, I suppose if that's all you have. I prefer something smoother."

"I don't have a big selection, so I guess it's a Muggle drink for you, then...most magical alcohol is sugary and, well, fluffy."

"No sugary fluff," Draco said, and braced his stomach for whatever dreadful Muggle swill was about to be inflicted on him. *Muggles are primitive creatures. Downing their crude alcohol and surviving is surely proof of extreme hardiness.*

"Okay. You look like... Yeah, gin and tonic should do the trick."

Draco nodded despite the fact that he had no clue what she was talking about. But the drink had the word 'tonic' in it, so it probably tasted suitably horrid. "Sounds perfect."

After three gin and tonics, Draco was willing to concede that Muggles might, occasionally, have something useful to contribute to society. He also concluded that blue dragons made the best listeners.

"There I was, dancing with her...quite well, I might add...and the prissy tart had the cheek to tell me that she thought I was gay!"

"Bit presumptuous of her."

*Very diplomatic, this bartender. Probably trying not to offend any of the guests...just in case it gets back to Miss Prissy Tart.*

"I was married, you know. To a witch. For almost twenty years."

"Certainly." His dragon nodded. She might be enabling those career drinkers with their uncouth Firewhisky addictions and reckless tips, but it was Draco she was listening to and sympathizing with.

"She abandoned me; I didn't leave her." Draco wasn't sniffing. Obviously he'd swallowed a bit wrong, and the alcohol was burning his sensitive nose.

"You poor thing! Here, let's have you try something different." She looked at him with great sympathy as she did something complicated with ice and lime. "You'll like this; it's called a Mojito."

"Oooh... Pretty green." Draco took one sip and was in heaven. He decided that he could get on well with this scaly woman behind the bar. Sure, she was a little on the... mature side, but with a wizard life span, she was probably still pretty energetic, and she obviously fancied him. He favored her with his Utterly Charming Malfoy Smile. "I knew you'd understand."

She smiled back, eyes big and brown and sincere under her fangs. "Anything else I can get for you, sugar?" *Ah, the smile works its special brand of magic.*

"Since you don't seem to have any trouble figuring out that I'm straight, tell me...how do I convince those Neanderthals who seem to have so much trouble with the concept?"

She poured some shots and slid them down the bar to their intended targets with a pensive expression. Then she placed one warm, claw-backed hand over his and said, with great solemnity, "Well, hon... you might want to go easy on the eye makeup."

---

Luna stepped off the stage to a round of applause. Harry thought that she did a much better job with that song than Astraea Cauldronbottom or whichever WWN warbler-of-the-hour had covered it most recently, and he told her so.

"I'll let you in on a little secret. When Ana and Al did the charms work needed to get the karaoke to work with magic, they added a little something that smoothed over rough spots in a singer's voice."

*Bonnie and Clyde strike again. I wonder if I can kill those kids and use my authority to cover it up.*

Harry was so lost in ideas of how he would repay his offspring for the night's inconveniences that Luna had to repeat herself several times before he heard her. "Have you made a decision on a song?"

"This one." Harry steadied his hand to make sure he was pointing to the right title. His contact lenses were beginning to blur slightly. He was pretty sure it was the lenses. *It can hold my liquor. It was just a little champagne. And a little Scorpius. Er, scorpions. Nothing too poisonous. Alcoholically speaking.*

The fact that he was actually agreeing to karaoke was highly suspect, but still only circumstantial evidence.

Luna cocked her Snorkack head quizzically. "Is there something about your divorce you need to talk about? Any... unresolved issues?"

"No. Why?"

Luna stared at the song title again. "Oh... no reason."

---

Draco was not at all happy about having his conversation interrupted. But neither was he sober enough to find his wand and hex Millicent. "Let me go! The blue dragon behind the bar fancied me." This made no impression on Millie, who continued to strong-arm him down the corridor, away from the dance music (and worse, away from the bar).

"The blue dragon was probably old enough to be your mum."

"Maybe in societies that allow child brides."

"We're going to do something before you give yourself alcohol poisoning flirting with someone's grandmother. And now that I've discovered it, I'm not letting you leave without experiencing the wonders of Karaoke."

"What the bloody hell is that? Some sort of hallucinogen?"

"I'm amazed you can still say 'hallucinogen.' And it's a Muggle entertainment. It's incredible!"

"Not likely."

"It's right through here."

Draco balked outside the curtain.

"Come on... I know you can sing. I'll bet we can get you a turn at it soon."

Draco cocked his head to one side and immediately quelled his intended retort. "Oooh... I like this one." He swayed softly in time to the music.

*"Every breath you take*

*And every move you make*

*Every bond you break*

*Every step you take*

*I'll be watching you."*

Millie listened with a decidedly less entranced expression. "It's creepy."

"It's not! It's about someone who can't keep their eyes off you. Hush, this is my favorite part!" Draco crooned along softly with the singer,

*"Oh, can't you see*

*You belong to me..."*

Millie rudely broke his reverie. "It's about a stalker."

*She claims to be concerned, but when my favorite song comes along and sounds like it's being sung directly **tone**...* "Their heart is breaking without their beloved!" Draco admonished her, seriously annoyed.

"Do you even realize there's a difference between love and obsession?"

Since no sensible words were coming from the person in front of him, Draco focused on the singer on the other side of the wall. "I want to be the center of someone's universe like that."

"When you're sober, we really need to have a serious talk about what constitutes a healthy relationship."

"Like you'd know, Miss Get-on-and-get-off-with-no-strings-attached."

"Do as I say, not as I do." She glanced over at the curtain. "Creepy song or not, his voice is kind of sexy. I'm going to take a peek."

"Well, okay, but don't leave me all alone again."

"Fucksocks, it's the hippogriff," Millie breathed.

"It's a guy?" Draco said forlornly.

"With that voice? If you could mistake it, you're more pissed than I thought." She tore her eyes away from the vision behind the curtain to look at Draco for a second, but her lust won out. "That's it, he's **mine**." Millie stormed the room to plant her flag on Hippogriff Island.

Draco leaned against the wall, pouting and not caring who knew it. *I bet that there's nothing all that wonderful about this hippogriff of hers, anyway.* To prove it to himself, he peeked through the curtain. It took him a moment to find the black shape that flickered in and out of focus with the dim, colored lights rotating around the room.

Leather trousers. Muscular chest. A hint of an unshaven jaw in silhouette, peeking out from beneath the curve of a glossy, black wing. One glance was all it took. Draco reeled back from the doorway, hyperventilating.

*He's... he's totally buff. Those trousers are so tight I think I can see his balls from here. I can't even see his face properly, for fuck's sake, but the glimpse of that stubble is... is...*

"But... but I don't want to be gay," he whimpered. Distraught, Draco headed back to his new best friend at the bar for comfort.

---

Millie lurked by the stage...inasmuch as a nearly six foot tall phoenix with flaming nipples can lurk...ready to pounce as soon as her quarry stepped down.

*Leather and stubble... Bollocks. If it turns out he's gay, I'll send him to Draco, just so I get a chance to ogle him on a double date* She studied him a little more critically above the waist, noting patches of gray hair and signs of middle-aged spread. *Granted, up close, he's a bit older than I thought. But if that body doesn't convince Draco to give seeking for the other team a go, then I'll have no choice but to believe he really is straight, after all.*

Her plan was foiled when the hippogriff practically fled the stage to a Snorkack's side and appeared to be wholly engrossed in conversation with it. Millie scowled and fingered her wand. *Budge up, Fuzzy. You're not woman enough to take that ride.*

Her lustful thoughts seemed to send the animate dust bunny packing, leaving her hippogriff alone. Once again, she zeroed in on that succulent backside.

*Ripe for the picking.*

---

Harry felt slightly dizzy as he left the little stage. It was simply because of the overwhelming niceness of having people applaud him despite having no clue who he was. He wasn't drunk at all. Though Luna's steadying arm was quite welcome.

"How was I, really?"

"You certainly put your heart into it. Are you sure you're all right?" Luna patted him on the back, and Harry wrapped one wing around her. *Balance must be off because of these damn wings.*

"Um, pretty sure. I think I had a bit of a flashback partway through the song, though."

Luna pushed her costume head out of the way and fixed him with her own enormous gray eyes directly. Harry found himself rather stuck in the cloudy depths.

"A flashback to the war?" she asked solemnly.

He blinked, trying to break the spell of the gray and to remember what, exactly, he'd seen out of the corner of his eye. The contacts were beginning to bother him, and he simply couldn't concentrate on the fleeting impression. "No... sixth year, I think."

Luna squinted at him with an uncharacteristic frown that niggled at his memory. "Wait here. I'll get you a little something to eat, to dilute all that alcohol. And maybe a small dose of Calming Draught."

"Okay," Harry said placidly because he'd always responded rather well to anyone who offered to feed him. He allowed her to position him a little to one side of the stage with a nice wall to lean on in case those wings got out of balance again.

Harry closed his eyes. He must have had them closed longer than he thought, because the next thing he knew, he could sense the warmth of a human body moving up behind him. He thought it was Luna until all of a sudden he realized that the warmth seemed just too **tall**, somehow. His eyes popped open.

"Who...?"

He never finished articulating the question before his bum was quite thoroughly grabbed and a mouth took up a hot, breathy position behind his ear.

What would have come out of said mouth was forever lost to history because Harry's reflexes asserted themselves and he whirled, drawing his wand and casting 'Protego' so close to his assailant that she actually bounced off the shield. Harry recognized the singer from earlier and snarled, "Respect this!" He raised his wand threateningly but managed to stop himself from casting anything else before he caused a scene...or worse, paperwork. Fortunately, the erstwhile Aretha whirled in a flurry of singed feathers and ran for it before Harry had to think of another plan of action.

Harry fished around in the puddle of alcohol in which his brain was submerged and found a handful of angry resolve.

*Lily and Albus are completely grounded for having anything to do with this. Wait... they're of age. I'll forbid them from marrying their accomplices...fiancés...those sneaky little things. There must be some musty old law I can invoke. Maybe Kinglsey will do me a favor.*

He stormed towards the ballroom with no clear idea of what he meant to do there.

---

Recognition hit Millicent like a charging Erumpent; and since no sensible person stares down a charging Erumpent, she took evasive action. Even Slytherin's Witch With the Solid Brass Balls had her limits.

In the safety of the shadows, Millie leaned heavily against the wall, frantically trying to recover her breath. "Holy fucking Merlin's incontinent old cock! Harry-fucking-Potter is... is the Hippogriff-Who-Lived! The boy who grew up to be the man with the gorgeous arse!" She finally roused herself enough to snag a glass of champagne from a passing tray. She chugged her way to the bottom of it and found her decision therein.

*Those eyes... that commanding, pissed-off posture... Bloody hell, no wonder Draco did everything he could to get that man to jump on him while we were in school.*

"I've got to find Draco."

---

Notes:

The Scorpion that Tatiana whips up is not the sugary, fruity, rum and brandy mix you may have seen in drink recipe books, but a more butt-kicking concoction involving generous portions of gin, vodka, light, dark, and 151-proof rum, and triple sec instead of orange juice (with a splash of pineapple juice and grenadine for color and to keep it from instantly dissolving the drinker's liver.)

Incidentally, I've had all the mixed drinks aforementioned and they ROCK. (Champagne, however, I find to be nasty.) I did not, however, have all of them in one night, and would not advocate anyone attempting to do so.

Lyrics swiped from *Respect* by Aretha Franklin (yes, I am bouncing up and down in my seat and applauding at the image of Millie belting it out.) *I'll Be Watching You* by Sting, and, holy crap, if that isn't the H/D dysfunctional relationship theme song, please tell me what is. (Okay, I'll admit that *'Tainted Love'*...I'll go with Wow-that's-gay-Soft Cell version for \$200, Alex...would also work pretty well. Come to think of it, *'Use Me'* by Bill Withers is eerily apt...)

\*turns off radio \*

Thank you, SeverusLovesUs, for patching the Crack. :D

## 4: Heretofore Immovable Force Meets Irresistible Object

*Chapter 4 of 7*

Oh tragedy—the Hippogriff's mating call goes unanswered! The Veela dances in vain! Will these two wankers EVER manage to run into each other? (Thus obviating the need for wanking?)

Disclaimer: My costumes, my Tatiana, my misused Muggle camera, my random colorful (or irritating) party guests. The rest is on unauthorized leave from The People with All the Money.

#### Chapter 4: Heretofore Immovable Force Meets Irresistible Object

---

While his dragon poured another Mojito, Draco poured his heart out about his visions of hippogriff. Considering that he was a few Mojitos over the border into Slurvia, it was a wonder she understood any of it.

"All I could shink of was how gorgeouish he was. He was singin' my favorite song and lookin' like sex on legs, but he's ~~the~~, and I just want to crawl away anddie."

"Now, sugar, don't do anything drastic! Maybe... maybe finding this guy attractive was a one-time thing? You know, feeling a little down about the ex, hearing a song you like, being...a few sheets to the wind?" Draco suspected that she was pretending not to see him push his glass back for a refill. He crumpled in on himself and tried to hide in his wings. *Brilliant. I've turned into a gay lush, and my only comfort is a scaly bartender who may well be old enough to be my mother. I want to go home.*

"Well... Lash time I felt that way...the ex and the res'...I got a bit... cuddly... with a guy." He looked up when he felt the bottle-cooled softness of her hand and the smooth, blunt points of her claws on his arm.

"Would it be so awful if you were bi, honey? I know it's not a politically popular orientation in these either-one-or-the-other days, but you could have the best of both worlds, in theory." Draco wanted to argue with her, insist that it couldn't be so, but her eyes were so gentle that he almost cried instead.

"I don't know." He wibbled. "I'm too ooold to be this confushed."

"Well, you don't look it, darlin'. In fact, there was a couple at the other end of the bar...a satyr and a unicorn...who just got into a fight over one of them ogling 'that Veela.' And they were looking at you."

"Which one was lookin'...the boy or the girl?" Draco asked hopefully.

"Um, well, I think they were both boys, honey."

Draco's head dropped to the bar again. "Bollocks."

"I've got an idea. Go find your hippogriff, sugar. I met him earlier; he's single and a real sweetie. Bring him over here for a drink and a talk, and maybe you two can figure it out?"

"I...I couldn't just tell a complete shranger 'is sort of sing." He gulped from the glass she provided and then gave it a sad stare*How come this tastes like water?*"It's not the sort of sing I want known, y'know?"

"You told me."

"But, you're s...shpecial."

She smiled and gave his hand another gentle squeeze. "He's special, too. And nervous about being here if his behavior was any clue. Worst he could do is say he's not interested. It's not as if he'll tell the world who's wondering what. You're in disguise."

It took a while for Draco's wobbly brain to parse that sentence. At last the implications sunk in, and he touched one of the sparkles on his cheek contemplatively. "I am..."

*I can find him... be utterly charming... have a bit of a chat... and I'll figure it out once and for all. He'll never know who I am, so if it turns out to be nothing but the pretty green drinks talking, no harm done.*

The dragon chattered happily away, unaware of Draco's dawning epiphany as she sent a couple of glasses flying over to the sink and cast the charms to wash them. "Even if he turns out to be straight, you'd look mighty fine together. I could get a smashing picture! My niece and her fiancé did some fancy Charms work with a digital camera..."

Draco didn't stay to hear the rest. He wobbled off, determined to find his black-feathered destiny.

---

"If I'm supposed to be a hippogriff, why in nine Hells didn't they give me a tail, so I wouldn't be ~~so~~exposed?"

Harry noticed a Jobberknoll blinking at him and clamped down on the urge to continue muttering*If you had children you'd talk to yourself, too*, he thought sourly.

He pushed his way into the ballroom with the idea of finding a Floo, but somewhere on the edge of the dance floor Harry's brain caught up with him and pointed out something important. *Did I just very nearly hex a shapely witch for patting me on the backside?* Upon review of the evidence, he was forced to conclude that yes, indeed he had.

*Reflexes. Side effect the job. She's lucky I'm slightly pissed and didn't....* Harry found the effort of convincing himself tiring. He leaned against a convenient wall and frowned dizzily at the guests who had the nerve to be dancing and having a good time all around him whilst he was experiencing an-almost-mid-life sexual identity crisis.

*Do I really check out guys?* Harry gave the matter serious, if sloshed, consideration. School didn't count...he'd been a mess back then. Besides, what Quidditch player didn't admire his captain or his more impressive rivals?

And now it was his job to give everyone the once (or twice)-over. Perhaps Luna had just imagined it... and he had only Luna's word for it that Ginny had noticed. Right?

Harry was just pissed enough to subject the question to an investigation.

That big, hairy bloke dressed as a werewolf reminded Harry slightly of Hagrid, and that just wasn't on. The willowy girls in pixy costumes weren't too bad. Harry's eyes passed over several fanciable faces, male and female, and settled a couple of times for a longer look. *I can't help it if I like to look at lean, flexible, pretty people and don't bother about their specific plumbing while I look.*

"Well, hello."

Harry looked up into the face of a blond with a convincing golden horn rising from his forehead. "Er, hello." He did a bit of a double take upon noticing the white shirt read "I'm horny...fancy a ride?" It didn't help that it covered a body that matched the fit-and-flexible criteria he'd pretty decisively identified. "Unicorn?"

The blond grinned saucily. "Right in one." He turned halfway and wiggled his slim backside, complete with a small tail, in Harry's direction. The gesture just escaped being crude. "Like my tail?"

"Enviably." Harry was thinking of his desire for said costume feature. He belatedly realized it could be misinterpreted when the unicorn's smoky eyes narrowed in a way that made Harry rather nervous.

"So, why aren't you on the dance floor?"

"I've never been one for dancing."

"Start a conga line...all you have to do is give your bum a shake and wait for everyone to queue up. Of course, they'll have to settle for being behind me." He leaned on the wall, displaying a mile or so of slender arms and legs to good effect.

"Sorry? I don't believe I'm getting you."

"That's easily fixed." His eyes roamed Harry's body in blatant appraisal.

*Yes, the conversation is going where you think it is, Harry.* "I'm... that is..."

"Is it just me, then? I was watching, and you were practically feeling up some of the blokes out there with your eyes."

*Pot, cauldron.* "But, I'm not...look, a friend mentioned earlier tonight that she thought I might be bi, so I was just... making comparisons. Looking at both."

"Oh?" The unicorn's soft voice deepened slightly in amusement. "Then this is your lucky night. I can give you a little of both, if you're so inclined."

The most articulate response Harry could devise was, "Huh?"

"Ever heard of a drag king, luv? It's all girl bits under the costume. But, with a few charms, I can accommodate... different anatomical requirements."

Harry gaped at the shirt again, this time ignoring the lewd print. A sweet tenor laugh brought his eyes back up to his...her?...smiling (and, now that he thought of it, remarkably smooth) face. "They always look for the tits first. I've got them strapped down well; you'll not see them...unless you'd like to."

"Er, thanks... I think... but I'm not quite sure what I'm ready for." There was something about that insolent smile that got to Harry, never mind the intriguing either/or possibilities. Harry needed to get away from that even, dangerous, androgynous voice before he got even more confused

The unicorn looked a little wistful, but not particularly upset. "Pity, that. If you change your mind..."

"What are you doing?"

Harry turned to find a black-haired satyr advancing on them, practically crackling with possessive magic. It had to be a 'him' this time unless that bare, fuzzy chest was cloaked in some advanced glamours.

"Do you care what... or who... I do anymore?" the unicorn purred.

"Look, I'm sorry! That Veela had me a bit turned 'round, but..."

"Wasn't a real Veela, luv." Harry belatedly recalled that unicorns could be dangerous when crossed.

The satyr pushed his way in front of Harry to gaze up at the unicorn, who had a good three inches in height on him. "You know that you're the only guy... and girl... for me."

It was evidently the right thing to say. The unicorn twined long limbs around her diminutive suitor, and Harry took the opportunity to slip away.

*Right. Time to find...*

Harry stopped in mid-thought at the sight of a dazzling flash of white wings across the room.

---

Draco caught a glimpse of black wings and practically flew across the room. Perhaps it was undignified, but he had to do it before he lost nerve. He started to turn on his best Charming Smile when he came up short.

*Gah! This isn't my hippogriff! It's the fugliest Thestral ever!*

The man looked up just as Draco realized his mistake and started turning off the smile. "Sorry," Draco muttered, and made a quick turn. The man made a quicker grab for his shoulder.

"Hey, hey, you know no one can resist a Veela, little lady."

Draco whirled, caught his robes on something, and swore as he heard the sound of silk tearing. He slapped the man's hand away. "What the fuck is wrong with you? You've, you've torn my robes, you heathen! And I'm NOT a lady."

"My mistake. Still hard to resist. And you don't need to wear robes on my account."

"I was married! To a witch!" Draco couldn't quite bring himself to state unequivocally that he wasn't gay, considering that his motives for seeking the hippogriff were not the most heterosexual imaginable. He was also afraid that the words wouldn't quite come out right because they were having a bit of difficulty getting from his brain to his mouth just now.

"Oh?"

"'Twasn't my idea to divorce...she left me.**She** left **me**." Draco repeated the last bit, not quite certain that his audience would fully appreciate the implications without the added emphasis. The fellow's eyes were certainly glazed-looking. Probably pissed as a newt.

"Right cow, she was," the man mumbled.

*Maybe not pissed, just that stupid.* "Look, you, tha's no way to talk 'bout the mother of my son," Draco said, and decided that the poor acoustics of the room must be doing something adverse to his voice. There was no way that he sounded so nasal and prissy.

"Aw, don't get shirty, princess. She was proolly tired of you being prettier 'an her," and of all the nerve, the uncouth sod leered at him. "Besides, we both know she wasn't quite your type, now, was she?" To Draco's abject horror, the bastard followed it up with a grab at his wand...**not** the hawthorn one.

Draco punched him.

He couldn't be entirely certain that the brick-skulled cretin actually noticed the impact because he continued to stare at Draco, looking dazed and possibly wondering why his nose felt wet. Draco positioned his hand over his wand in case the lout had any notion of coming close enough to bleed on him (or something equally unpleasant).

"You **arse**! If I was gay as a picnic basket I shtill wouldn't let you put a paw on me, not if you were the last thing on earth with a cock!"

Some combination of insults and pain finally penetrated the man's lizard-like brain and assured him that, no, he was not wanted here, and he had best depart posthaste. "Fuckin' little twunt," he slurred back over his shoulder as he lurched away.

Draco didn't feel the least bit sorry for hitting the bastard in the back with a jinx Scorpius and Albus had devised. He wondered if the idiot would be thrown out of the party or

if he would be sufficiently embarrassed at letting loose an enormous fart every third or fourth step and leave on his own.

Speaking of which...

"Oh, bugger. I need the loo."

---

*Merlin's girlfriend in a thong... It's... it's an angel.*

Harry angled for a better look at the gorgeous white-winged creature that was floating across the dance floor. He fumbled around in his well-buzzed brain for signs of Veela influence, which he was just as adept at identifying and resisting as he was 'Imperio,' and found none. Apparently it was the person in the Veela costume that had caused the trouble between the satyr and unicorn. Harry could see where the problem lay. She... He? It? No, it had to be one or the other, drag notwithstanding. Boy or girl. Whatever. It was beyond sexy, and Harry was going to ogle its cute, feathered backside for a while.

That was his plan at least, until a very curvy Cleopatra barged into his line of sight and sank all his fun.

"Hey there. Bet you think I'm at the wrong party, eh?" A witch in a white gown with a flashy collar cut in front of Harry. Though her endowments weren't half as impressive as those of the phoenix, Harry was rather forcibly reminded of Bludgers as she forced them as close to his face as she could manage.

*Well, I'm pretty sure I am.* "I hadn't given it any thought. Sorry, I need to get through." He attempted to sidestep, but she followed.

"Look, I'm Cleopatra. Cleo-PAW-tra. Get it? Paw?" She pointed to the tufts of fur sticking out of her headdress which might, with imagination, be mistaken for cat's ears.

*You're going to get it, if you don't barge the fuck out of my way so I can eye up my Veela!* Yeah, it's got. Now, if you'll excuse me..." Harry dodged around her, not caring if he was rude or not. A funny feeling was brewing in the vicinity of his sternum.

**Want. VEELA.**

She spluttered angrily after him. "Don't you walk away from me! You tell me, what haven't I got, huh? What, are you a fag or something?"

Harry looked over his shoulder with an expression that had made braver and stupider people turn tail. "If you were all that was left of witches, I'd be a fag, thanks!"

'Cleo's' indignant hissing was smothered in applause led by the unicorn and a merry band of eavesdroppers. Harry walked off, head held high; but his elation at having got the upper hand was short-lived.

*Well, shit. The Veela's flown.*

---

"Tatiana, I need..."

"Luna, honey, you're just in time. Can you handle the bar for a few?"

"Well, all right. But I need you to take something to H...my friend, the hippogriff."

"Oh, I was just going out to look for him. And I need to get that poor, unhappy Veela. I'll bring him by when I've found him, okay?"

"Okay." Luna felt rather as if she'd just been maneuvered around... or misunderstood... or something of that nature. The steady stream of customers didn't give her time to consider it.

After a brief while, one wheedling voice pierced the general buzz. "Dragon? Bother, I don't even know your name. Dragon, help me!"

Luna tried to peer over the heads of the people in front of her, but all she could see were white wings and a glimpse of a feathered head. "She's away. Can I get you anything?"

A gray eye peered sulkily past the Erumpent who was first in line. "Yes, the way to the loo."

"There's one just the other side of the Karaoke area, across from the bar..."

"Right, thanks."

"...but that one's nearly always occupied. You'll probably have to go back to the rotunda just opposite the entry."

"What? Where?"

"Other side of the ballroom. Walk anticlockwise 'round the Wrackspurt trap just to be on the safe side, then take the first right hand corridor under the stairs. It'll be on the left."

"How...oh, never mind!" Luna looked up again only to find the wizard gone. She shrugged and went back to pouring as her mind replayed the conversation and images in its own leisurely fashion.

*Was that Tatiana's Veela?*

The glass before her overflowed, but the squawked protests of the customer went unheeded as her brain wandered down various pathways in an effort to identify that annoyed whine.

*Tatiana's Veela is... Draco Malfoy?*

"Might want to give Harry the heads up about that," Luna mused. It finally registered that she was causing a bit of a flood and no little consternation among the patrons, and by the time the resulting kerfuffle was smoothed over, she'd rather forgot.

---

Everyone and his Kneazle thronged the ballroom in anticipation of the unmasking.

*Draco, where the hell are you, you great, rat-arsed, ponce?*

Millicent was not renowned for her patience, and she was on the verge of casting 'Sonorous' and yelling for Draco through the ballroom, embarrassment factor be damned.

Then she got distracted.

*Helloooo, horns!*



A pair of puffskeins squeaked in fear and fled at the predatory grin on Millie's face. She brushed them off the back of her feathered sleeve, focused completely on the Minotaur with the red bull's head dancing in a crowd of enthusiastic admirers. *Fuck, he must wrestle hippogriffs for a living, with all those scars. And what a torso! It's almost enough to make me swear off arses.* She cast a critical eye over said body part. *Although I bet that's just as impressive, once he's out of those idiotic, red fur trousers.*

Millie turned on her flames, turned up her smile, and started her inexorable sway towards him. It was the work of a moment to nudge...okay, knock...some twiggy little witch out of the way so that she was dancing directly in front of him. *Bugger off, you dozy cow. MY bull.*

"What's a healthy bloke like yourself doing at a sedate, little charity party?"

He couldn't have minded her presumption much, judging by the broad grin that lit up the shadow under the bull's snout. "The Dragon Preserve benefits from the event, too. The least they can do is spare a dragon tamer or two to liven it up."

The words 'dragon tamer' stirred something non-sexual in Millie's mind, but her hormones stomped on it. "Well, Dragon Tamer... is it safe to say you like a fiery date?" She wiggled her flames.

"I don't do anything safe...and call me Charlie," he answered, lifting his bull's head to add wicked eyes to his freckle-faced grin.

*Well, hell. Looks like a Weasley. An older one, at that. Still... Merlin knows their cocks have lifetime warranties.*

Millie grinned back. "Call me anytime... Charlie." Somewhere behind her, applause broke out.

*What was I supposed to be doing? Never mind, it can wait until I've crossed Charlie off my 'to do' list. Shouldn't take long...*

---

As predicted, the closer loo was occupied. Even as drunk as he was, the sounds from within gave Draco a pretty good idea of how. He pounded on the door in desperate annoyance.

"Thisizz a fuckin' mansion--find an empty bedroom! There're people who actually need the bloody plumbin' fixtures, you know!" Apparently the pounding from without simply blended with the pounding from within. By the sound of it, they were against the door, and all Draco was accomplishing was adding additional vibrations to the experience.

Taking a moment to cast a booby trap on the door (Draco regretted not having the concentration to do anything more painful than a delayed Trip Jinx), he set about following the Snorkack's directions. Or at least, he thought he did.

"Rotunda... clockwise? Anticlockwise? 'Round the whatsits trap? Bugger! Stairs, left, right... no, left." The corridor was getting colder, which was **not** helping.

He opened the door on the left, only to find a room with a huge fireplace. "Bloody hell! I asked for the loo, not the Floo!" He knew better than to take an emergency piss in an open Floo. Less intoxicated men had wound up in St. Mungo's from standing with their bits at incoming skull level before a fireplace.

The draft caught him again, and he stormed out into the corridor. No plumbing in evidence, but there were French doors leading to a little terrace of some sort, overlooking the garden.

*You're not seriously considering...your mother would be mortified!*

"She's not here...as usual. To hell with it!" Draco's hand was on his fly before he'd wrestled one half of the door open.

---

*Fucking hell. No Veela. I seriously need some air.*

Harry wandered down the corridor, blinking his crumpled contact lenses and trying to remember something of the last time he'd visited the house. He took the inevitable wrong turn at the Wrackspurt trap and wound up in a bathroom, where at least he was able to right his eyewear. Shoving his Hippogriff beak up and out of the way helped, too. *I may not know where I'm going, but at least I'll be able to see when I get there.*

The odd, grumbly feeling in Harry's chest was getting worse. He tried to pretend it was alcohol or indigestion, but the beast would not be denied.

*Oh, no. Not you again. Weren't you a byproduct of teenaged glands?.*

The grumbly thing stirred arthritically.

**Grr. Want Veela.**

Finally, a welcome cold draft got Harry's attention. He followed it, shivering with the waning protection of the Warming Charms cast on his harness and spotted a partially open French door.

*If this doesn't work on you, Mr. Chest Monster, we're heading back to the loo and giving you a cold bath. I'm too old for this shit.*

And stopped dead just the other side of it when he was confronted with the sight of sweeping white wings rising from a slim back covered in tattered silk. Above, they framed a mane of shining, moon-touched hair; below, that delightfully pert backside.

*Veela.*

Harry was so awestruck that it took him a moment to register the sound of a tapering-off stream of liquid. A relieved sigh from the Veela snapped him out of his idyll.

"Hey," Harry managed to blurt out, not without difficulty, "were...were you peeing over the rail?" He felt rather proud of himself for not slurring any of that. It had been a near thing, even with the word 'hey.'

The Veela turned, also not without difficulty. Given that it had been pretty certain that said Veela had been relieving himself off a balcony, it was rather drunk of Harry to sound so puzzled when he remarked, "You're a guy." A sparkly, poncy-looking guy, but Harry was quite sure there was nothing 'strapped down' under the translucent remains of the pale, silky robe.

"I shay, doesn't anyone 'round here know that theresh...therrer...damn it, Veelas have cocks, too!" The voice was drunk, petulant, indignant... and familiar.

"Malfoy?" It was Harry's night to blurt, it would appear.

"Which...oh. Right. I'm the only one here. All by myself, no Mummy, no Daddy, no wife, even my baby boy sh-shtolen away by some pretty lil' green-eyed Potter." He stopped in mid-sniffle to blink confusedly in Harry's direction. "Speaking of... Potter? Potter, where'd you lose the specs? And when'd you grow feathers? And peccs?"

"Didn't grow'em... Kids made me wear 'em...er...them." He thought for a moment. "The wings, I mean. And I think you're confuseded, Malfoy. Your son's taking my little girl away to live at that musty, old manor of yours."

"Oh. Always wanted a lil' girl." Draco sighed. "It'll be nice. We can play dress up."

*Dress... dressed... hang on.* Harry's sharp Auror observations skills swam courageously forward through the rising tide of alcohol in his brain with a little prompting from the line of conversation. Not only was his Veela not a Veela, he was a boy, and not just any boy, but a thoroughly pickled Draco Malfoy with his **boyiness** still in evidence.

*Stick with 'Malfoy.' Especially while he's still... like that.*

"Malfoy, your dick's kinda sticking out."

Draco...no, Malfoy...looked down in apparent surprise. "So it's. Didn't realize this party was all that exciting."

"Um, I think it had more to do with peeing over the rail. That was pretty rude. You should use the loo."

"No thanks, don't have to anymore."

Harry was having an inordinate amount of trouble thinking with Draco's...Malfoy's!... fly open. This was a slightly alarming state of affairs. "Then you should put it away."

Malfoy looked down and blinked at the opening in his trousers. "How awkward. I... I can't seem to 'member how."

*Oh, hell, no. I am NOT doing up Malfoy's trousers for him. He can just wander around with egg on his chin for all I care.*

Draco *Oh, give up* gave him a round, fragile, Luna-like stare. "Help me out?"

*Well, shit.*

"Are you sure? I...that is..."

Draco jerked his head up with such suddenness that he swayed precariously in place. "Wait, you're my hippogriff!" He leaned back on the rail, grinning and looking quite cheerfully debauched between his torn robe and the trousers situation.

Harry felt a prickle of foreboding below his bellybutton, a place that had absolutely no business prickling with anything while contemplating Draco. "Um, it's all right. Not a real hippogriff. Not going to bite." He reached forward carefully to get that damned fly buttoned because it was becoming painfully obvious that he'd be a mental wreck until it was.

"Hee! You wicked sing, you. Just can't keep your hands off my wand, can you, Potter?"

"What the...OOF!"

Draco squirmed and overbalanced himself. The next thing Harry knew, he had an armful of fabulous faux Veela, a distinct sense of déjà vu, and rather little air in his lungs. Harry grasped desperately for a handhold that was not male organs, fragile wings, or tangled silk, and found himself clutching Draco's absurdly perky leather-and-feather-clad arse.

**Purrr...**

Nobody asked you.

Rather than take offense, Malfoy was, of all things, giggling.

"Um..."

"I'm flattered, Harry, but I don't know if we should be doin' this on the firs' date."

"Uh, M...Draco...We should get you home." Something told Harry that he really ought not be hanging onto Draco's arse like that. But Draco obligingly wrapped his hands around Harry's own leather coated derriere and thus, in some warped manner, appeased his inner sense of fair play. Either that or befuddled his drunken brain sufficiently to forestall his objections.

"Mind, I'm not easy. I need to be drunker 'an this before I let some strange man take me home." Harry noted abstractedly that Draco was able to fondle condescendingly.

"Draco, you've known me for years. Our children are engaged." Harry tried to get a hand in between them in such a way that didn't imply anything but buttoning. He sincerely hoped that Draco was too drunk to... expand beyond the trousers' capacity... should Harry's hands make an accidental lascivious detour.

"Oh. Right. Well, that's all right, then." He gave Harry's bum another friendly squeeze and nuzzled his neck, making odd, little happy noises.

Harry had the distinct feeling that he was failing to communicate. He also had the distinct, disturbing feeling that he actually rather enjoyed feeling other male backsides and dealing with other male trouser fastenings and fervently wished that he, too, was blitzed enough to be unable to fill his codpiece to capacity. "Draco..."

"Hmm?"

"We should find a Floo. We're too drunk to Apparate. Well, I know you are, and I'm not in such great shape, myself.*Though thanks for making the whole bisexual thing a bit clearer.*

"In great shape from where I'm standing," Draco said with another giggle. He stroked Harry's chest hair, forcing Harry to choke lest he make a more undignified sound. "Warm, too."

*Well, shit. It's the engagement party all over again.*

---

*This is more like it. If I'm going to be gay, it's going to be for someone hot.*

Draco made himself comfortable against Harry's chest, which was a wonderful place to feel the vibrations from Harry's voice. Every nuzzling action left a trail of silver makeup, giving Draco a primal rush at marking his territory. "Are you sniffing me?"

"Why not? Smells good." Draco inhaled again. *Leather and Harry. Mmm. Those badges were sooo off-base.* Draco nuzzled his way back to Harry's neck, where he was somewhat annoyed to find his feathers and hair getting caught. *The coordinating costumes are brilliant, but that stubble is murder on my skin.*

Draco managed to unclamp one hand from Harry's very touchable backside and fished out his wand. "Tha's gotta go." He tried to bring the tip of the wand up to Harry's chin, but Harry kept wobbling for some reason.

"It's a charm, 'Finite' it." Draco wondered why Harry sounded so anxious.

"Kay. Hol' still." Apparently Harry couldn't hold still without grabbing Draco's wrist. Oh, well, whatever it took. *Finite... Finite In...*

Harry gently pulled the wand from his hand. *"Finite Incantatem,"* he said carefully.

"What you said." Draco nuzzled in against Harry's now-smooth neck. He hadn't been this happy in ages. Harry was so warm... so nice... had such a squeezable bum...

He talked too bloody much, though.

"It's half eleven. If we don't get out of here soon, we'll be unmasked!"

"Wha?" This sounded worrisome, though it was a bit beyond Draco's mental capacity at the moment to figure out why.

"Everyone takes off their masks at midnight."

A few more cerebral regions flickered to life, complete with emergency lights. "You mean, someone cou' know who we are?"

"Anyone who's still sober enough in half an hour."

Draco's head jerked upright. He noticed Harry 'owing' and rubbing his nose but failed to connect the events. "I know where there's an open Floo."

"Good...let's hurry."

This was easier said than done. Bipedal locomotion had never quite posed such a challenge for Draco before. Possibly the alcohol he'd just partied with had been crucial to maintaining his center of gravity. Fortunately, Harry was there.

"Bloody hell, you'll break your neck at this rate. Up, sparkles." By some combination of Draco hopping...or possibly lurching...upward and Harry cradling him close, with one arm under white-leather-clad-knees and the other somewhere under Draco's wings, they managed to stagger back into the house. Draco happily discovered that, given enough wiggling, Harry was forced to slide one hand under his backside for support.

"You'll always catch me... Right, Harry?" Draco pushed the hippogriff beak entirely out of the way so that he could see Harry's face more clearly. Harry sighed, his strained expression softening.

"I've got you; don't worry. Now, where's that Floo?"

"Righ' through there." Draco pointed to a door across the corridor. He smiled, unable to contain the overwhelming happiness he felt from just being so close to Harry. "Home, Harry! Flyyyy me home!" He giggled, wiggling his toes with the sheer joy of it. Harry wasn't a hippogriff, he was a bloody black-winged angel, offering access to that strokable chest, letting Draco drown in those emerald eyes and bask in the warmth of Harry's smile.

And how could Draco argue that Harry talked too much when he said things like, "You're ridiculously cute when you're drunk," in such a fond voice?

*This is Heaven, and I have my own Harry-Angel. I've died happy.*

---

Whatever Draco's personality shortcomings while sober...and Harry was honestly hard-pressed to think of any serious ones more recent than two decades past...he was an adorable, happy, cuddly drunk. His smile was wide and honest and his gray eyes were starry. Maybe they were just glazed over by alcohol, but since Harry was nicely marinated himself at the moment, they looked quite stellar to him.

"Floo's right here," Harry said softly. "You'll have to light the fire or let me put you down so I can do it."

"Fire?" The happy expression melted into a wibbly one and Draco hid his face against Harry's neck.

If Harry had any reserve or caution left, it melted along with his heart. His world narrowed down to the slim, shivering body in his arms. "Hey." Lacking a free hand, he nuzzled Draco's cheek until he turned enough to look at Harry. "It's just the Floo. I'll hold you the whole time, yeah?"

It was supposed to come out scolding, but...rather like when he tried the same tactic with the kids...Harry sounded affectionate instead. He probably was looking at Draco with a stupid, fond smile as well.

Draco smiled at him brilliantly and slid down to the hearth, leaning trustingly against Harry. Harry pulled his wand. *Incendio.* Tossing in a handful of powder from the little box on the mantle, Harry called the address and hugged Draco close...as promised...as they stepped in together.

---

*Click.*

Tatiana was speechless with the sheer gorgeousness of the image. Before she could take another shot, her subjects ducked into a room. She rushed down the corridor, holding her camera up and clicking as she got to the door. The few seconds it took for her to catch her breath were a few too many.

"Wait!" Tatiana's call came too late. "Aw, hell."

She checked the display in the back of the camera, and crowed at the images...one coolly moonlit and framed by French doors, one warm and natural in the glow from the chandelier in the back Floo parlor.

"Well. At least I have some nifty candids." She noted something glittery on the hearth and stooped to pick it up. It was one of the Veela's sandals. "And a souvenir."

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Notes:

Um, yeah. We're getting to the juicy parts.

Hee... er... did I mention that this is six chapters in all? Thank you, SeverusLovesUs, for dealing with the verbal budget excess!

## 5. Fly With Me

Are we there yet? And if so, how many shenanigans can two thoroughly drunk middle-aged wizards in the midst of sexual identity crises get up to, anyway?

Disclaimer: I only own the costumes and the OFCs... and to be honest, after the mess they've made of 'em, I might let you have the costumes.

## 5. Fly With Me

---

Harry managed to turn them sideways as they fell heavily through the Floo so that his wings cushioned their fall. Draco landed on Harry, knocking the breath out of him for a bit. It took Harry a while to realize that Draco was still planted on top of him and staring at him in a weirdly cute, misty sort of way.

"You're not goin' take 'vantage of me, are you?" Draco asked. It sounded more hopeful than anything else.

"Uh, yeah...no...er, what was the question again?" Harry was just a tad confused. Draco was on top of him, so shouldn't he be asking that question? Maybe?

Draco blinked thoughtfully. He was quite good at looking thoughtful with all that forehead to work with, Harry thought admiringly. "Not sure."

Draco rolled off to the side and seemed to notice his costume for the first time. "Bugger. Lost a shoe." He didn't sound too upset about it, but simply kicked the other away. Then Draco spent what Harry should have considered an indecent amount of time studying his own crotch, except that Harry had been looking at the exact same spot and didn't want to admit to indecency. "Help me get these off?"

"Thought we just got them back on."

"They're too tight. Wan'em off."

Harry thought that they looked quite nice tight. The part of him that was still worried about these thoughts insisted that he stall for time. "Hang on." He threw his Hippogriff headpiece into the fireplace in disgust. Harry seriously considered burning it, but shut off the Floo and re-warded the house for the night instead. That familiar bedtime routine activated the 'dressing for bed' reflex and he started removing his boots.

Apparently Draco was not only a happy, cuddly drunk but a helpful one as well. "Lemme do that. You do the trousers."

Something in Harry's brain protested vehemently at the fact that he was rolling around on his hearthrug, helping Draco Malfoy remove a pair of white-feathered leather trousers while Draco pushed at his loosened boots with bare toes. He ignored it under the assumption that his brain was just as drunk as the rest of him and probably wasn't coming up with the best of ideas just now.

The assumption was confirmed several minutes later as he knelt on the floor, panting. It wasn't so much the kneeling and panting as the fact that he was doing so in front of a similarly panting Draco...who was nude from the waist down and clothed only in the shredded remains of his silk robe and assorted feathers from the waist up. Since the collective effect was no more concealing than a handful of party streamers and Draco was sprawled all over the rug, it left his cock sort lounging around in the midst of the absolute palest pubic hair Harry had ever seen, trying to decide whether it was sober enough to get hard or not. Nudely.

It all made Harry suddenly painfully aware of a profound fact of his existence.

"I really gotta piss."

Harry managed to stumble to the downstairs bath without any accidents of any variety and got that wretched codpiece out of the way. Curiously, removing it seemed a bit easier than putting it on had been, but that raised thoughts he'd really rather not study in detail when he had to devote all of his concentration to aiming.

The next thing he knew, Draco had wobbled up behind him and was resting his chin on Harry's shoulder, watching the proceedings with interest. Harry's cock did not seem to mind, a fact that Harry found to be somewhat awkward.

"I'll be done in a minute if you need it."

"No rush. I went. Jus' before you found me."

"I remember. You're going to have to 'pologize to Tatiana for peeing in her garden." Harry caught himself slurring a bit and tried to get his tongue back in order. He had the notion that at least one of them should not be completely shitfaced, though he couldn't for the life of him figure out why this was important.

"I was? I did?"

"Yes. Quite clear on that."

Draco was very still for a moment, contemplating this. Then he curled his arms around Harry's chest and relaxed again. "I shay. Rather rude of me."

"Rather. Speaking of which, why are you watching me pee?"

"Oh. That. Guess I wanted to see your cock."

"Er... Any special reason?"

"Looked nice through the trousers. Is, too. Quite. Nice, that is."

"Run out of complete sentences?"

""Spect so."

The fastening which had given Harry's sober brain so much trouble defeated him utterly now, so he left it.*Not as if the damn things aren't tight enough to stay on without it.*

Harry washed up, wondering why he was so content... possibly even pleased... at the image in the mirror of Draco cuddling him from behind. They were mostly nude except for a few scraps of costuming and what appeared to be contrasting-colored bondage harnesses with wings, which caused a slow bloom of warmth to spread through Harry as if he was blushing internally. Harry distractedly noticed silver face makeup smeared on his chest and his mind drifted to when Lily was nine and Al had come home for the summer with brilliant plans to change her relatively harmless Muggle bedazzler into a magical one.

Gruesome glitter memories notwithstanding, Harry's wings stirred, easing back to caress Draco. He was relatively certain he didn't remember ordering them to. He was pretty clear on the fact that he hadn't ordered his cock to do anything either, yet there it was, fitfully attempting to overcome the gravitational pull of age, two Scorpions, and around half a dozen glasses of champagne.

*I don't even like champagne*, Harry thought dizzily as he turned and leaned on the counter, swaying slightly and studying Draco's fond, dreamy expression. He wondered if

Draco was through being cuddly...disappointing thought...and if so, where his drunkenness would take him next. Harry's personal stages of drunk were pessimistic, energetic, jumpy, confused, and... one other. *Which one is left?*

His train of thought was interrupted when Draco yawned massively, immediately moving Harry to follow suit.

*Oh, yeah. Sleepy.*

---

Harry's yawn came out hot and alcoholically sweet. Draco studied Harry's tongue with some interest.

"Well. See you." Harry sounded a bit befuddled as he made for the door of the bathroom. He seemed unable to stop petting Draco with his eyes as he went, so his progress was irregular at best.

Draco followed automatically. He had a plan for Harry, he really did. It was his body's plan, actually, and it tingled faintly and pleasantly beneath layers of alcohol-induced numbness. Sadly, Draco's drunken brain wasn't up to following through with the plan...assuming he remembered what it was...beyond finding Harry's backside once they stopped at the foot of the stairs. He settled his hands comfortably on the body-warmed black leather while they breathed on each other's shoulders under the glow of the night-light.

After a bit, it occurred to him that this could be better.

"Aren't these sings awfully binding?" Draco wedged a thumb into the waistband of the leathers. He was either trying to get inside or prove his point, hell if he knew which.

"They're soft."

"But tight." Draco had a great spell for removing stuck trousers, a byproduct of an embarrassing haute couture phase. Now, if only he had his wand... and could remember anything more complicated than his own name...

"Now that you mention it...hey!"

*Strike me down. Wandless magic!*

"See?"

Harry stared bemusedly at his trousers where the magic had deposited them across the steps. "I... it's rather freeing to be rid of them."

"Good." Draco hadn't any real clue of what Harry had said, but 'good' certainly applied to their situation. Harry had his arms around Draco's neck and one hand tangled in Draco's hair, and there was nothing between them but a few straps and some bits of silk.

*Skin feels so good. Silk is rubbish.*

Come to think of it, 'good' was a little insipid. All that close-pressed Harry nudity was almost enough to sober up Draco's cock. Almost.

"Msleepy. Wan'gotobed," Harry said against Draco's shoulder.

Draco's current fluency in Slurvian and his desire for something similar aided the comprehension process. "'kay. Wherezit?"

Harry gazed sadly into the shadows at the top of the stairs. "Up there."

"Oh." Draco wanted to object, but the persistent thought that bed equals good overrode it. He pulled away from Harry reluctantly, every inch of skin shivering in vehement protest at losing contact with all that lovely warmth. Draco secured a death grip on the banister and managed to haul himself up the first step. Seeing as he still had one hand on Harry's arse and Harry still had one arm draped around Draco's neck, Harry stumbled along by default. With the aid of the banisters and some very dodgy grabbing, they crawl-lurched upwards until they were on a blessedly level bit of floor. It was a fairly simple matter from there to stagger through the bedroom door.

Well, they would have staggered through had their wings not got caught in the frame.

"Mstuck." Draco stared longingly at the bed. Maybe he could sleep standing up? Harry was pretty comfortable to lean on, after all.

Harry grunted and gave a little lurch forward. "Pull."

"Pull what?" Draco glanced down, contemplating a likely object for the verb.

"Wings." Harry twisted and lunged again, and all of a sudden, they were in a feathered heap on the rug.

"Harry... room's spinning." Draco felt a frightened quaver creep into his voice. Harry squeezed his hand reassuringly.

"Lie still. Should right itself. I think."

*He's so reliable*, Draco thought in silent adoration as the prophesized decrease in the rotation of the ceiling came to pass. He sat up to find Harry smiling up at him. "Look nice, angel."

Draco smiled back. He contemplated saying something similarly nice to Harry, but then he caught sight of a fashion sin that could bar his handsome, dark angel from Pillow Paradise. "No socks in bed."

Harry blinked at him, pretty green eyes wide with confusion.

"No socks in bed." The leather and feathers...even those little claw-thingies...he could live with, but those damn socks looked too silly.

"'kay." Harry shucked them off and slumped back on the floor in a pile of splayed limbs and wings. "Better?"

*Definitely an angel. Ooh. Maybe a dark and thoroughly fallen one that likes to dally with pretty mortals...*

"Yeah." Draco was dizzy again, but he suspected that it wasn't anything a nice bed couldn't fix, so long as Harry was in the bed as well. Getting there would be a bit of a trick with Draco's sadly bedraggled wings pulling him down, but through some combination of stumbling to the bed and dragging Harry with him...or vice versa...he shrugged his way free of his tattered white wings and the last pitiful bits of his robe. Harry's harness was too great a challenge for luck and drunken fumbling, but they managed to flop amongst the pillows anyway. Not that Harry's wings bothered Draco once he was in bed with Harry squished against him where he belonged.

*Eh, what are a few feathers? Life is good.*

---

Draco seemed partial to cuddling Harry's face against his neck. This suited Harry just fine since what he could smell of Draco through the gin was thoroughly pleasant and it had been so bloody long since he'd gone to sleep with his arm draped over a nice, warm body. Or since he'd had such nice, soft hair to play with. Come to think of it,

Draco's hair was the softest he'd ever felt, softer than the feathers that were still tangled in it, so that made it even longer.

Too much cuddling made breathing a little impractical though, so Harry shifted around, looking for somewhere to put his nose that would admit the passage of oxygen. He found himself face to face with a slightly out-of-focus Draco. Harry could see Draco perfectly clearly with the contacts; but the way those gray eyes were slowly shifting (and occasionally crossing) it was apparent that Draco was having trouble doing likewise.

"You sang m' fav'rite song tonight."

It was important to Draco to impart this piece of information, judging by how much effort he put into focusing while he said it. With some effort of his own, Harry managed to process the non-sequitur.

"Which... Oh. Yeah. I like that one. Nice music."

"Millie thought it was creepy." Draco pouted.

"Nuh-uh. I don't think so." Harry gave the matter some thought. Thinking was rather painful at present, but no effort was too great for his pouting, unhappy Draco. "It's my job. You know. To watch people. Keep 'em safe. I like keeping people I like safe."

Draco melted against the pillow. The starry-eyed look was back, on a galactic scale. "I like you, Harry." Flatteringly, Draco sounded only a little surprised to be saying it. Then he leaned in and planted a highly alcoholic though not too sloppy kiss on the corner of Harry's mouth.

Draco's mouth was soft and hot and smelled of gin and something vaguely minty, and it rendered Harry happy enough to override the alarms in his psyche. Anything that opposed the cuddly, warm Draco-ness snuggled against him and the slightly skewed kisses was clearly malfunctioning. Harry smiled into the kiss and returned it...even managing to center most of it on Draco's lips.

"I like you, too, Draco."

He really did. Draco was all warm skin and soft, if a little sparse, hair, and he totally understood the whole protective thing. It had been so long since Harry'd had so much skin against his skin... too long since there'd been anyone else warming his bed... years, if he wanted to be thoroughly honest, since he'd shifted a knee under the sheets and found it slipping between two other relaxed, willing, knees...

Suddenly, Harry wasn't very sleepy.

His resolve and certain less principled parts of him firming, Harry swayed up onto his hands and knees above Draco. **Really** like you."

---

Draco felt a little confused. He'd been falling asleep cocooned in the sweetly smug knowledge that he was right about that song*ake that, Millie*, the highly pleasant sensation of Harry's lips, moist and firm and rather decisive against his, and the thoroughly euphoric sound of Harry saying that he liked Draco. Then all of a sudden Harry was above him, eyes intense, huge black wings gleaming dully in a sliver of moonlight. He definitely wasn't hovering though, wings notwithstanding. Draco felt rather thoroughly squished and a bit poked. Then Harry repeated the bit about liking Draco, and a little squishing didn't seem too hard to take anymore.

*Hard... Oh, my. That accounts for the poking.*

Had Draco been even remotely sober, he would have felt a fair amount of trepidation at the fact that a very hard penis not his own was rubbing insistently against his hip. In fact, given that he was on his back for the proceedings, 'panic' might not have been too strong a word.

But since sobriety was currently as remote from Draco's location as it could float on an entire bellyful of drinks, what he chiefly felt was a hard body with a generous sprinkling of slightly scratchy little hairs all over it. Harry's greedy tongue slithering across his collarbones, the delicious sound of moaning, and the hot press of muscle cut through Draco's haze of drunken numbness. It had been longer than he cared to remember since anyone had touched him like that.

His hands awakened first. It occurred to Draco that he'd been terribly unfair to limit his attentions to Harry's arse because while that was perfectly glorious (especially bare), his back was also a sensory delight and his hair was paradise. By the time Draco had steered Harry in for a kiss by means of that hair, Draco's legs and prick decided that they were alert enough to enjoy the party.

From there on out it was all tangled legs and tongues, frantic heartbeats pressed close together, moans, grunts, gasps, and whimpers, and dizzily wonderful friction of cocks against hips. Harry snuck a hand in between them and did something remarkable with Draco's nipples, which he'd always declined to experiment with before for fear of seeming girly. His mistake became clear in a shuddering wave of pleasure that gripped him and wrung him, forcing Harry's name from his throat...among other ejaculations.

Draco was faintly aware that he was wet and sticky, which should have been a highly distasteful condition. But the last thing he noticed, before sweet unconsciousness successfully beckoned, was a haze of pleasure and Harry calling him beautiful.

---

So good, so hot, hands all over him, so much skin for the first time in ages... He wanted to keep his eyes open to watch the play of exquisite expressions on Draco's face, but the pleasure was too great. Harry moaned with every thrust against the firm, slim body beneath him, drinking in Draco's little huffs, whimpers, and breathy cries rising in pitch until a shriek of "Harry!" rung in his ears and hot, slick wetness pulsed between their bellies.

Harry's eyes rolled back at the incredible feeling of the slippery sweetness that his cock was now gliding through. He gasped and jerked stiffly in place, panting, "Fuck...beau'ful...Draco!" With a final groan, he made his own contribution to the puddle.

Harry slid a bit down Draco's body, too tired to move further; his head dropped to his new favorite pillow, the smooth bit of Draco's chest just below his shoulder. The rhythmic thump of Draco's heart lulled Harry to asleep almost instantly with a slightly drooly smile on his face and a contented snore that could have been ignited by a spark from a breath mint whooshing past his ear. Harry's wings, released from the charm that put them under conscious control, drooped to cover them in a blanket of black feathers.

---

The Floo flashed green, and one by one, Lily, Anastasia, Albus Severus, and Scorpius stumbled sleepily (and, it must be confessed, rather tipsily) into the Floo Parlor at the Manor.

"I think we all deserve shirts that say, 'I survived another one of Aunt Hermione's Parties,'" Lily said.

"Uncle Percy had some made once...you must be too young to remember. I still remember Dad telling Mum 'The fan has not yet been built that could handle the resulting shit,'" Al said, snickering.

"At least we won the pool for how long it would take Uncle George to get around the wards and spike the punch!" Ana raised the little purse in triumph. Scorpius applauded her sleepily. "Oh, and thanks for putting us up for the night, Scorpius."

"Shouldn't be any trouble finding you beds." Scorpius leaned in close to Lily and whispered, "I've got one that I'm sure you'll like, if you don't mind sharing."

"Wait till after the wedding before you say something like that around me, will you?" Al shot his friend a glare. "And even then, I'll have to kill you if you let slip any details."

"Fancy Daddy shutting off the Floo!" Lily's indignation would have worked a lot better without the giggles. "I just hope we're not going to end up calling some little slag we went to school with 'Auntie.'"

"Gah, Lilz! I don't know whether to say, 'Go, Dad!' or vomit," Al said, rolling his eyes at her.

"Go, Dad!" Ana yelled, and she and Lily dissolved into laughter.

Scorpius called a house-elf to ready a room for Al and Ana. He turned away from the creature with a peculiar expression. "Father's not home yet. What if something happened to him?"

"He's able to take care of himself, Scorpius darling. I don't think we need to inquire at St. Mungo's just yet."

Scorpius clenched his fists, the pleasant buzz of spiked punch fading with worry. "Damn the Notts for canceling their event at the last minute! With that crowd at Tatiana's party, anything could have happened."

"What do you mean, 'that crowd?' Auntie Tatiana's parties are always very colorful!" Ana piped up.

"That's what he's worried about, love," Al murmured against her ear, trying not to exacerbate Scorpius' anxiety.

"What if your Dad found him at the party and they...I don't know...started taking the piss about the costumes and got into a fight or something?"

Lily soothed the worry lines on Scorpius' forehead with a kiss. "They haven't fought in years. We'll call Tatiana in the morning; maybe Papa got a little tipsy and is sleeping it off there." She smirked. "Maybe he found someone to sleep it off with."

Al whistled. "What are the odds they both got lucky tonight?"

Scorpius winced. "Okay, I want Father to move on as much as anyone, but please... let's not dwell on it."

"Pretty good, based on those costumes you two designed," Ana said. "And I thought they were too over-the-top. Shows what I know about fashion."

"Well, they were deliberately a bit over-the-top. We needed to get them outside of their comfort zones," Al explained. He snickered. "Though I think that the outfit we designed for Millie suited her perfectly."

"Suited her? We toned her down," Scorpius said with perfect seriousness. His face relaxed into a hint of a smile. "But if we do Halloween costumes again next year, I want to go easy on the feathers. What were we thinking?"

"They look spectacular...but, agreed. They were a right bitch to work with. I'm glad we didn't get the bright idea to put any on your wedding robes," Al said. "Finishing those will be a nice change of pace."

"You two need to go into business. Those costumes were incredible. And I love what I've seen of my robes so far," Lily added, giving her brother a peck on the cheek and her fiancé a rather less innocent kiss of appreciation.

"It could be a great sideline while Al finishes his Charms apprenticeship, and Merlin knows the family investments could do with some livening up...if you two would agree to be the faces of the company." Scorpius favored Ana with his most charming smile and nuzzled Lily coaxingly.

Lily looked askance at him. "We've been through this. My position with Uncle Bill's company is demanding, especially if I'm going to make partner. I don't have time to impersonate the head of a house of fashion besides."

Scorpius gave the elf a nod of acknowledgement as it popped back to inform them that a room was ready for his guests. "It wouldn't take any more time from your schedule than the actual designing does from ours. Think about it, love." He favored her with the smile of a man certain of his personal charm. It was a testament to said charm that Lily let him take her hand instead of rolling her eyes at him and making her own way to bed.

"Why don't you just admit that you design all these incredible outfits?" Ana leaned sleepily on Al as they followed the house-elf to their own allotted room.

Al wrapped one arm around her waist. "It's all about marketing. Honestly, Ana...who would believe that a couple of straight men came up with this stuff?"

---

Late the next morning, Luna and Tatiana were preparing their follow-up feature on the Snorkacks, Nargles, and Rare Creatures Society (S.N.A.R.C.S.) Halloween Ball for 'The Quibbler.' This meant Luna was plowing through the avalanche of photos that Tatiana and Shecky, the house-elf, had taken...since, left to Tatiana, they would have added extra pages and kept them all in. Meanwhile Tatiana was editing Luna's story, trimming the lavish verbal excesses and nodding absently when Shecky pulled on his ears and begged Mistress Tatiana to 'please be remembering that the 'u' in 'colour' was really necessary in British English.'

"This is so exciting! I couldn't sleep until I'd counted everything up. I think we've got enough to finish the safety fence around the entire preserve for those sweet little Snorkacks of yours."

"Yes, it was quite the success. But I think that we should write some guidelines for costumes if we make this an annual event. We at least need to ban sharp edges and open flames. There was an incident in the loo."

"Wouldn't hurt to hire some security as well. Poor Shecky had a hell of a time getting rid of that Kneazle. And she wasn't even drunk. Much."

"Speaking of that, I really think that we should keep to just champagne next year. Our Transfiguration skills are more than equal to making all that we need."

"And my Charms skills are more than equal to making sure that the other liquor bottles don't run dry for at least the course of the evening," Tatiana reminded her brightly. She made another mark with the blue quill. Shecky winced and erased it when she wasn't looking, mumbling about the idyllic, editing-free lives of house-elves in the good old days before general emancipation.

"I know that you love tending bar, but..." Luna stopped in mid sentence. She turned the photo in her hands as if somehow a different angle would change the image.

"Tatiana... have you sent copies of the photos to the 'Daily Prophet' yet?"

"About an hour ago. That picture-making device of Al and Ana's is a dream! Not that we'll get more than a back page mention for the cause, but every little bit..."

"**All** of the photos?"

"Well, certainly. I wanted to give us the best chance possible that they'd see something they'd want to publish." Tatiana widened her own impossibly large brown eyes at her cousin's impossibly large gray counterparts. "I'm sorry dear, was there a photo that you wanted to keep exclusive? I'm sure that we can Floo or owl them and work something out. I don't imagine that they'll get around to printing anything until the Sunday edition."

Luna stared at the image in question. "Oh... I think that they'll work **this** photo in today. Front page. In color." She dropped the lot on the desk, Tatiana's stuttered questions trailing her down the hallway. "I'd better go warn Harry."

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Notes:

Yeah. The Ministry of Magic has a crap vetting process for weeding out high-ranking employees with potential psyche problems...

(Did you know that 'Hermione' is the most vitriolic expletive a house-elf can utter?)

SeverusLovesUs really is the best. These chapters look like comma farms before she goes in and weeds out the excess.

## 6. We Can Crash Together

*Chapter 6 of 7*

Oh, yeah.... You know you want the morning after.

Disclaimer: I disavow any ownership of these characters and refuse to acknowledge any responsibility for their actions in this fanfic.

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### 6. We Can Crash Together

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Harry awoke to a steady, flutter-bump sort of sound and a raging headache. To make matters worse, his pleasantly warm front contrasted uncomfortably with his absolutely freaking polar backside. He had only just assimilated all of this information when his pillow moaned.

*Okay... forty years in the Wizarding world, but moaning pillows are a new wrinkle.*

He rolled onto his side, grunting at the sharp tug of a couple of arm hairs being pulled out. Sticking to the pillow was also a first, though if he were perfectly honest with himself, sleeping while hugging a pillow was rather a regular thing these days. The blanket feeling as if it was made of feathers, on the other hand, was highly irregular.

*Am I actually awake or is this a seriously weird, hungover dream?*

His contact lenses seemed to have spontaneously Transfigured themselves into glue during the night. It was with great difficulty that Harry pried his eyes open to discover that his chances of hugging a pillow were pretty much nil, as the pillow not only groaned, but also possessed nipples. Rather significant even to Harry's Bludger-thrashed brain, those nipples were not attached to breasts.

Harry reared up. Agony threatened to split his skull, but his gritty eyes still managed to focus on painfully blinking gray eyes in a flushed, befuddled, and terribly familiar face. The shock was almost enough to distract Harry from the excavation work in his cranium.

While Harry was staring, open-mouthed, Draco emitted a sound that was probably supposed to be a scream, a shout, or a really choice, nasty word. It came out as more of a despairing croak. Draco's efforts to reclaim some semblance of dignity were further undermined when his sudden move to pull a sheet over himself seemed to do for his stomach what sitting up suddenly had done for Harry's head. His flushed cheeks went scarily grayish, and his face puckered into the universal expression for 'imminent vomit.'

Harry, not sure that he could expect cooperation from his own voice at the moment, pointed urgently toward the door of the en suite. Even in pain and in a certain amount of concern for the cleanliness of his home furnishings, Harry still noticed Draco's pale arse, considerably perkier than the rest of him, as he disappeared into the bathroom.

*This is not good.*

It was a very small leap from there to awareness of the dry, flaky mess on his own stomach.

*Oh, God. Oh, lousy, moldy Merlin. What do you do with a...a...one-night stand..he winced at the mere thought of the expression...a fling nope, not any better...the morning after?* Harry hadn't any encounters of this nature with the opposite sex to draw on for guidance, never mind the whole same-sex thing. He suspected that it was several thousand times worse with someone you knew than with a stranger, though. And the longer he stayed in his bed, in pain and pondering it, the worse it would get.

*This is so not good.*

Retching sounds came from the bathroom. Harry felt inclined to second them, though the source of his nausea was more psychological than physical.

*Oh, God. He was too blitzed last night to have the foggiest idea what he was doing, and I...I totally took advantage of him.*

Harry was almost glad of the pain in his head when he stood up because he felt pretty sure he deserved it. He hadn't any real idea how to begin to apologize for all this, but he figured that helping Draco out of his agony would at least be a start.

*This is fucking awful.*

Harry plodded slowly to the bathroom, head and wings drooping.

---

When Draco felt hands come to rest on his shoulders, part of him wanted to shrug off the touch and wallow in mortification alone. A much larger part wanted not to knock himself unconscious on the porcelain. Once he was fairly certain nothing more was forthcoming, Draco allowed himself to be steered to a seat on the bath mat. He pulled up his knees to make a shelf for his arms and buried his face in the resulting pretzel of limbs. Through the dull throb in his head, he noted the sound of water running and looked up with a violent shiver at the too-cold touch of a wet cloth at his temple.

Looking up proved something of a tactical error. Harry's face was right there, squinting at him in a way that looked absolutely painful. And yet, there he was being helpful, damn him.

"Hang on. Got to get rid of these." Harry's voice sounded like it was being dragged down a gravel road. He gently tucked the towel against Draco's forehead and stood up with a groan. Draco thought that he meant the wings until Harry stepped over to the sink and did something odd with his eyes, a vial, and two little cups. He groped around the counter for his glasses and with a sigh of relief, slipped them on. To Draco's dismay, they did nothing to diminish how disgustingly fit Harry looked. Draco hid his face in the cloth.



*Why does the earth never actually swallow you up?*

More noises, this time of a wand, then tumblers being Summoned, glass on tile, a cabinet door creaking, and little vials clinking. Harry's hand came to rest on Draco's shoulder again, but he hid until he heard a ragged, "Drink this."

Despite the utter and complete shit that Draco felt like now, he knew that he would feel even worse later for letting Harry wipe his face, help him sip water, get those embarrassing feathers untangled from the pitiful remains of his hair, and otherwise take care of him like a sick...well, not child, but debauched flat mate, perhaps. Then Harry tipped a pretty blue vial of Pain Relief potion down Draco's throat and fears of future self-loathing made way for an abjectly pathetic sense of gratitude.

"Feel better?"

Draco took another sip of water. He feared what his head might make of nodding, so he settled for answering in an embarrassingly small voice, "A little." The headache potion and water had washed away the worst of the 'seriously crappy' sensations, leaving mainly extreme embarrassment.

This was apparently the permission Harry needed to proceed with his own 'morning after' healing rituals.*Fucking Merlin. No, no, please tell me that Saint Potter did NOT neglect his own hungover state and martyr himself for however long taking care of my pathetic self. Oh, God. Suicide is too good for me at this point. And he needs to cover his honorable arse before it drives me completely barking.*

Harry managed to extricate himself from his harness. He let the wings fall to the bathroom floor in a heap. "At least they used the same non-chafing stuff on the harness as on the damned trousers."

Draco grasped at the thin hope that a humiliation shared was a humiliation halved. Knowing Harry, he might get him to take on more than half. "They got you with that line, too?"

"Bloody delinquents."

Draco let his head fall to his knees again. "Where did we go wrong?"

Harry slid down the wall to sit beside him. "Yours wasn't in on it."

"Yes, he was. He was part of the coercion team."

"Oh. Fuck. Where did we go wrong?"

It was then that Draco noticed his stomach. And remembered why it looked that way. Some evil impulse made him look at Harry, and by the blush heating his face until it looked as if it might melt his glasses frames, there was no doubt that Harry had noticed him... noticing.

*No crying. No crying in front of Harry in the bathroom. There is no way in hell you will be able to convince Mr. Knight in Shining Armor that it would be a mercy to attempt to kill you this time. You will only embarrass yourself further.*

"Would you like to use the shower?" It came out meekly and accompanied by the chivalrous gesture of Harry draping a towel around Draco's shoulders.

*If I look up directly into the showerhead, can I drown myself?*

Draco hid his face in his arms and hoped that if his voice sounded like it was breaking, Harry would nobly attribute it to being hungover. Just to be on the safe side, he whispered. "Yes, please."

---

Harry wasted no time in Transfiguring a spare toothbrush, grabbing his own razor and toothbrush, and escaping to the downstairs loo. He even refrained from taking a few seconds to Vanish those lurid leather monstrosities on the stairs.

Under the shower he scrubbed at the mess on his stomach, drowning in embarrassment. Since he'd not drunk nearly enough last night to forget how he'd made the mess, mortification was unable to mount a successful argument against his sex-starved penis, which was of the opinion that a good wank to the memory was in order. Or better yet, a march upstairs to repeat the performance with the principle player.

*Why the hell did you bring him home with you?*

Harry considered any number of perfectly pure motivations, the most convincing of which was keeping Draco from injuring or making a public spectacle of himself.

*Our children are getting married soon, for Merlin's sake, and that's just the sort of thing you do for family.*

The problem with that excuse was that Harry could easily have accomplished the same thing by taking Draco to the Manor and turning him over to a house-elf. The elves would have been more than happy to find Harry a room for the night if he didn't feel up to negotiating the Floo again. An even bigger problem with Harry's reasoning was that the image of Draco, nude and writhing on his sheets, was still taking up a considerable amount of his brain's visualization capacity.

*Thanks a whole fucking heap, Luna, for bringing up bisexuality. Did it never occur to you that I was quite happy being oblivious?*

Even dwelling on the fact that he was soon going to be related to Draco only exacerbated his angst without abating his arousal in the slightest.

*The wedding is going to be a nightmare. I wonder if I can arrange to have an emergency call before the reception gets underway?*

Harry winced under the onslaught of cold water and futilely wished that he could wash himself down the drain.

He wished it even more fervently about a minute later when he realized that he hadn't brought any clothes downstairs with him and that the only bit of fabric in the bathroom bigger than a hand towel was the bathmat.

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*No, no, no... it couldn't have happened. I... the alcohol made me a bit randy, and... and... with an actual warm body next to me, I... had a wet dream. Yes, that's it. Nothing whatsoever of a homosexual nature occurred here last night. Aside from the arse grabbing... and the nudity... and...*

Water splashed into Draco's mouth, forcefully reminding him of lush, starved kisses that were most definitely not a dream and had most definitely been experienced with Harry.

At least he had the wet part right.

*Well, it's not my fault! Potter... Potter took advantage of me! He overpowered me with all those big, strong, sexy Auror-muscles and... I... couldn't stop groping him...*

Draco tried to make it work, he really did. It used to be very easy to lay all the blame for his troubles on H...Potter's doorstep, but that bitch maturity was raining on his parade. Not to mention that the mere thought of last night had forced him to frantically turn the taps all the way to cold.

*Even in his drunken state, Har...P...bother, all right, HARRY...was trying to do something nice for me. But of course he was completely helpless in the face of my Veela-like radiance and I jumped all over him like some sailor who'd been at sea too long. He's going to go back to hating me and I'll have to feign some terrible illness to get out of the wedding reception so that I don't spoil it for the children by feeding the hostility in the room.*

Draco turned off the taps and shivered.

"My life is over."

He grabbed the dressing gown on the back of the bathroom door and slunk into the bedroom. In two more seconds, he would have had a grand plan underway to run downstairs, secure his wand, sneak out the nearest door or window, and Apparate home. He would even convince himself to part with the delightfully warm, Harry-scented garment and owl it back with a painfully formal little thank-you note.

Unfortunately for Draco's master plan, it was only one second before Harry popped into the bedroom, grabbed something shiny...and green?...out of a drawer, saying, "I'll just make breakfast for us, then," in a too-high voice before disappearing down the stairs. All while not quite covered by a very, very small towel.

*Fuck. I forgot. My plans never work.*

---

Harry was aware of Draco in a way that was almost painful. The sounds of the kettle and the various little clickings and rustlings attended upon making tea and fishing the bread out of its box for toast failed to hide the soft pad of his feet on the tile. Harry could have sworn that he could smell his own soap and shampoo, scents that he had stopped noticing on himself long ago. Draco's skin seemed to have a remarkable alchemy that turned them into something wonderful and excitingly new. *Leave it to a Malfoy to make cheap soap smell like something exotic. This is going to be torture.*

"Will tea and toast be okay?" Harry paid careful attention to his breathing so that the words wouldn't come out stilted. Or at least not too stilted.

There was a long pause behind him. Draco was probably evaluating the state of his stomach. "I think so." Harry heard a chair squeak. "Thank you." It came out a bit stilted, but at least Draco didn't sound like someone who was contemplating filing a sexual assault charge.

"What about eggs?"

"Please, don't go to any trouble."

*Are you kidding? Any excuse not to turn around yet.* "No trouble." Harry was pleased to note that he actually did have eggs in the refrigerator, which was not-too-poorly-stocked considering his bachelor state.

"So. Do you do this often?"

"What?"

"Make breakfast for last evening's... company."

"Company?" Harry was trying to figure out what his frequency of houseguests or lack thereof had to do with their situation and why Draco sounded so... almost petulant. *Jealous. He sounds... jealous.*

"No! Um... haven't exactly had 'company' since the wife left." *Does this mean... is that what he thinks of what we did last night? That it was something... to get jealous about?* Harry hazarded a glance over his shoulder and felt a pleasant little curl of warmth in his chest at the sight of Draco's hair trailing down in a soft, almost-white curtain over his faintly blushing profile. *And do I really mind if he does?*

"Oh. Right. Same h...That is, I haven't really had the time... work..." Some of the tension had left Draco's voice. *Luna is not allowed to make another crack about my ability to read people.*

"Who has time to go out, really."

"Yes, exactly."

"I suppose that's what got us into this mess."

"Sorry?"

"The kids and their matchmaking-by-costume. They've been bugging me... Hell, everyone I know has been after me to 'get out more.'" Harry felt as if he'd just chugged a Babbling Beverage, but he needed to get back to last night to make sure everything really was all right.

It appeared to be the special of the day, judging by how quickly Draco rattled off his response. "Yes, all their fault. Detestable. Just when we were getting along..." Draco swallowed whatever he might have said in a too-fast gulp of tea.

"I'm really sorry. I should have done a better job of... heading that off." It sounded a bit lame owing to the fact that Harry was having trouble feeling sorry.

"No, I'm sorry. I rather... miscalculated... how much it was safe to drink."

Harry sat down with only the corner of the table between him and Draco. Not as close as sitting directly next to him, but not on the opposite side of the table where they would stare at each other confrontationally... or where Harry would feel as if Draco was too far away. "We were terribly drunk. No reason to...to not get along."

"No reason."

This should have been where Harry breathed a sigh of relief, certain that the awkwardness level at the wedding would be bearable.

Instead, Harry thought about how Draco didn't need to be dolled up as a Veela and looking slightly feminine to make Harry feel slightly dizzy. He contemplated how gorgeously vulnerable Draco looked wearing Harry's silly 'Sexy Grandpa' dressing gown and trying to keep his hair positioned just so that it hid the bald area. He considered how most of his close friends...and rather more to the point, at least while he was contemplating Draco, his own penis...all seemed convinced that Harry was bisexual. Then he threw caution to the wind, looked directly at Draco, and said, "I said that I liked you last night."

Draco looked shocked in an almost comically wide-eyed fashion, then a little upset, then completely pink in the face, and directing his small, mortified voice into the lapels of the dressing gown, he asked, "Before or after we brought each other off?"

Perhaps Luna had a point after all because Harry couldn't figure out where the landmines were in that question, though he could sense their metaphorical menace. *When in doubt, tell the truth. You're a crap liar anyway.* "Be...before."

"Oh." Draco exerted a palpable act of willpower and ceased shredding the bit of toast on his plate. Harry was afraid that Draco's face might explode if the rather alarming shades it was attaining were indicative. "Right. Well. That's...that's all right, then."

"Er... Good."

Harry sipped his tea to keep from saying anything else. Or to keep from looking as if he wasn't saying anything else. Draco nibbled a morsel of toast and washed it down cautiously as if testing to see if it was inclined to return.

"I said I liked you, too," Draco said suddenly, peeking up over the teacup with a little smile. He'd faded back to a rather cute shade of pink.

Harry couldn't do much besides grin as best he could around a mouthful of eggs, which he swallowed painfully fast so as to be able to utter a profound, "Yeah." Harry suspected that the silliness of his grin was increasing exponentially, if the warm, fuzzy feeling welling up in his chest had anything to say about it.

Draco picked at his scramble again. This time it looked less as if he were afraid of vomiting it up and more as if he was stalling for time. "So, ah, are you," he coughed, took a quick sip of tea, "gay?"

"Bi." Harry managed not to add, 'I think.' That probably would have sounded insulting, under the circumstances. "And you?" he asked, cursing himself the instant the words left his mouth sounding hopelessly hopeful.

*Brilliant, Harry. You're just as much of a boob when going after a bloke as after a bird. At least there's one constant in all this.*

---

*Harry likes me...when he's half-dressed and entirely sober!*

It took Draco a minute to quell the giddy little voice in his mind and recognize that 'bi' meant someone who likes to Seek for both teams, as it were. Yes, the term 'bisexual' came up rather a lot last night. It sounded sophisticated. More importantly, it would facilitate doing something... half-dressed and entirely sober... with Harry. Something really pleasant. *Right. 'Bi' works.*

"Me, too," he affirmed quickly. Having this discussion at breakfast was an excellent tactical situation. He could shove something in his mouth while he thought of less inane things to say, thinking with a little inward smirk of satisfaction that Harry, unlike Astoria, probably wasn't going to make a pinched face at him and try to guilt him into spilling all his thoughts.

Draco found himself blinking at his reflection in the tea. For the first time in five years, he'd thought his ex-wife's name without feeling a red-hot knife stab him right below the ribcage.

*Kissing Harry wasn't so bad. Who am I kidding...it was fucking brilliant, and that thing with the nipples...*

"Well, that's, um, not quite as awkward, then."

Draco looked up in a slight panic, wondering if Harry had noticed him reacting to the memory. He calmed himself, realizing that a twitch behind a robe, under a table, wasn't going to get anyone's notice. Not even the Head Auror's. Of course, as 'Head Auror' took on an entirely different connotation in Draco's mind, the twitch developed into an erection of a magnitude that probably constituted some sort of record for a half-hungover all-but-middle-aged wizard.

Come to think of it, dwelling on 'hungover middle-aged wizard' labels wasn't doing himself justice. He had the body of a man in his... early thirties, at least from the eyebrows down. Granted, he didn't look like a poster for a Muggle gymnasium, but Draco felt fairly confident in his ability to hold the attention of the conveniently located bloke in the room who did.

*Okay, okay, you win this one, Millie. Tits don't always do it for me, either.*

"Well, that's good." It seemed the thing to stand up just then, so Draco did. He didn't stop to consider that he was already 'standing up,' though he realized his miscalculation fairly quickly when Harry's eyes fixed approximately at the sash of the robe, but not quite.

*Oops.*

Before Draco could decide on an escape route, Harry pushed his chair back from the table. Though he never got to his feet, Draco could readily tell that Harry was rather standing up as well.

"Yeah... good." Harry even managed to look up at Draco's face while he said it. That was more than sufficient impetus for Draco to take the few steps necessary to stand right in front of Harry, their knees brushing. Harry stood so that they were almost eye to eye, and oh, what eyes. Perhaps it was just the contrast with the still pinkish whites, but Draco could swear that Harry's eyes were actually a more intense green than Lily's, and Draco strongly suspected that he would have breathing difficulties shortly if he kept looking into their sea-like depths. Then he swept his eyes over the rest of Harry and wound up lightheaded anyway, his only clear thought being that if he could keep Harry out of shirts, he would really have something there.

"They're right... we should get over it." He leaned in closer still, returning to Harry's eyes. A warm hand on Draco's cheek and warm breath over his lips brought his own eyelids to half-mast. Whatever Harry saw in those half-closed eyes brought something roaring to life that was not at all cool and sea-like; more like emerald lightning.

"Get on with life." The first kiss fell, soft and just the tiniest bit moist, on his chin; the second, on his lower lip.

"Find someone." Draco paused between kisses, his own lips finding Harry's cheek and forehead despite the dark behind his eyelids.

"Have fun." Harry's voice was dark with the sort of promise that not even breakfast breath could diminish.

Even so, it sort of surprised Draco when Harry lifted him up and the little kisses were replaced by a whole lot of tongue. But he honestly couldn't say that it displeased him.

---

Harry figured that they'd thrown their dignity over the hedge sometime last night. Sitting in the kitchen still slightly hungover and staring bemusedly at each other's crotches had washed any remaining dregs down the drain. So, rather than keep up with the pleasant soft little pecks, Harry simply grabbed Draco about the waist, sat down, and pulled Draco into his lap. Because, damn it, he hadn't had any in ages, and last night had been fucking brilliant, even pissed out of his mind. It turned out that it was even better sober.

*Okay, rethinking the sarcasm angle. Thanks, Luna. This time, for real.*

Apparently, Draco was equally willing to let dignity be damned. After an initial squawk of surprise, he wriggled around so that he could straddle Harry's lap, and they set about snogging in earnest. Draco's teeth were sharp, and he made little, whiney, growling sounds whenever Harry scraped him with the little patch of stubble he'd missed in his haphazard attempt at shaving. Harry wondered if Draco would be willing to take this to the table... or the floor... *The floor's not that dir... Table. Definitely table.*

He was distracted by Draco snickering. "Is this your idea of sympathetic magic?"

Harry followed Draco's gaze to where he was staring pointedly at Harry's boxers. It took Harry a moment to tear his mind away from the thought that their erections weren't close enough together to realize that Draco had been **reading** the damned pants.

"George and Angelina gave them to me after a trip to Las Vegas. So... are they going to prove prophetic?" He leered at Draco and rolled his hips so that the emphatically tented words, 'I GOT LUCKY WEARING THESE' ground against the other man in all their cheap, satiny, card-suits-printed-on-green glory.

Draco stopped in mid-snicker with a low, impassioned groan. Harry took advantage of his open mouth and invaded possessively. Draco's tongue tasted of buttered toast and tea sweetened with whimpering sounds, and Harry sucked on it with great enthusiasm as he felt long fingers work their way into the waistband of his boxers. Harry growled...almost a snarl, really...and practically ripped the dressing gown from Draco's shoulders, his hands wandering in a frenzy down the back of the battered garment before he switched tactics and sent one in through the gap in front to return the favor. If their mouths hadn't been so tightly fused together, Harry was certain that the sound Draco made would have come out as a shriek.

"Still feel like making fun of my pants, Mr. Wizard-in-a-robe-that-reads 'Sexy Grandpa?'"

"I... put it on... I didn't read it," Draco panted. "And it's your robe." He pulled away enough to slip Harry's glasses up to the top of his head and stare at him from intensely close. "Fits you," he said throatily.

There was only one reasonable response to that as far as Harry was concerned. He abandoned Draco's back in favor of a firm hold on his arse so as to pull their groins as close together as their position allowed. *It worked brilliantly last night. Why mess with success?* Within seconds, they were rocking against each other, the chair creaking a rhythmic protest in counterpoint to their steady moaning.

Which probably accounted for why they didn't hear anything until the yelling commenced.

---

Morning witnessed the curious spectacle of Albus Severus struggling with the door of his dad's house while Lily, Scorpius, and Anastasia stood around him, all clothed in various pilfered items from Scorpius' wardrobe and expressions much less cheerful than one would expect of people who'd all had the benefit of a decent shag the night before.

Al's mouth was set in a thin, cranky line. Whether it was because of the unusual difficulty he was having with the locked door or because of Scorpius' constant fretting was not entirely clear.

"Father's not been out overnight since Mother left us! Luna didn't remember him being at the unmasking, so he's been gone since before midnight last night."

"For the tenth time, lover, Daddy will be able to find him," Lily wrapped her arm firmly around Scorpius' waist to stop him from pacing. "I'm sure he just got a bit tipsy and went home with a friend to sleep it off. Auntie Luna said that Millicent was there."

"Oh, yes. Dear, responsible Millicent was there to save the day. I feel ever so much better now." Scorpius pulled a face for emphasis. "I still don't know why we're tiptoeing around on the doorstep instead of Apparating right in."

"Because Dad locked the Floo last night. He NEVER does that. And I sure as hell don't want to pop in on him while he's either hungover or with some silly tart he picked up at the party. Or both." Al's patience, not the most impressive to begin with, was worn to a thread. And Scorpius was jumping on the thread.

Anastasia giggled behind her hand. "Al, the only silly tart your dad fancies involves a crimped crust."

"Bloody hell, Dad must have been drunk as a lord to set crazy wards like these." Al swore as the key finally turned.

"Drunk? Hungover? Honestly, Al, since when does Dad drink to excess?"

"If he was as unhappy about his costume as Father was, he might have had a few too many...and he might have decided to sample a different kind of pastry," Scorpius said darkly.

Which just went to show how very unfair it was that Scorpius wasn't awarded an 'O' in Divination.

The door finally yielded, and they all stood for a moment on the threshold, given serious pause by the notion of parental nudity.

"Okay... Ana, you re-open the Floo. Lily, we'll go upstairs to look for Dad, and Scorpius, you go get tea ready so that we can wake him up enough to be useful."

They cleared the small foyer and began branching out off to their respective destinations. Several things happened in very quick succession.

The first was that Lily paused, one foot on the stairs. "Crap! Al, I think you were right." She pointed at the costume bits on the stairs and shuddered.

The second was that Al, barely having registered the black trousers and stray boot sprawled rather obscenely across the steps, heard an unidentifiable noise from the direction of the kitchen. Fearing that Dad might be doing something untoward there...hopefully just burning toast in a state of undress, but one couldn't be too careful...he whirled to head off Scorpius. "Wait, Scorp, I..."

The third was that Ana rushed in from the living room with her eyes bulging, a silver sandal dangling from her nerveless fingers. "Lily..." she whispered, as if she wanted a second opinion before daring to break the news to Al.

And while Lily was trying to pick her jaw up off the floor and Al was sprinting toward the kitchen, Scorpius, having heard none of the warnings and seen none of the signs, strolled into the kitchen and promptly screamed.

"AHHH! MY EYES!"

---

Harry peeked up over Draco's bare shoulder. His glasses fell back into place just in time for him to see two thirds of his offspring clatter to an open-mouthed halt behind Scorpius, who had one hand over his eyes and the other flung outward as if to ward off something hideous. Anastasia peeked under Scorpius' outstretched arm, Draco's sandal clutched against her chest like a prop in a slightly off-color Cinderella story. Harry had the unsettling feeling that her eyes were wide with interest more than shock; he dazedly marked that her resemblance to Luna was uncanny.

"This is like a Greek Tragedy! Isn't there some sort of fathers-in-law incest taboo?" Anastasia broke out in surprised giggles, somewhat detracting from Scorpius' ongoing rant.

"Now who's taking 'Drama Potions?'" Draco muttered sulkily.

"Well... At least I was right about one thing. Daddy was able to find Papa," Lily said weakly.

Al rubbed at the side of his nose as if he could coax the headache from between his eyes and out of his body by that route. "Dad, um, I know I said you needed to get out... but this wasn't exactly what I had in mind."

"Oh, God. If we don't look up and pretend they're not here, will they go away?" Draco said, his complaint muffled against Harry's shoulder. Harry couldn't see Draco blushing, but he was almost certain that he could actually feel the blood redirecting itself from Draco's erection to his face.

Harry sighed. "I've been trying that for years and it hasn't worked so far."

Anastasia slid down the doorframe to the floor, still giggling and clutching that bloody sandal.

"Father, even WE don't have enough money for all the therapy I'm going to need."

"Shh, Scorpius, love." Lily snuggled against him reassuringly. Scorpius clung to her.

*Not sure what you're worried about, boy. You look entirely too heterosexual for my comfort when you're wrapped around my baby girl. If she didn't have your ring on her finger, you'd be chasing your bollocks down the front walk.*

"Bloody hell. Take Sophocles home and shag him so he quits fretting about...whatever it is about this that has him worried," Draco said to Lily. Harry smacked Draco soundly on the bum for his trouble.

"No suggesting that until they're married," Harry said severely.

"No spanking where we can find out about it," Al countered. "You and Mum didn't...no, wait, wait. I don't want to know. Seriously." His face appeared to be stuck in a permanent wince.

Ana's condition deteriorated into a full-on belly laugh.

Lily's face turned a few interesting colors. "Shall we just agree not to mention the sex lives of anyone in this room, and leave it at that?"

"Sounds good to me!" Scorpius addressed the ceiling in a strained voice. "Father... Dad... Ah... Nice seeing...um...Have a lovely day!" He spun and pulled Lily after him.

Al collected Ana from the floor. "Owl when it's safe to come back," he called dryly over his shoulder. As they headed for the door he said more quietly to Ana, "Okay, now you and Lily really need to keep fronting for us. Our reputations definitely won't survive being publicly acknowledged fashion designers under the circumstances."

"I heard that!" Harry shouted after them. Judging by the outraged noise that he made, Draco heard it as well.

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Notes:

Well, it's been lovely! I'd like to thank SeverusLovesUs for the benefit of her beta skills, and...

Sorry?

What do you mean, I can't stop it there?

Oh, very well. ONE more chapter. But then, bedtime, you lot.

## 7: Never Mind Success

*Chapter 7 of 7*

This time for sure!

Disclaimer: You know this shit ain't mine. You do realize that these disclaimers don't do one damn thing to protect us from prosecution if the People With All the Money decide they really want our arses in a sling...right?

Chapter 7: Never Mind Success

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Draco kept his face buried against Harry's shoulder even after the door slammed shut. "Well, that effectively killed the mood."

"Did it? I guess I'm more used to the monsters barging in." Harry's tone was quite mild. His finger, tracing aimless patterns on the small of Draco's back and occasionally teasing the very top of his crack, was considerably hotter. Somewhat paradoxically, Draco shivered.

"Are you cold?" Harry whispered the question against Draco's neck, lipping softly.

"No," Draco whispered back. He looked up in some alarm when Harry slipped a hand through his hair, coming perilously close to that shameful bit of scalp in front. "Don't."

"Your hair is so soft. I can't help it." Harry gently tangled both hands in the surviving tendrils, and Draco looked away, not quite able to face Harry's appreciative expression.

"I don't like to be reminded of my... visible signs of aging." *Though you seem adept at making certain parts of me feel significantly younger.*

Harry turned Draco firmly to face him. "Like I'm looking younger."

Draco studied the little white kinks in the dark mess of Harry's hair and the fine little lines around his eyes and mouth. *Yes, but on you, it looks... rugged.* "Bother. I didn't treat my lines this morning."

"I never do. I don't charm the gray out, either."

"You shouldn't...I like the curls." Draco wrapped one of the locks in question around his finger. There was something ridiculously endearing about the whole glossy heap. "As for treating the lines, I could do it for you."

"Should laugh lines be a deal-breaker, then?" Harry traced the little smile crease in Draco's cheek. Draco couldn't help but smile a little, deepening the groove for Harry's thumb to follow.

"No. I just want to..." Draco demonstrated with light touches to Harry's cheeks and eyebrows, and around his lips, "apply the lotion."

Harry turned into the touch to nuzzle Draco's palm. "Oh. I think I could learn to like that." He licked a little circle on the sensitive skin there, and Draco shivered again. "Hmm... It's too cold for you here. I think I should take you to bed and warm you up."

"Okay." Harry smiled brilliantly at Draco's acquiescence and stood, obviously prepared to swing Draco up and carry him off in style. Draco stopped him with a serious

expression and a stammered, "W...wait."

Harry blinked at him, looking worried and slightly rejected. Draco grimaced slightly but said what had to be said. "Harry? When you said you don't have much... company... Does that mean that we don't need to worry about... ah... medical issues?" Draco felt as if his face might spontaneously combust. He couldn't even remember the last time he'd had to ask something like this. "Because I was tested after my wife left. You know. In case she'd had something on the side."

*Being a responsible adult is so embarrassing.*

"Oh! Er, yeah, no... nothing like that. We get tested every year because of work. You know, in case a suspect spits in your eye or something like that. No... um... bugs. Clean." *When he blushes the color of a cherry tomato, it emphasizes his eyes. Bastard.*

"Oh, good." It was awkwardly silent for a moment.

*You have skills equal to this situation. It's been a while, but come on... you remember flirting...*

Draco let a strand of hair fall into his eyes and did his best to smile coyly. "So, you mentioned something about a warm bed?"

"I did, didn't I?" This time Harry did swing him up, and it was much more fun when Draco was sober enough to enjoy it. Harry yanked loose the remaining sleeve that Draco more or less still had on his arm. "Lose that tatty gown. Except for the word 'sexy,' it doesn't suit you in the slightest," Harry whispered.

"Only if you lose the pants. You should let your children dress you more often." Draco was too happy to smirk properly and too turned on to care that they were grinning at each other like fools or that Harry had idiotically tried to kick his stupid novelty boxers off while he was walking.

"Maybe I'll just wear Warming Charms." Before Draco could come up with a suitable retort, Harry curled his tongue around the nearer of Draco's nipples. If Draco could have managed anything more articulate than a shuddering moan, he would have heartily endorsed Harry's new wardrobe plan, at least while they were indoors.

*How far is it to the bed?*

They got as far as the bottom of the steps when the pounding commenced at the front door.

---

Draco started at the sound and slipped in Harry's arms. Harry didn't quite drop him, even though Draco's limbs bumped inconvenient places and flapped rather awkwardly as Harry guided them to a sort of controlled fall across the stairs.

"Potter? Potter, answer the damned door!"

"What the...?" There was something familiar about that shout, but all that Harry could call to mind was an image of a witch with really big... lungs.

"Have you got Draco in there?"

"Not yet, he hasn't. But if you'll bugger off, Millie, I'm sure he will."

"Do we need to wait for her to go?" Harry murmured. Draco looked at him, the paleness of his eyes making his expression even more startled. Harry smiled and twirled his tongue around what was fast becoming his favorite nipple before licking a long stripe down the center of Draco's body. Between the breathy little moans falling from Draco's lips and anticipating what his final destination would taste like, Harry was almost inclined to start humping the stair carpet. *One more inch...*

"Lucky bitch, managing to find him without me. I don't blame you; I'd be gay for an arse like that. Grabbing it was like seeing the face of Merlin."

Harry's head shot up before his tongue could do more than barely, frustratingly, brush the pleasantly salty head of Draco's cock. Draco's squeal was half-choked off, half-lost in Harry's incredulous shout. "That was you?"

"Touch him again, and DIE!" Apparently Draco wasn't quite as far gone as he'd sounded. Harry felt a bit flattered at the possessiveness, though.

"Don't get your knickers in a twist. Speaking of twist, did you notice any other Slytherins from our year or the two years above us at the party last night? Someone trapped the bathroom door with that bloody Delayed Trip Jinx that was spreading like clap during fifth year. Turned my ankle. Good thing my shag was used to minor burns."

Harry got comfortable on Draco's stomach, watching with interest as Draco's Adam's apple bobbed nervously. "I was rather indisposed, but if I remember anyone, I'll let you know."

"You do that. And remember, I called dibs on..."

"Yes, yes, you're hired. My one and only fag hag. The pay is nil but the benefits of my extraordinarily fashionable company are enormous. Now, vanish."

"Love you, too. And I want details." A dramatic crack marked Millie's Disapparation.

"Does she always know where you are?"

"Um... not always. But often enough to be annoying. Sorry about that."

"Funnily enough, stranger things have happened to me than listening to a crude conversation about shagging being yelled through my front door. Thank Merlin for privacy wards, otherwise the neighbors would be lapping this up." Harry lifted his head and turned, realizing that Draco's cock was still very much in the mood, despite the interruption.

*Speaking of lapping...*

This time Harry started with Draco's balls. His nose quivered delightedly at the soapy-and-lightly-musky scent as he stretched out his tongue to trace the dividing line. "Fuck, that feels good," Draco groaned, and it was a glorious sound, except that his word choice pulled Harry's mind into a bad place.

Harry made a pained face, trying to focus on the enthusiastic, dark pink cock bobbing happily just in front of his nose. "I can't believe I was felt up by Millicent Bulstrode."

"It happens to all of us eventually."

"You don't mean..."

"I'd rather not talk about it."

Harry didn't have a chance to refrain from asking, because the bloody doorbell rang loudly enough to wake the dead.

---

"Circe's twat! Is that your doorbell, or is the Apocalypse being announced?" Draco thought, based on Harry's expression, that it might be the latter.

"Only one person I know rings like that." Harry sighed. The rush of air was an invigorating sensation for Draco's cock. The voice that penetrated the door was... not.

"Harry! Harry, open the door THIS INSTANT!"

"Hermione, I'm busy right now," Harry yelled.

"As in 'busy,'" Draco clarified, just as loudly.

"He's with you now?"

"Yes, and unless you want to see a great deal more of both of us than anyone except a Healer has recently, you'll keep to that side of the door," Harry said in a warning tone.

"I'll bet she always knows where you are." Draco would have found it all very amusing if his cock were not left standing there, not being sucked, as a result.

"Often enough to be annoying."

"HARRY! We need to DISCUSS this and not through a door!"

"I don't suppose you're here offering to be my fag hag, are you?"

This apparently crossed some line. The Emergency Apparation provision in Harry's general wards was invoked, and Draco was quite startled (though not precisely surprised) to see Hermione standing in the hallway, hand over her eyes. She flung the 'Daily Prophet' in their general direction and Disapparated with a veritable explosion.

Draco relaxed his death grip on Harry's shoulders. "I didn't realize that it was possible to Disapparate disapprovingly. Does Granger always break and enter to deliver your paper?"

"Only when she's mad as hell and I refuse to answer the door."

"So, it's a regular thing."

"Oh, sod off."

"Well, we've been trying, but our friends and family aren't cooperating."

Harry flopped back onto the stairs beside Draco. "Sorry, but for a variety of reasons, her voice just..." He looked down his body with a disgruntled expression. "Give me a few."

Draco decided to satisfy his curiosity since the chances of other parts of him being satisfied were looking slim at the moment. "Is it true what they say about her parties?"

"Ever since George nearly incited an orgy at Ron and Hermione's fifth wedding anniversary...well, let's just say that there's a reason we call that one 'the party to end all parties.'"

"Wow."

"Yeah. Well. Shall we see what the shit stirrers have done with the cesspool?" Harry Summoned the paper. "I think this takes some of the mystery out of how Millie found you."

Draco stared at the image. He had to admit, he and Potter's own little Dolce and Gabanna had talent. It helped that they were designing for fairly impressive bodies and that the photo was taken in moonlight, against the backdrop of gracious architecture; but still, the leather alone was a work of art. In fact, if the image in question was in a frame on Draco's bedside table, he would consider it...well, he would 'consider' it nightly before sleeping (assuming Harry wasn't actually with him).

On the front page of the paper, however...

"Oh, no."

"Oh, yes."

"This has to be doctored. Even drunk off my arse, I don't smile like that."

---

As much as Harry would have liked to join Draco in denial, he had a pretty clear memory of that little moonlit carrying-over-the-threshold moment. Harry would be happy to have the memento if he wasn't sharing it with the entire newspaper-reading public. "Um, I'm afraid you did."

"Yeah, well, you look pretty chuffed yourself. And your hand is on my arse."

"From this angle it looks like yours is going after a nipple. And I admit I wasn't exactly unhappy just then. After all, you really are very charming at around three or four sheets to the wind."

Draco 'humphed' and tried to look entirely displeased.

"Face it, Draco: we really are on the cover of the 'Daily Prophet,' looking like...I don't know...some gay magazine's Fetish Wedding Couple of the Year." Harry could see why the boys didn't want their design activities acknowledged. Any guy who dressed males in that getup had best be prepared to field lots of interested looks from their fellow males. Though Harry was rather at a loss as to figure where Al had come by such a talent; Merlin knew that Ginny had as little color sense as her dear, maroon-sweater-and-red-hair-pairing mother. And, well, Harry's idea of success on that front was not letting it be generally known that he possessed and occasionally wore novelty boxers.

This yielded another sound of contempt. "Well, at least we look fabulous. And far more original than this headline. 'The Word is 'Out!' Lifelong Rivalry a cover for what was going on under the covers!' Do we even want to read the article?"

Draco was sort of cute when he was being snarky about other people, Harry decided. Even so, he tossed the paper across the room in annoyance. "Stupid, bloody paper."

"Down with the 'Daily Fishwrapper.'" They sprawled side by side on the stairs for a while, casually intertwined.

"Our children are annoying," Harry said with a sigh.

"Absolutely."

"Our friends are intolerable."

"Indubitably."

Cue another knock at the door. "Harry?"

"Speak of the fiends...friends..."

Harry flopped over on his back, staring at the ceiling with a familiar 'Why me?' feeling. "Shut up, you." More loudly, he called, "Yes, Luna?"

"Are you okay?"

"Considering that so far today I've traumatized my children, pretty much come to grips with the whole bisexual thing, and been yelled at by Hermione, I'd say I'm actually doing rather well. Oh, and I found out that I was groped by Millicent Bulstrode last night."

"Ah. Happens to everyone eventually."

Draco shook with suppressed laughter against Harry's shoulder. *Was I the only one who escaped school unmolested by Millicent?*

Luna continued without missing a beat. "So, you've seen the 'Prophet,' then?"

"Hasn't everyone?"

"Sorry about that. Tatiana didn't realize it was you."

"Which one of us?" Draco asked. "Oh, wait. I can guess," he added, sounding rather bitter.

"Not necessarily. We're talking about a woman who, upon meeting me, said, 'There's something on your forehead, honey,' and tried to wipe off my scar with her handkerchief." Harry was actually a little fond of Tatiana on account of it.

"You know that poor Tatiana has no memory for faces. She hadn't the least idea who either of you were last night when she took the photo." Pitching her voice as if talking over Harry's head...a curious effect, considering she was still outside the door and presumably couldn't see them...Luna called out, "Sorry, Draco. Tatiana was horrified when she found out they'd said such vulgar things. She's taken quite a liking to you."

Draco wiggled around to reverse their positions. "Quite all right," he said, a trifle pompously. He ignored Harry snorting practically in his ear and settled his thighs around Harry's hips, which brought a much more interesting sound.

In a slightly strained voice, Harry called, "Luna, if you don't mind... We've got some...er...business to attend to."

"Really? You might want this, then."

For the second time that day, one of Harry's friends abused their emergency house entering privileges to toss something to him. Luna didn't bother not trying to look, though.

Harry studied the little tube and swallowed. He was afraid to unroll the piece of paper for fear it had instructions or something. "Do I want to know why you carry lube around with you?"

"No. Have fun! Or, more fun, rather."

She stepped out and Disapparated.

---

Draco's face remained glued to Harry's neck, radiating heat. "I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that she just saw my arse."

"Whatever wasn't covered by my hand. Think of it this way: better Luna than Hermione."

"Point."

Draco contemplated the lube. "Are we ready for quite this much 'fun?'"

Harry joined him in solemn evaluation of the little container. "There's nothing wrong with blowjobs," he finally pronounced sagely.

"Hmm, yes. No need to rush into...other things." *Where does one find out about this sort of thing so as not to look like an utter ninnyhammer? And... how do you decide who puts what, where?* Draco wondered if the accompanying piece of paper had anything useful towards that end on it.

Before he could consider whether he really wanted to know what Luna considered 'useful' with regards to gay sex, he unrolled it.

"Oh," Draco said softly. He couldn't tear his eyes away from the image repeating on the page.

"What? Don't tell me that Luna..." Harry stopped when he looked at the photo. "Oh." Then, "I'm glad they didn't print this one."

Photo-Harry, his entire body and facial expression shaped in a reassuring, protective attitude, gently nuzzled photo-Draco's cheek again and again; each time, photo-Draco turned to look at photo-Harry with an open, unguarded expression of absolute trust. The soft flicker of candlelight gave it an intimacy and warmth missing from the pretty, sparkling front-page shot, and Draco completely understood why Harry wanted to keep this image to themselves.

Harry cleared his throat, and it sounded like a fearsome beast growling in his chest. It was all Draco could do not to startle quite violently.

"So... I'm going to a wedding in December," Harry said. He left it there, a noncommittal statement with fear, anticipation, and a wealth of hope quivering behind it.

"What a coincidence. So am I." Draco felt the heartbeat beneath his ear speed up, and his own breath came a little faster, stirring the black hairs on Harry's chest with each little pant. "On Christmas Day."

"Amazing. Sounds just like the one I'm going to. My evil, manipulative daughter is marrying this relatively nice, if a bit high-strung, young man whom she met at school. I'd worry about him except that he's a Ravenclaw, so I assume that he's clever enough to figure out what he's getting into."

"Hmm. That sounds so familiar, I must conclude that it's the same wedding. Except that I think the high-strung fellow is pretty manipulative in his own right. Comes from a rather dodgy family, you know."

"So I've heard. Dodgy, but incredibly good-looking."

That deserved some sort of reward, Draco decided. He curled his fingers around Harry's hand, and they made love to each other's palms.

"You make an excellent point. At least your spoiled, manipulative, fairly clever grandchildren will look fabulous."

"And that's the main thing, of course."

"Of course. So... do you have a date?"



"I should have one, otherwise my ex might be insufferably sympathetic." Harry cleared his throat again and stroked Draco's hair as if it was something fragile. "I'd like to have one."

Draco shivered and manfully restrained the urge to bounce up and down on the stairs...and possibly on Harry...squealing, 'Yes, of course I'll go with you, you tosser!'

"Hmm. I should have a date, too." He nuzzled in, making sure that Harry could feel the smile on his lips. "It would be even better if he was someone who would embarrass my son and scandalize my ex. Of course... I'd have to go on practice dates with him beforehand. You know. To work out if we made a good looking couple, could keep a conversation going... find out if he makes breakfast consistently well... that sort of thing."

"Well, if that's what you need, I'm your man." It was said playfully, but Harry's voice was warm and full of all sorts of delightful implications.

Draco felt Harry press a grinning kiss against his hair. Felt his own face open into a wide smile, shining with mischief and satiety and a hopeful anticipation.

"Yeah... you are."

FIN

Notes:

Okay, I know it's crackfic... but, unless I'm writing characters who are in an established, monogamous relationship (or the Mutual Deflowering Scenario OF DOOM), I do try to make a point of mentioning precautions against disease. 'Cause really, the universe is funnier and hotter without spreading VD.

My original estimate for this fic was ca. 8,000 words. 35,000 words later...

A drabble writer I am not. Thank you so very much, SeverusLovesUs, for continuing to work with me on this despite my constant underestimates of how long this would be.

Thanks also to Ravine and Red\_Rahl, who both commented on the first very, very rough draft of the first chapter, and encouraged me not to chuck the whole business in the bin out of frustration.

And finally, thank you to SS Lupin, who convinced me to reveal the original nucleus of this idea during our Sunday morning walk to Mass while we were attending Terminus in Chicago and who subsequently cajoled me into not letting the idea go. :- )