

ADVENTURES IN FAN FICTION



The House That
Gedric Built

CIROCCO JONES



A RED HEN PUBLICATION



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KINGS CROSS

IT WAS MISTY AND DIM at the station, which rather fit Draco's mood. It was too bad for Scorpius, though; for his sake Draco would have

wished for bright, cheery sunshine.

He reminded himself to smile for Scorpius' sake, or at least to act normal. He couldn't quite manage many genuine smiles on the day that he had to say goodbye to his son, the most difficult thing Draco could remember doing in a long, long time.

"It's here!" Scorpius said. "I didn't know it would already be here! Are we late?"

"No of course not, Scorpius. Settle yourself. We're perfectly on time."

"Can I go on right now, Father?" Scorpius said eagerly, and Draco's heart gave a painful thud.

"Wait. Calm down. You'll be getting on soon enough."

"But I want to go *now*!" Scorpius said belligerently.

Draco pulled Scorpius closer and spoke into his ear. "Show some consideration for your mother's feelings, please," he said sternly, and Scorpius looked abashed.

"It's all right, dear," said Astoria with a gentle

smile. "You're excited. That's perfectly natural."

"It's *Hogwarts*, Mother!" said Scorpius, and Draco could remember his own excitement at the prospect so many years ago as if it was yesterday. The world had seemed limitless back then. His friends near him, a golden future before him...

What did Scorpius see in his own future?

The fog parted slightly, revealing a gaggle of Potters and Weasleys, and Draco stepped back to let them pass. Despite the inclusion of some non-red-heads in the crowd, they all still seemed depressingly similar: loud and boisterous, with no decorum at all. One of them had to be Potter's younger son, who was supposed to be in Scorpius' year.

His son and Harry Potter's, starting school together. Who knew what relationships would be started, or made impossible forever, during this trip.

Weasley was talking to his daughter Rose, also in Scorpius' year and already in her robes, strongly reminiscent of her mother in her eagerness to get to her academic future. Draco nodded stiffly to Potter and Weasley as they noticed him. Twenty years after they'd gone to school together, he still had little use for either of them.

It seemed like too short a time till Scorpius' trunk and owl cage were on the train, and Scorpius was about to leave. Starting his own future, away from his parents, taking a part of them with him and leaving them emptier than before he'd

come into their lives. The small hand that shook Draco's in goodbye was clammy with nerves, but his smile was so bright that Draco longed to pull Scorpius into his arms and never let him go.

But he wouldn't embarrass his son with a display like that. Their private farewells had been said at the Manor, and this was a time for them all to acknowledge that Scorpius was growing into a young man.

The train pulled out and Draco watched Potter waving to his two boys, and had a rare moment of complete sympathy. There was almost an air of bereavement on Potter's face under its cheerful front.

Astoria slipped her hand into the crook of Draco's arm, and he held her close. It was just the two of them again. They stayed together for a moment, then Astoria stepped back. "Oh, I just spotted Queenie," she said. "Is it still all right for her to come to our house for dinner?" Draco nodded. "I'll go talk to her, then. Go on ahead to our brooms; I'll catch up."

Draco gave her a kiss and turned to leave the station, passing by the Potter and Weasley herd, now missing a few of the older children but augmented by some smaller ones that must have emerged from the mists like loud ginger wraiths. He nodded as he walked past Potter and Weasley again.

"Draco?" said a voice behind him. "Can I talk to you?"

He turned, and smiled warmly at the woman walk-

ing up to him. "Hello, Hermione," he said. "Of course."



AUGUST 27, 2017: DEAR TIGGY

Dear Tiggy:

I know Scorpius gave you instructions regarding what he did and didn't want you to pack for him for Hogwarts. I'm putting this in writing so that you can show it to him if he gets angry and accuses you of disobeying orders.

Please make sure Scorpius has his Mr. Gummidge when he goes to bed the first night he's at school. I know he said he's too old for it, but trust me, he's going to want it his first night so far away from home and I have no desire for a repetition of the nightmare incident with the sleepover at the Davises.

Please Apparate directly to whichever House he's Sorted to. I've knitted four scarves for Mr. Gummidge; please put the appropriate one on him.

*Thanks,
Mistress*



AUGUST 27, 1998: GIRLFRIEND OF THE BOY WHO LIVED

"Who are the Head Boy and Girl?" asked Millie, her voice low, as she scrubbed the second-last cauldron.

"Ginny Weasley, that's a cinch," whispered Quee-

nie, her scrub brush paused, scorn evident in her voice. "Girlfriend of the Boy Who Saved Us All Again." She paused. "Think I prefer The Head Girl who Gives Head to Our Saviour. And for Head Boy, would you believe they asked Neville Longbottom?"

Millie's eyes widened and she sat back on her heels. "He couldn't, he's eighth-year."

"Apparently that's what he said, too."

"Who is it, then?"

"Mauricius Fiddlethwaite."

Millie blinked. "Who the hell is that?"

"Exactly," said Queenie, and gave a disdainful sniff. "But completely unobjectionable in every way."

Draco gave his own cauldron a swipe. "Isn't he the one who carried on the DA after Weasley and Lovegood and Longbottom were gone?"

Queenie nodded. "Sort of. Except Longbottom wasn't really gone, he was just hiding. Fiddlethwaite was more like his spokesman than a real leader."

"That's hardly fair, you know," said Millie. "They talk forgiveness and working together, but then stack *everything* with people from Potter's side. Why couldn't they put someone at least slightly sympathetic to us in there?"

"There's building bridges and then there's being an idiot," said Queenie. "Who should've been Head Boy? A Slytherin? Get a dose of reality, please." She looked at the row of cauldrons. "D'you reckon that's clean enough?"

"The Hufflepuffs can finish them," said Millie carelessly. "It's more their kind of thing."

"And don't be a twat," said Queenie, her voice suddenly harsh. "We were assigned this room to clean. We will do it well, magic or no. That last cauldron of yours needs another wipe."

"And remember, they're not Hufflepuffs any more," said Draco, and bent over his own cauldron one last time.



AUGUST 29, 2017: YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

Dear Mr. Malfoy:

It has been nineteen years since the defeat of Voldemort, formerly known as You-Know-Who, and the Ministry of Magic's Department of British Wizarding Archives has been busy preparing various projects to mark the twentieth anniversary. As a member of the group of students who helped to make Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry ready for the new post-Voldemort world, and helped us to usher in a new era of peace and reconciliation in the wizarding world, you and your classmates are invited to participate in one such project, under the direction of noted Master Archivist Maximus Love. Your involvement would consist mostly of interviews conducted by the research team, but we would also be grateful for any mementos you may have of the post-war period, such as letters, newspaper articles, and other personal items. There has been significant

preliminary enthusiasm for this project so far from Hogwarts. Our hope is to put together a museum exhibit, and possibly a book, describing the first school year post-Voldemort at Hogwarts and its legacy within the wizarding world.

We will be holding an information session for you and your housemates on December 1. We eagerly anticipate your reply to this request for your participation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us, by owl or Floo, as the Department of British Wizarding Archives does not condone text messaging.

Sincerely,

Gerald Sutzliffe,

Assistant Archivist, Ministry of Magic



AUGUST 29, 1998: SHE TURNED IT DOWN

"She turned it down," said Queenie as the Slytherins tried to look like they weren't huddled together next to the fireplace in their small common room.

"Who? What?" asked Millie.

"Ginny Weasley. The Head Girl position. She's not going to do it."

"Why not?" asked Draco.

"After last year?" Neville Longbottom shook his head, leaning forward to poke at the fire, then sat down next to Queenie. "And with everything that happened to her family?"

Draco and Millie looked at each other, and he could tell she was struggling with the impulse to tell

him to shove off and go talk to somebody who actually wanted him to be part of their conversation, but...

Queenie blinked, then gave Longbottom an insincere smile. "Poor thing. I suppose it would be difficult, wouldn't it? She's brave to come back to school at all."

"She didn't want to do that either," said Longbottom.

"Didn't she?" said Dean Thomas, joining them as well.

"No," said Granger, taking a seat next to him, and now they were an even split of Slytherin and Gryffindor. And, ugh, the rest of them – minus Hannah Abbott and Anthony Goldstein, who were snogging heatedly in a corner – were all gathering on the floor and on low chairs next to the fire, and now the Slytherins were outnumbered. "Said she never wanted to see this place again. Can't say I blame her."

It was odd, thought Draco, to know exactly how any Weasley felt.

"So how did she end up coming back? Can't imagine her parents forcing her," said Thomas. "Or her giving in."

Draco glanced at Millie, reading in her blunt features the same impatience he felt at all these bloody outsiders barging into their conversation. Queenie, on the other hand, looked curious.

Getting to know the new power structure. How self-serving, and disgusting.

And politically astute. Draco schooled his own features into polite interest.

"Harry convinced her, actually," said Granger.

"Really?"

"Shortly after they got engaged," said Granger, and the girls in the group gasped. Longbottom had a small smile on his face.

"So it's true!" said Lavender Brown. "I wasn't sure. I heard she proposed."

"Weren't they broken up last year?" asked Parvati Patil.

"So what happened?" asked Thomas, and Draco vaguely remembered he had dated the Weasley girl too... hadn't he?

"She asked him, yes," said Granger. "And he got rather miffed because he'd already made reservations at a restaurant to ask her. Had the ring and everything."

The others laughed. "So did she give him a ring?" asked Patil.

"I don't think so," said Granger. "Look at her finger next time you see her, though. Hers is gorgeous."

Probably worth more than her entire family owns, Draco thought, and had to content himself with just looking at Queenie. She hid a smirk and nodded avidly. "So who is Head Girl, then?"

"No clue," said Granger.

"They didn't ask you?"

Granger gave Queenie a level stare. "The Head Girl is supposed to be a seventh-year student," she said firmly, and apparently that was that, as far

as she was concerned.



AUGUST 30, 2017: ALL OF YOU

Astoria huffed out her breath with impatience. "Well, I'm going. You don't have to," she said, and Draco rolled his eyes because Merlin, she knew that got to him. "You'll be glaringly evident in your absence though."

"Why? How many are supposedly attending?"

"Thirteen, says Hermione. Plus spouses."

"All of them?" Draco asked, surprised.

"All of you," Astoria retorted.



AUGUST 30, 1998: BY THE NUMBERS

There were forty-one of us when we were Sorted eight years ago. Ten Slytherin, ten Gryffindor, ten Ravenclaw, and eleven Hufflepuff. Twenty-two boys, nineteen girls.

Draco wrote the words carefully, paying proper attention to the shape of each letter. No need to hurry on this; he wasn't writing an essay or a letter to his parents. He wasn't needed anywhere, nobody was demanding his leadership, nobody wanted to scare him, nobody even wanted to talk to him. He was just writing to pass the time.

He continued, not really knowing what would

come next, just letting idle thoughts flicker from his brain to the parchment.

Missing in September of 7th year: 12

— 9 Muggle-borns (Roper, Thomas, Finch-Fletchley, Matthews, Boot, Entwistle, Granger, Moon, Turpin)

— Potter & Weasley

— Li (always claimed to be half-blood; either lied, or wasn't sure enough of it to face Umbridge's investigators)

This was only meant for himself, but it could conceivably fall into other hands. He murmured a simple spell to make Muggle-born look as though it hadn't been half-scratched out.

Pulled out by parents: 6

— Rivers, both Patils, Abbott, Brocklehurst, Davis

— all families left England when school became compulsory.

Hiding in the Room of Requirement by the end of the year: 6

— Longbottom, Finnigan, Brown, Goldstein, Corner, Macmillan

= 24 who didn't complete 7th year, 17 who did

He paused and glanced around the empty dorm room. It didn't look half-bad, for a room that had been a rather large pile of crumbled stone not so long ago. He debated changing Abbott from the "pulled out" to the "missing" column, as she was a Muggle-born who would've been missing anyway, but... she'd already left school the year before. When her mother was killed. He left her where she was.

"Malfoy?"

He turned, surprised to see Longbottom at the door. "Yes?"

"We're going down to the Great Hall," Longbottom said. "Are you coming?"

"No," said Draco. "Thank you," he added hastily, and Longbottom's eyebrows went up slightly. "I'm not hungry."

"Right." Longbottom turned and left.

Of the 12 'Missing'

- 2 remain missing (Matthews, Li)
- 2 died (Roper, found by Catchers & died in Azkaban; Finch-Fletchley in the Battle of Hogwarts)
- 5 left wizarding world or decided not to return to school
- = 3 (Thomas, Granger and Turpin) in 8th year.

Of the 6 pulled out by parents

- 3 never came back

- 1 nished at Beauxbatons
- = two (Patil, Parvati, and Abbott) in 8th.

Of the 6 in hiding:

- Corner did an equivalency test
- = 5 (Finnigan, Longbottom, Macmillan, Goldstein, Brown) in 8th year

Draco sighed and looked around at the dormitory, then worked on a kink in his neck. He sighed and wished for the umpteenth time that he didn't have to be here.

Of the 17 who were still attending classes in May, some left the country, knowing that many people would see finishing Hogwarts that year as a mark of shame rather than distinction. Everyone knew what was being taught. Two of us went to prison because of it. Some said it was unfair to blame the students for having followed course curriculum, but enough witnesses told how Goyle and Cornfoot enjoyed the whole Cruciatius thing that public opinion went against them.

One died in the battle.

And four of us came back for eighth year. For Bones it was about "getting a proper

education". For Bulstrode and Greengrass it was less about actually getting a proper education than being seen to be getting a proper education. For me it was a condition of my probation.

Draco looked around again. The dormitory had been hastily put together, and showed it. The walls were a bland light grey; no decorations, no House insignia. They'd been a little busy helping to rebuild the castle, mostly without the aid of magic for safety reasons, to worry about interior dcor.

So here we are, all fourteen eighth-years. Six Gryffindors, three Hufflepuffs, two Ravenclaws, three Slytherins. They didn't know where to put us, so MM said they should make a new House. I'm now sharing a dorm room with Finnigan, Thomas, Longbottom, Macmillan, and Goldstein. Five members of Dumbledore's Army, five blokes who went into hiding in the Room of Requirement or were on the run all year... and me.

It's grand. Really. I'm ever so happy.

Draco put the book away into his trunk. He stood up and started to get ready for bed, reflecting that he probably should go downstairs instead.

They were supposed to be getting to know each other, getting to work as a House. It was a bad idea to not be there while the initial jockeying for position was going on. It was allowing the Diggory House boys to become a unit, except for him. He was the add-on.

He put his journal away and reluctantly got ready to go downstairs. He was part of this House now, sod it all, and he had to be part of it. Besides, Queenie and Millie might be feeling a little uncomfortable about being the only Slytherins.

He made his way downstairs and looked over Diggory House's table. Damn. The only room left was next to Lisa Turpin, who seemed to be being getting the cold shoulder, intentionally or not. Not surprising; she wasn't one of the ten members of Dumbledore's Army in their House. They'd even wanted to be called Dumbledore House. It had been Granger, oddly, who had objected, saying that they were supposed to be a House together, and not excluding those who hadn't been part of Dumbledore's Army.

He sat down, forcing himself to not squirm as the others ignored him. He glanced over the empty Great Hall, bracing himself for the moment when the rest of the school showed up. He needed to be part of his House before then.

Somehow he didn't think that was going to happen any time soon.



SEPTEMBER 1, 2017: CAN I TALK TO YOU?

"How is Scorpius?" Hermione asked.

"Excited. And Rose? Is she looking forward to getting there?"

Hermione smiled. "Yes. She has been, forever."

Draco could imagine that. "Like mother, like daughter."

Hermione nodded, then smiled sadly. "It's difficult, though, isn't it? Seeing them go."

Astoria approached, wiping a tear away, and Draco put a hand on her shoulder, pulling her close. "Hello, Hermione," she said. "Queenie'll be a little late," she told Draco. "What a shock. So," she turned back to Hermione. "I couldn't help overhearing... is Rose actually afraid of not getting into Gryffindor?"

Hermione shook her head. "Not really. She knows Ron's just joking. I hope." Draco didn't let himself react. "I wouldn't mind Ravenclaw, to be honest," she continued. "And Scorpius? Where is he hoping to go?"

"Very much hoping he doesn't go into our House, to be honest," said Draco.

"Really?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "Hermione, please. Don't pretend to be thick. It's not attractive in a woman your age."

"Maybe he'll be a Ravenclaw too," said Astoria.

"You never know," Hermione said. "It might be nice to be able to cheer for your own team when

you go see Quidditch games."

Draco chuckled. "Come now, you and I won't be able to cheer for *our* Quidditch team... ever, really."

Hermione smiled back. They glanced around at the people getting ready to go, the smaller children with their parents, Hugo Weasley and Potter's daughter playing some imaginary game and telling each other stories of what they'd do when they finally got to take the train...

"Speaking of our team, are you coming to the reunion?" asked Hermione.

Draco stiffened slightly.

Hermione sighed. "Come on, Draco. It's your reunion too."

"Keep telling him that," Astoria said. "I do."

Draco looked away. "I wasn't really... you know how people felt about me at the time. They still do."

"Not everyone, you know that," said Hermione. "And even if some do —"

"I'm not terribly interested."

"But... Draco, it's your history too."

He looked away.

"Astoria, you'll work on him?" said Hermione.

"Absolutely," chuckled Astoria. She took Draco's arm and they walked off, heading towards a home that was going to be much quieter and neater and much emptier from now on.



SEPTEMBER 1, 1998: THOSE CUNNING FOLKS

Draco glanced over the Slytherin table, noting its sadly subdued air. There were hardly any seventh-years. Last year their table had had the fewest empty seats, since Muggle-borns never went into Slytherin, but this year... Draco counted. There should be roughly sixty. There were fewer than forty.

How many pureblood families had gone overseas? How many were hesitant to send their children to a school where they would likely be shunned by the rest of the students? How many didn't want to send them to a school that had witnessed the ugly final death of pureblooded ideals in wizarding Britain?

How many didn't want their children to go to a school that only last year had taught them how to Crucio one another?

He glanced up as one of the new children was Sorted into Slytherin. The boy gulped audibly, then reluctantly made his way to the Slytherin table. The others at the table were clapping unenthusiastically, and only Professor Slughorn was jovially cheering.

Draco's eye was caught by a girl with long brown hair sitting proudly, her back straight, her chin up, among the seventh-years. Astoria Greengrass, Queenie's younger sister. Quiet little thing, intelligent eyes. Mostly apolitical, like her sister.

Astoria half-stood, holding out her hand to the new boy, smiling at him, and gave her table-

mates a stern look. Her tablemates welcomed him half-heartedly.

Draco's eyebrows went up. That one would bear watching, his mind said automatically.

No, she wouldn't. He wasn't part of that House any more. He wasn't part of power plays any more. He wasn't a political entity any more. The Malfoys had fallen too far by any stretch of the imagination to do anything any more but keep their heads down and try not to offend. Father was in prison, Mother's social position was precarious at best, people from all sides hated them, and what he'd learned most last year was that he didn't care what happened around him, as long as he could stay safe.

He turned back to his meal.



SEPTEMBER 1, 2017: A READY MIND

Draco sat back, pleased, but a bit sorry, too.

"Oh that's wonderful," said Astoria, pleased, reading Scorpius' text message. "You'll be sure to tell him so."

"I'll tell him I'm very proud of him, and that I know he will continue to make us proud."

"And you'll mean it, too," said Astoria, touching his shoulder. "And he'll know it."

Draco smiled. It helped to hear that. Helped allay the sorrow he felt at the tentative tone of his

son's message.

"He knew you'd be proud of him whatever happened. He knew it. You're not your father." Astoria regarded him seriously. "But he also knew no choice the Hat made would make you perfectly happy. And he knew that wasn't his fault."

Draco gently tugged his wife's hand to bring her closer, and gave her a kiss.



SEPTEMBER 1, 1998: WELCOME TO GRIMNESS

"I would like to welcome you all to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry," said Headmistress McGonagall, then paused and looked at the students assembled in the Great Hall for so long that Draco wondered if perhaps she was just going to skip the welcoming speech. He wondered if he was the only one remembering that Snape had barely said anything the day he began as Headmaster beyond welcoming them, introducing their new professors, and advising them to always be on their best behaviour and do credit to their school "or face consequences." Even the change in the curriculum from "Defence Against the Dark Arts" to "Dark Arts" hadn't merited a mention.

"As many of you are aware, it was hardly a given that the school would open at all this year. Much of the school was rubble. And, more importantly, we lost many good friends, professors and

students." She looked them over grimly. "But. We are here. We are ready to begin again, and do our best despite the wounds that have yet to heal.

"We begin the new year in a school that is only half-rebuilt. You will need to be careful not to wander into dangerous areas in the building, careful not to do more damage through your own carelessness. You will need to be no less careful when dealing with people. The summer has not been long enough for any of us to recover from our wounds, as serious as the wounds inflicted on the building itself. There will be friends, classmates and housemates who have lost family members. There will be many who were badly hurt here last year, and many who spent time in hiding, or in Azkaban. You may be one of them, or you may be one of the lucky ones who escaped relatively undamaged. Regardless, it will not be an easy year. But you are young, you are resilient, and you are our hope.

"No other group of children in Hogwarts' history has been put through so much, or has been asked to do so much, or has accomplished so much, as those who have been in this school in the last seven years. I do not want any of you to forget that the reason we are here is due in large part to students from this school who had not a single NEWT among the three of them when they helped to defeat a wizard who held the wizarding world in fear for decades. And

they were helped by students in this school, many of whom are still with us. If they could accomplish such great deeds, so can you.

"This will be a difficult academic year for many of you. Some of you lost an entire year of education, none of you completed a standard curriculum, and you will need to work hard in order to complete last year's work as well as this one's. Doing so in addition to dealing with the damage done by the war will not be easy, but you will do it.

"In acknowledgement that this year will be filled with challenges and will require innovation, some changes have been made to the school. One new addition to this school is a new House. The Sorting Hat will not place anybody into it; it is for the students who have chosen to return to the school for an eighth year, or who were unable to come to their seventh year, and wish to do it now. They have been here for the last three weeks, helping to reconstruct Hogwarts. They will be here for their own education, but also to help rebuild the school. You are encouraged to seek them out. They were from different Houses, but they are becoming one. Becoming united again is what we hope for this school this year, and these are the student leaders who will help to make that happen.

She took out a long scroll. "There are also certain new rules." Her voice became hard and uncompromising. "Along with the regular rules

forbidding magic in the corridors and entry into the Forbidden Forest, no divisive language will be permitted." She paused and looked up. "Normally we leave this to your discretion. This year, we will not. The words Mudblood, Blood Traitor, Junior Death Eater, Death Eater Spawn, and all others of that kind, are all prohibited. Use of any of these words will earn the speaker an immediate detention. There will also be no anti-House language permitted. Any negative epithet containing a House name will result in a detention. We may not be able or willing to control your thoughts, but we will control what comes out of your mouths.

"We must live together this year, and you must further your education. There are appropriate areas in which to seek justice for what happened in the past. Hogwarts is not one of them. There will be no exceptions. Anybody attempting to take revenge for last year's violence on school grounds will be expelled and given the opportunity to complete his or her schooling at home.

"Nobody is asking that you love each other and become the best of friends, or even forgive one another. We are merely asking that you put aside your conflicts with one another and concentrate on your academic future.

"In this, the members of Diggory House are to be your role models."

Draco felt his spine crawl with discomfort. Not

a single one of the members of his table turned to look at him, all keeping their eyes fixed on McGonagall.



SEPTEMBER 1, 2017: YOUR NEPHEW

"Your nephew, the werewolf's son," said Queenie, over supper, "is apparently dating Victoire Weasley. Who is, I am told, the new Head Girl."

"Really?"

"Really. My daughter pointed them out to me at the station today. Snogging, right there in the open."

"Yes, Draco's aunt said something about him being rather smitten this year. I didn't know it was with the Weasley girl."

"It is. Pretty enough, but rather common for all she's got Veela blood in her." Queenie gave a small sniff. "Girlfriends aside, that boy certainly has come a long way, considering his background." She nodded in approval. "Head Boy last year and accepted into the Unspeakable Apprenticeship program this year. Shows what I've always said: you cannot take for granted how somebody will do, no matter where they came from."

Astoria's blue eyes met Draco's, and he had to stifle a smirk.

"I only wish somebody would tell him to leave his hair one simple, human colour. Today it was purple. The last time I saw it, it was blue."

Astoria smiled. "Aunt Andromeda says he spent about half his childhood with it pitch black. For his godfather."

Queenie shuddered.



SEPTEMBER 1, 1998: THE HEAD GIRL

McGonagall continued. "Other students who are here to help you in this year are your Prefects, each of whom can be identified by his or her Prefect Badge. You may turn to any of them for help, particularly those of your House. They are also responsible for helping professors to enforce school rules, and occasionally acting as go-betweens between faculty and students." She nodded and the various Prefects stood up, some proudly, some warily, some indifferently. The last year had been a trying one for Prefects, Draco knew. Nightmares and magic in the corridors were the least of the problems they'd had to deal with.

"We also have a Head Boy and Head Girl," said McGonagall. "You may turn to them for advice and guidance." She nodded towards the Ravenclaw table. "The Head Boy this year is Mauricius Fiddlethwaite, from Ravenclaw House." Fiddlethwaite stood up and the students clapped for him, a hesitant sound to match the hesitant look on the Fiddlethwaite's face. McGonagall's speech was not exactly the most inspiring thing Draco

had ever heard, as far as encouraging anybody, let alone schoolchildren...

As Fiddlethwaite sat down, McGonagall cleared her throat and spoke again. "And the Head Girl is Astoria Greengrass, from Slytherin House."

There was a shocked silence. Then Granger started clapping, and the others in Diggory House joined in, and then nervous clapping began at the Slytherin table and spread fitfully to the rest of the Great Hall. Queenie sat open-mouthed as Astoria stood up, her face carefully blank, and nodded politely to the Hall in general. The applause died away quickly, and Astoria sat back down.



SEPTEMBER 3, 2017: TIGGY

"Tiggy, it's all right," said Astoria, her voice an odd mixture of sorrowful, soothing, and a little impatient. "It was a mistake, that's all."

"Tiggy is not supposed to make Mistress sad!" sobbed the little elf. "Tiggy made Mistress cry!"

Draco's impatience grew. How could a simple dinner at home with his wife turn into this? He blew out his breath.

"And now *Master* is unhappy!" Tiggy wailed, and Draco rolled his eyes.

"Master is not unhappy, Tiggy," said Draco, his patient tone hiding an itch to smack the ugly little thing. "Master is hungry. Can Tiggy please

do something about that?"

"Yes, Master!" Tiggy hiccupped, and disappeared with a crack.

"Draco. She misses Scorpius too, you know," said Astoria reprovingly, wiping her eyes.

"How hard is it to set two places instead of three?" said Draco. "And she should know better than to break into wails over a simple —"

"Obviously, she should know better," Astoria broke in. "But we took her in because she's been given clothes at three different places and she needed a family to serve."

"We'd be better off serving ourselves," muttered Draco.

"Don't be surly, Draco. She's upset."

"She's more trouble than she's worth."

"Missing somebody you care about is hard on everyone," said Astoria. "Tiggy deals with it by crying. I deal with it by working harder. You deal with it by getting belligerent."

Draco glared at her. Astoria had a bad habit of being right a great deal of the time.



SEPTEMBER 3, 1998: THREE

It sometimes felt like student life was something Draco had left behind years ago, even though the last school year had ended abruptly only four months ago. He had thought that he

would be used to it again after living in the castle for the last few weeks, but three days into classes he was still gripped with a feeling of unreality, like he was trying to fit into clothing he'd discarded before puberty. Possibly because he didn't have his friends with him, or because he was taking courses he'd never thought he'd take, or because he wasn't living in the dungeon any more. He didn't know; all he knew was that it all still felt off, and wrong.

The members of Diggory House were back in the common room after dinner, and Draco had taken his accustomed place in the corner far from the fireplace. He took out his books and prepared to study, reflecting that part of the problem was that, academically, there was really little point to him being here. He had learned a fair bit last year. And as for socially... that was a laugh. He wasn't ever going to be accepted as a member of this new House, no matter what he did. He'd never been close to Queenie and Millie and certainly wouldn't become so now that all three of them were trying to avoid being thought of as Slytherins.

And as for being a role model for the other children, as Diggory House members were supposed to be... that was an even bigger laugh. Other than the obvious heroes like Granger and Longbottom, there was no reason for the younger students to look up to anybody in this House. He was frankly

scornful of McGonagall's having placed them in that position in the first place. Besides, he didn't have the time or desire to help anyone, or to role model anything. Not that anyone had asked him.

He was startled to hear his thoughts echoed by another voice in the room, and put down his textbook and looked towards the fireplace seats, where Susan Bones was speaking vehemently to a group of former DA members.

"I mean, seriously, what does she want from us? We're supposed to be leaders here? Haven't we done enough? Why is it our year that has to do this?" She tossed her hair back impatiently. "Hermione, Ron and Harry killed V-Voldemort. Ten of us were in Dumbledore's Army. Five of us ended up in the Room of Requirement, hiding." She shivered. "And the ones who didn't... listening to little kids crying from Cruciatius, listening to the rubbish those Muggle Studies people taught, it was... and for God's sake, two of our year *died* – "

"Three," said Draco.

There was a sudden silence.

"What?"

"Three," he repeated evenly. "Not two."

He didn't need to look around to know that some people were gaping, some glaring at him.

"If you think that Crabbe – "

"I'm not saying he was killed by anything but his own stupidity," said Draco hollowly. "And I've never

said his name deserved to be on that monument along with Finch-Fletchley and Weasley's brother and Professor Lupin. And I'm not going to debate that he was a victim instead of just another Death Eater. But he was in our year, and he did die."

"After what he did –" began Anthony Goldstein.

"I know what he did," Draco said harshly. "To you, and to other students. If he hadn't died he would've ended up filling a cell in Azkaban right next to Goyle. And my father. I won't even say he wouldn't have deserved it. But he doesn't deserve to be completely forgotten." Draco stood up, his voice steady though his legs were shaking.

"Hate him all you want; it doesn't change the fact that he was in our year just like Justin Finch-Fletchley and Sarah Roper. He may not have been a 'hero' like Finch-Fletchley or a victim like Roper, but he's just as dead as both of them." There were tears on his cheeks, he realized distantly. "And he was only seventeen when he died, just like them. Try to remember that." Draco picked up his work and headed for the dormitory, drawing his curtains closed as soon as he could.

It hurt, sometimes, so much. It hurt when he let himself think about it. Crabbe, burning up in that hellish room that still appeared in Draco's nightmares. There hadn't been a body to recover; Fiendfyre destroyed all it touched.

He lay still, breathing quietly and trying to

think of positive things, keeping the ache in his throat from turning into pointless blubbing. Repeating comforting words to himself. A list of foods he liked. A list of Weird Sisters songs he enjoyed. A list of Charms against insects.

There was a soft step outside his curtains.

"Malfoy?" said Longbottom quietly.

"What?"

There was a short silence. "Can you open the curtains?"

Draco opened them. "What do you want?"

Longbottom sighed and sat down on Draco's bed uninvited. "I'm sorry. About Crabbe."

Draco gave him a sceptical look.

"All right, I'm not really. I'm sorry, though, that you... miss him." He paused. "Do you?"

"He was my friend," Draco said.

"Didn't seem to be. Seemed to be more like your servant."

Draco shrugged.

"Hermione said that he disobeyed you," Neville said. "That day."

Draco shrugged again. "He wasn't my servant."

"But she said you still asked about him. After he'd nearly killed you and Goyle too."

"He was my friend," Draco repeated dully.

"Was he?" Longbottom hesitated. "Did you like him?"

"What kind of question is that? And why does it matter?"

"Fine. Sorry." Longbottom stood up. "I won't bother you. I just wanted to say sorry."

Draco nodded, and Longbottom headed for the door.

"He liked Transfiguration," Draco said, surprising himself. Longbottom turned around. "He was pants at it, but he liked it. And he liked eating. A lot. Was scared of Muggles. Hated to wear a skirt."

"A what?"

Draco shook his head, the lump in his throat eased somewhat. "Long story." He lay back and picked up a textbook.

Longbottom gave him a smile, and left.



OCTOBER 4, 2017: A MODEST PROPOSAL

THE FIFTH HOUSE:

DIGGORY HOUSE AT HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCH-CRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Introduction (2 pages): What is the Fifth House? Who was Cedric Diggory?

Part I, The War (10 pages): Voldemort's First Rising, The Order of the Phoenix, Voldemort's Second Rising, Dumbledore's Army, Dark Days At Hogwarts. (Includes brief insert biographies of Tom Riddle, Albus Dumbledore, Severus Snape, and Harry Potter)

Part II, Victory (6 pages): Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Dumbledore's Army at Hogwarts, The Order of the Phoenix, the Battle of Hogwarts

Part III, After Victory (4 pages): The dead

and wounded, the Ministry, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Muggle-borns freed from Azkaban, families reunited, Minerva McGonagall

Part IV, Healing Hogwarts (8 pages): Rebuilding the building, magic, volunteers, organizations, Ministry aid, international aid

Part V, A Fifth House is Proposed (6 pages): The proposal, pros and cons of a Fifth House, purpose of the House, prospective members of the Fifth House

Part VI, The Fifth House Begins (4 pages): A name is chosen, members are decided upon, students move in, students are assigned areas to work on in the school

Part V, The New School Year Begins (7 pages): The school fills, the Fifth House begins its duties

Part VI, The House Expands (12 pages): Diggory House in the first year

Part VII, The House Survives (12 pages): Includes controversies surrounding Diggory House

Part VIII, Diggory House Today (8 pages): Influence of Diggory House at Hogwarts and in wizarding society, biographies of past members

Conclusion (2 pages): Lessons from Diggory House

Draco shook his head in wonder as he read the proposal. It all sounded so organized. So clean and neat and planned. It hadn't been.



OCTOBER 4, 1998: ASTORIA SPEAKS

Draco plodded down the corridor to the Great

Hall, musing about Tesser numerals. Four weeks in, he'd finally become used to the routine of school again, and actually become fairly interested in Arithmancy. Today's entire lesson on Tessers had been frustratingly vague though, and had left him completely lost. It didn't help that the class was now taught by Professor Scalari, what with Professor Vector having been injured last year. Damned if he was going to ask for help from a Muggle-born.

He noted with approval that even in his thoughts he didn't call the man a Mudblood. It would never do to have anything like that slip out in an awkward moment.

"Out of the way, *you*," said a sixth-year Hufflepuff girl, shoving past him, and he stepped aside without a word, only a narrowing of his eyes betraying his feelings. It hadn't taken too many punishments handed out to those who said the Forbidden Words to convince students to stop using them. It didn't do a damn thing about their attitudes, though. "You" could hold as much or more venom than "Death Eater Spawn" ever could. The one gave him an identity of sorts. The other labeled him unworthy of even that.

And words and attitude weren't the only dangers for people like him. Despite all the efforts of the teachers, every day there were incidents of children getting hurt by "accidental" spells and

other seemingly innocent mishaps.

The castle wasn't safe for people like him. He didn't let himself dwell on the fact that he'd felt even less safe last year.

He entered and glanced over at the Slytherin table, with its subdued children, its silence, its air of defeat. Some of them were looking a little less downtrodden than in the first week or so of class – it didn't hurt to have the Head Girl be one of your own – but it was a sad, sad contrast to last year's air of fierce pride and smug invincibility.

He found himself a seat at the Diggory table – not too close to Hannah Abbott and Dean Thomas, who were being nauseatingly demonstrative again – and took out his books, briefly considering looking over his Astronomy, then decided to work on his Muggle Studies essay on Muggle communication devices. What the hell, it was mandatory for everyone for the next two years; he might as well show that he was taking it seriously, never mind that he didn't believe three quarters of what he read, or half of what he wrote.

He was halfway through a paragraph on the differences between telephones, fax machines and internets when a throat cleared and a magically enhanced voice said, "Could I please have your attention?"

Astoria Greengrass was standing at her table, apparently about to make an announcement.

She had done a few in the last few weeks – the Forbidden Forest really was Forbidden, students must use caution when practicing hexes for Defence Against the Dark Arts (with emphasis on Defence), that kind of thing. Somehow she was looking more nervous about this one.

She waited until the Great Hall was focused on her. "It has come to my attention that certain persons are not taking seriously our Headmistress' request that we treat each other with courtesy and respect. Several students have spoken to me about being targeted because of their families' political backgrounds or their House, and being victimized repeatedly and sometimes seriously. Regardless of your attitude or how you may feel towards one quarter of this school, hexing students for the crime of being in Slytherin, or of having unpopular social connections, or even of having the wrong political beliefs, is not acceptable. I sympathize, but this has to stop."

She looked around the room, her nervousness apparently gone. "To whoever sent a little boy to the Hospital wing this morning with severe vomiting and no sense of hearing: the little boy in question was too afraid to give me names. You are safe; I do not know who you are. But I would like you to think about a few things.

"If you are a Gryffindor, I would like you to ask yourself whether your founder would've approved

of intimidating and hurting an eleven-year-old boy. Ask yourself if that's a particularly brave, courageous thing to do.

"If you are a Ravenclaw, consider the wisdom in taking out your frustrations on a boy who is small now, but may someday grow to be a powerful wizard who hates you and yours because you targeted him unfairly.

"If you are a Hufflepuff, ask yourself whether Helga Hufflepuff would have thought it fair to blame one child for the mistakes of his parents – or to discriminate against anybody for any reason whatsoever.

"You all know that I have disciplined students from my own House who have broken the rules. I will do no less to students from other Houses. Prefects, you have been entrusted to help other students follow the rules. If you see students under your protection behaving badly towards one another, it is your responsibility to help them stop this behaviour. I expect your cooperation. That is all."

She sat down, and a murmur broke out around the Hall. She looked supremely unconcerned, and met Draco's eyes briefly.

He looked down to his notes, then back at her, and only then noticing her hand trembling as it brought a goblet to her lips.



OCTOBER 16, 2017: THE DAILY PROPHET,
SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTION

HOGWARTS HEAD BOY STEPS DOWN

Hogwarts announced today that its Head Boy, Larry Zhou of Hufflepuff House, will be stepping down barely four weeks into his tenure. The reason is understandable, and has students and sports fans around the world cheering: Zhou has been tapped to join the Irish Quodpot team when the new season begins in February, and will need to spend many hours practicing if he wants to help his team pull out of the doldrums where it has been ever since East Wing John Lockey retired three years ago.

Zhou says the decision was a tough one. "I care about the school, obviously, and I had great plans as Head Boy. Not to mention my parents were dead pleased. But this is my career, and I had to make a choice."

Asked if he thought of simply doing his best to fulfill both duties: "Not doing them both well, no," says Zhou frankly. "Being

Head Boy is hard. You have to give it your all. There's meeting with students, working with the Prefects, helping the Hospital when students are badly injured, working with the professors when students are in trouble, dealing with parents sometimes — it's all day long, every day. And I care too much about the school to only do the Head Boy position halfway. Besides, it would be very unfair to Victoire (Weasley, Head Girl) to have to do extra work if I wasn't doing my part. This way I can do me practicing, study for NEWTs, and not leave anybody in the lurch."

Why Quodpot? "I've been playing Quodpot since I was six," says Zhou. "Played with me dad. It may not be as popular as Quidditch yet, but it's gaining. Watch out, Quidditch!"

Terence Thomas, from Slytherin House, will be stepping into Zhou's spot.



OCTOBER 16, 1998: ASTORIA VISITS

"Does anybody mind if my sister comes in?" asked Queenie, popping her head into the Diggory common room. There was a small rustle of surprise from the occupants. Although they had been told that the Diggory dorm was special in that it was not off-limits to members of other Houses, out of habit so far none of them had brought in any outsiders. They all tended to go into their own former Houses if they wanted to socialize.

"No, of course, she's welcome to come in," said Longbottom, who had become their leader by some quirk of a universe that obviously had a sense of humour.

"She asked, you see," said Queenie. "She's been awfully busy being Head Girl and hasn't had a chance to talk to us yet, but she'd like to see what we're all about."

Patil and Brown exchanged a look. "Oh is the Head Girl your sister, Queenie? I didn't know," said Patil sweetly, and Queenie flushed and popped out again, presumably letting her sister know it was all right to come in.

Granger gave them a quelling look. "Please, come in," she said as Astoria came into the room. "Welcome to Diggory House."

"Thank you," said Astoria, and looked around, her eyebrows drawing together slightly. "This is your common room, then? Bit... bare, isn't it?"

Draco glanced around. It was.

"Why are you here?" asked Patil, polite but not exactly friendly.

"I'm the Head Girl," Astoria replied. "I'm supposed to visit all the Houses."

"You haven't been here before."

"You're not exactly under my jurisdiction."

"We're not," said Patil. "We're all of age. We don't really need a Head Girl."

"Not that you're not welcome to come visit," said Granger, her voice edged as she glared at Patil.

Astoria met Draco's eyes, and he was surprised to see determination and intelligence and grit there. How odd; he'd been with her for six years in Slytherin, and never noticed her at all.

"Please, have a seat," said Susan Bones, gently nudging Hannah Abbott and Seamus Finnigan to move farther down the ugly beige couch and make room for her, leaving her chair to Astoria. Predictably, Hannah chose that as an excuse to move onto Finnigan's lap and they started snogging, oblivious to the other occupants of the room.

"What did you want to know about us?" asked Patil.

"General getting-to-know-you things. How you're doing, what you're all about, how you're finding eighth-year. Whether there's anything you need from me."

"Thank you for thinking of us, Greengrass," said Granger. "Actually, I have a lot of questions for you too."

"Call me Astoria, please," said Astoria, and leaned forward in her chair, looking interested. Genuinely interested in Granger, or at least making a damn fine semblance of it. He supposed it was what all of them should do, Slytherins especially; Mudblood though she was, Granger was a power to be reckoned with now. No self-respecting Slytherin without a permanently tainted reputation towards Muggle-borns would do any differently.



NOVEMBER 2, 2017: IT'S A REUNION

"Draco, you're being an arse. It's a reunion. It'll be a chance to see your housemates again. Some of whom you haven't seen in years."

"If I don't see them any more, maybe it's because I don't want to see them."

"It would be nice to see Hermione."

"Weasley will be there."

"This is true. But so will Neville." She was using her patient voice, the one she used with Scorpius when he was being childish, and Draco didn't much appreciate it. "Besides, it'll be a chance to hear what the others think about the project."

"I'm not going to be involved in the project," he pointed out.

"You're impossible," said Astoria.

"I. Am. Not. Going," Draco repeated. "If you're so bloody interested, why don't you go?"

"I am, Draco. I can go as your wife and as Queenie's sister. And I will be involved in the project. Which, by the way, is not the main point of the get-together." She stepped back and glared at him. "You are fucking *impossible*," she said. "And much as I love you, on days like today you make me wonder what the fuck I was thinking when I got together with you." With a crack, she was gone.



NOVEMBER 2, 1998: WHAT CAN WE DO?

"Seven Slytherin students have withdrawn since Halloween," Astoria said quietly, and the Diggory common room stilled.

Granger gave her a sympathetic look. "That's not your fault, Astoria," she said gently.

"Isn't it? Halloween was a disaster. People taking all sorts of opportunities to play 'harmless' tricks, chaos all over the place —"

"It's not just inter-House problems," said Longbottom. "There've been withdrawals from the other Houses —"

"Yes. One Ravenclaw, two Gryffindors, two Hufflepuffs."

Granger and Longbottom blinked.

"Head Girl," Astoria said grimly. "I know these things." She rested her head against the back of a new sofa that had appeared a few days ago, a spot of oddly attractive violet in the otherwise

dreary tan and beige of the room. "And I'm supposed to be helping. I know I'm supposed to help everybody, but the other three Houses have support from inside and outside the school. Nobody cares what's happening to the Slytherin kids. And they're leaving. In droves."

"You really do care about them," Granger said slowly.

Astoria rolled her eyes impatiently. "No, Hermione, I only fake it to get pity. Of course I care. I have to; nobody else does."

"How can we help?" asked Granger.

Astoria blinked. "Who?"

"Me. Neville. Malf — Draco. All of us in Diggory House. How can we help?"

Astoria tilted her head to the side and gave Granger a long look, and Draco could see the wheels turning in her head, could see her getting over her initial surprise that anybody would offer to help, and working on how to use that offer.



NOVEMBER 20, 2017: DUMBLEDORE'S ARMY

Dear Mrs. Malfoy:

*Enclosed is the blurb you were interested in looking over, from Part 11 of *The Fifth House: Dumbledore's Army**

Dumbledore's Army, the group of students most closely connected to the struggle against Voldemort, was initially simply a school club, organized by students to gain skills and experience in Defence Against

the Dark Arts. Founded by Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, the group had sixteen members when it first began, and at its largest numbered some thirty students, more or less. It was active during 1995-96, disbanded during 1996-97, and active again in the year that Severus Snape was Headmaster of Hogwarts, under the leadership of Ginevra Potter (né Weasley), Luna Lovegood-Scamander, and Neville Longbottom. By the end of the year leadership had been passed on to Mauricius Fiddlethwaite, as the other three had been forced to go into hiding. The club was continued during the 1998-1999 school year, but was disbanded that November, as it was decided that the need for it had ended.

Membership of Dumbledore's Army reads like a Who's Who of the wizarding world. Its most famous member was of course Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, who eventually defeated Voldemort and today heads the Auror Department. Ronald Weasley would go on to rise high in the Auror Department as well. Hermione Granger would eventually become the founder of the Magical Creatures Defence League. Ginny Potter had a celebrated career as Chaser for the Holyhead Harpies, Luna Lovegood-Scamander became owner and Senior Editor of THE QUIBLER, and Neville Longbottom became Professor of Herbology at Hogwarts and a noted contributor to "Magical Manure Magazine". Other former members include Wizard Wireless personality Lee Jordan;

George Weasley of Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes; Seamus Finnigan of Explosions For All Occasions Inc; Michael Corner, leading architect of the newest wizarding neighbourhood in Edinburgh; Danielle Erebus, noted director of the Wizarding Orchestra of Cardiff; Hester Darnley, author of YOUR BABY'S FIRST MAGICAL YEAR; Hannah Abbott-Longbottom, proprietress of The Leaky Cauldron; Angelina Weasley (né Johnson) of the Wimbourne Wasps; and Lucas Diggie, youngest member of the Wizangemot.

Membership in the DA, as it was called, was not without peril. In total twenty-two of its members fought at the Battle of Hogwarts, and four (Fred Weasley, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Colin Creevey, and Erica Barnhauser) died there. And the damage didn't stop there: in the next few years, various members, wounded by their experiences or losses during the war, became alcoholics, attempted suicide, used illegal potions, suffered emotional breakdowns, or engaged in other risky behaviour. They sacrificed a great deal, this teenager's club.

Ten of the founding members of Diggory House were in Dumbledore's Army.



NOVEMBER 20, 1998: NOTHING TO FIGHT AGAINST

Draco's eyebrows went up as he entered the Diggory common room and spotted Astoria sitting in a group with Granger, Longbottom, Love-

good, and Ginny Weasley, all of them looking dreadfully serious.

"It's getting out of hand," she was saying.

"You can't blame the firsties," said Weasley. "Most of them are just glad to be part of any group. And many of the others just don't want to forget what they learned there last year."

"They're not really learning anything new, though," said Astoria. "It's more of a social thing now."

"It was always a social thing," said Longbottom. "For me and Luna, anyway."

"Then why aren't you in it this year?" asked Astoria.

"I have friends now," said Lovegood quietly.

"Look, it's just a social club," repeated Weasley.

"Perhaps it should be turned into an official thing," said Granger. "An extra-curricular club to teach self-defence and to build bridges."

Astoria blew out her breath. "I'm hearing the same thing everywhere: it's just a social thing, it's not meant to be anything special. And when I ask why not make it an official school club I'm told it was never official, and it shouldn't be. They don't want it to be."

"Well... I suppose it would lose some of its fun if it was something you could sign up for — " Granger began.

"I think the problem is that if you make it official, then you have to let anyone in," said Astoria.

Weasley narrowed her eyes. "I wouldn't want to

let anyone in, thank you very much. Why should the students doing it be forced to spend time with people they hate? What's the harm in keeping it unofficial?"

"You're not in it any more. You don't see what they're doing. There's nothing to fight against, now, so they're turning on other students."

"Nothing to fight against?" said Weasley softly. "That's what we were told before."

Astoria regarded her seriously. "Do you think there's still something to fight against?"

Weasley hesitated, then shook her head. "No. But I won't force anybody else to believe what I believe."

Astoria clasped her hands together. "I'm asking for your help here. It's not just for those who were in it last year; they're also letting in their friends. But the Slytherin students — and the others who were on the wrong side — aren't being allowed in. And it is turning into an organization of bullies."

Weasley pressed her lips together.

"What you did in forming that group was important," said Astoria. "Do you want what you built to become a training ground for thugs? Do you think Dumbledore would've wanted that?"

"Don't you tell us what Dumbledore would've wanted," said Weasley dangerously.

Astoria bit her lip. "Right. I'm sorry. Please think about what I've said, though. I don't want to even bring up the idea of considering banning it. That will do no good whatsoever and will create

more trouble than anything. But if you four get involved... maybe go to some of the meetings, maybe help it disband peacefully... do you think?"

Longbottom looked doubtful, Weasley completely shut against it, and Lovegood was in her own dream world, but Granger looked thoughtful and Draco couldn't quite believe it, but she was going to agree.



NOVEMBER 22, 2017: WITH OR WITHOUT YOU

"You know it would mean the world to your mother," said Astoria.

Draco put down his fork and sat back, glaring at her. There wasn't any point in arguing with Astoria when she got like this. She was the epitome of Slytherin, and would do whatever it took to get his cooperation. He might as well face it. He was going to give in eventually, just to get her and Hermione off his back once and for all.

That didn't mean he had to like it, though. Or make it easy for her.

"Why is this so bloody important to you?" he asked, exasperated. "Or to Granger, for that matter? What does it matter whether I cooperate and contribute my 'oral history' to this bloody project? You can tell it as well as I can."

"I wasn't there, Draco. I didn't live there. I didn't see what was going on behind the door."

"Rubbish. You spent half the year in there. And

you had Queenie to tell you the latest gossip."

"It's not the same."

"I doubt anybody is looking for my opinion on this."

Astoria frowned. "So all those letters from the head of the project, they're... for shits and giggles, then?"

Draco blew out his breath. "I don't see why anybody cares, anyway."

"Because it's important. You helped to build something important."

"It was a piddly little House in a piddly little school. It didn't matter."

"It mattered," Astoria snapped.

"Nobody wants to hear that I was part of it anyway. Other than you, Hermione, and the head of the project."

"And that's precisely why they should hear it."

"For what? For the greater glory of the Malfoys? Bit of a change for you, isn't it? We had a few conversations about this, as I recall."

"Merlin, Draco, that was years ago. I changed my mind. Some years after I changed my name, and became a pariah to a lot of the wizarding world."

"Look, I did what needed to be done. The school got better. Slytherin House is no longer quite as feared. Diggory House hasn't disappeared. Isn't that enough?"

"Not any more. It's important that people know you were part of the story. I'm not asking you to run for Minister For Magic, Draco. I'm not telling you to jump into the spotlight. I am asking you to come out

of the shadowy corner though. Not just for you, but for me. And your mother. And Scorpius."

Draco set his jaw stubbornly.

"At least come to the information meeting," Astoria said. "You don't have to commit to doing anything else."

"Could you possibly drop this?" Draco asked.

"Listen, I will rebuild the Malfoy family with or without you," she said grimly. "It'll just be easier if you go along."



NOVEMBER 22, 1998: IT'S NOT EASY, IS IT?

"It's not easy, is it?" said Astoria one day, and Draco raised his head to look at her. "Coming back here. Would you have come if you hadn't been forced to?"

"Probably not," he said curtly.

"Don't think Queenie would have either."

"She didn't have to."

"Oh, she had to," said Astoria. "You don't know our parents. They're very eager to be part of this brave new wizarding world."

"She's of age," pointed out Draco.

"Queenie? Please. I know my sister. She's spoiled and silly and selfish and has no backbone at all. Queenie is the perfect name for her. She doesn't care enough to stand up for herself. Our parents said she had to come or they would cut her allow-

ance for clothes and jewelry and that was that."

Draco gaped at her. "That's... inspiring family loyalty," he finally said.

"I love her and I'm loyal to her. I'm also realistic about her." Astoria tilted her head to the side. "So why did you come back? You could've chosen a different way to spend your probation."

"It's what my mother wanted."

Astoria looked at him askance. "She wanted you back here?" She glanced around the ugly common room. "In a school that was the home of Death Eaters, and where the majority of the school body remembers you were the beginning of that, and hates you for it?"

"Thank you," said Draco sarcastically. "I try to forget it, but thank you for pointing it out."

"Why would she want you back here?" Astoria asked, ignoring his tone.

"First step in rehabilitating our family."

Astoria snorted. "Oh please. Your mother always seemed fairly bright, beneath the spoiled society witch veneer. She must know that's a hopeless cause."

Draco scowled. "Obviously, she disagrees."

"What do you think?"

Draco said nothing, knowing of no answer that would be politically astute and realistic and honest, and for some reason unwilling to play the regular Slytherin games with this girl. This girl who'd always seemed quiet and reserved

and utterly uninteresting, but who had somehow become a power to be reckoned with.

"If she wants to rehabilitate anything," said Astoria, "I would strongly advise moving to the continent. Or perhaps Asia. There must be some wizards and witches who haven't heard of the Malfoys over there."

Draco sat back. "Are you going somewhere with this?"

"Pardon?"

"Why are you telling me this?"

She pursed her lips thoughtfully. "I don't know. Maybe because you look like you're twiddling your thumbs and waiting for this year to be over. And I remember what you were like before. When you led Slytherin House."

He looked away from her intent gaze.

"And I need your help."

He looked back at her, startled. "My help? To do what?"

"Help the Slytherins."

"I'm not a Slytherin any more."

"Once a Slytherin, always a Slytherin," she said.

"Most of them want to disassociate themselves from me anyway," he pointed out evenly.

"Can you blame them?"

"I suppose not, but it does make it somewhat unlikely that I'd be able to lead them to do anything, doesn't it?"

"But you can help," she insisted.

"Why should I?"

"So that this year won't be a complete waste of your time and energy and talents. Wouldn't you like to know that you did some good in the world? Built something lasting, and beneficial?"

"Please. I'm not a Hufflepuff."

"No, and you're also too old to be falling back on House cliches. Slytherins can work for good. Look at Snape."

"That was Snape. This is me," said Draco bitterly. "And I can't do a damn thing. I can't lead, I can't 'make connections' like my mother said, I can't rebuild the Malfoy name —"

"Just because you can't do those three things, you feel you can't do anything? That's pathetic." She leaned forward. "You want to rebuild something. I'm telling you the Malfoy family is something that can't be rebuilt." She put a hand on his arm. "But what if there's something else you can build?"

"Like what?" Draco said, baffled, somewhat distracted by her hand on his arm, and annoyed at the distraction.

"This House. In this school. You can be part of something. And just because it won't do the Malfoy family any good doesn't mean you shouldn't do it."

"I'm not interested."

"Then you're going to just continue to twiddle

your thumbs and waste your life? What will you do once you're out of here? Sit at home and continue the twiddling? That's *really* pathetic."

Draco glared at her. "All right, let's say I did agree to help. What could I possibly do?"

She gave him a brilliant smile, and he was inexplicably struck with the thought that she really was a rather pretty girl. No icy beauty like Fleur Delacour or fiery head-turner like Ginny Weasley, but pretty in an understated, serious way. A bit like Granger, ever since she'd got her teeth shrunken and her bushy hair under control.

Oh God, he'd just put the words "Granger" and "pretty" into the same thought. He firmly brought his attention back to Astoria.



NOVEMBER 25, 2017: EGREGIOUS

Dear Father,

I really don't see why this deserves more than a slap on the wrist, and besides, it's not my fault that Weasley can't spell. She was the one who wrote the incantation wrong and so I said it wrong and nobody was hurt anyway. Hers was an egregious mistake and I am being unfairly penalized for it.

- Scorpius

Scorpius:

It deserves more than a slap on the wrist because what you did could have seriously hurt somebody. I will not send you a Howler, but I am very disappointed in you. It does not matter that Weasley made a spelling error; you know better than to rely on somebody else's assignment when it comes to using spells on other students.

And don't point fingers at anybody else's spelling. You misspelled egregious.

On a happier note, your success in getting into the Quodpot team has made your mother very happy. Perhaps next year you can join Quidditch.

Mother sends her love. Please write more often, Scorpius; your mother and grandmother miss you, and are very happy whenever they receive your owls. And please do remember not to text message Grandmother. It isn't good for her nerves.

- Father



NOVEMBER 25, 1998: AUGUSTINE

"I don't know what to do. That's three more little ones who want to leave now." Astoria took a deep breath. "This is supposed to be their year of wonder. Even if you've grown up in a wizarding household, this is supposed to be the year you're finally doing it, learning magic, with your own wand, your own friends... and it's a nightmare for them."

"It's normal to get homesick in first year," said Granger. "And it was bound to be a little harder for everyone this year."

"It wouldn't be so difficult if that was all it was," said Astoria. "But one little boy, a Ravenclaw, Augustine Cornfoot, is —"

"Cornfoot?" Granger blinked. "Any relation to Stephen?"

"Younger brother."

Draco winced. Stephen Cornfoot, Ravenclaw from their year, sentenced to two years for crimes committed during his last year at Hogwarts. He'd been a star pupil in Dark Arts, and relished Dark Spells, the darker the better.

"He's having a terrible time."

"Why, what's he doing?" asked Patil. "Spouting off pureblood propaganda?"

"Nobody wants to room with him," Astoria said, politely ignoring Patil. "He's had a bloody nose three times. The other kids say it's just spells gone wrong, but really it's Nosebleed Nougats, which aren't so

bloody humourous when you don't have the antidote."

"Can you really blame them?" asked Patil.

"For an eleven-year-old boy who's done nothing wrong but have the wrong name, and admit he still writes to his brother?" said Astoria, her voice steely. "Yes, as a matter of fact, I can." Patil opened her mouth, then seemed to think better of it and made a slight nod of apology. "Madame Pomfrey contacted George Weasley and got the antidotes — in fact, Weasley's older brother sent along a lot of antidotes; seems to have some sympathy for people being targeted and made fun of for some reason. But it's still not enough. Augustine's scared that they'll just keep getting more violent and I can't say I blame him."

"You know, he could stay here," said Granger.

"Where?" said Draco.

"Here, in Diggory House. We have a study room, but nobody's using it."

"What? Where? He doesn't belong here!" said several voices at once.

"He's a child," said Granger. "And he's afraid. Is he in Ravenclaw right now?"

Astoria shook her head. "No, Madam Pomfrey's got him in the Hospital wing, but that's no place to live. He needs someplace safe." She stared at Granger musingly. "You know... that's actually not that bad an idea," she said slowly.

Draco was suddenly certain enough to bet his

last Knut that Astoria had been thinking of doing just that before she'd ever spoken to Granger. She was good, though; he didn't think any of the others would've guessed any such thing.

"But... but he can't!" said Brown.

"This is supposed to be a House for adults," said Lisa Turpin. She glanced over at the new plaid couch, where Hannah Abbott and plump, pompous Ernie Macmillan were so closely entwined Draco couldn't even tell whose hands were whose.

"Besides, we're busy," said Millie. "We can't be babysitting every ickle firstie who's feeling hard done by."

"I'm in," said Goldstein.

Draco blinked.

"He's one of my House, right?" said Goldstein curtly. "I'll take responsibility for him, if nobody else will."



DECEMBER 1, 2017: WE BUILT IT TOGETHER

"Now, I would very much like to focus on Dumbledore's Army, and how you came together to build Diggory House," said Master Archivist Maximus Lore to the gathered group of people. "The ten of you former members were instrumental not only in starting the House, but in expanding its purpose. You carried much of the inter-House cooperation that had been evident in Dumbledore's Army into Diggory House," he said. He focused on Neville and

Hermione. "Also, the six of you – what we historians have started to call The Sextet – "

"The what?" asked Hermione.

"You, Mr. Potter, and Mr. Weasley, who first headed the DA, and then Professor Longbottom, Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Lovegood-Scamander, who took over when you were gone. The six of you helped to make Diggory House into – "

"But Harry and Ron were busy with Auror training," Hermione said, shaking her head. "They didn't have anything to do with Diggory House. Neither did Ginny and Luna."

"Still, you were dating Mr. Weasley at the time – "

"But he didn't have anything to do with the school any more," said Neville.

"If you're going to focus on the larger group of people who were behind all of this," said Hermione, "which you should, in my opinion, then of course the other members of the DA were relevant. A lot of people were." She glanced over at Draco and Astoria. "Astoria Greengrass's help was invaluable. But if you are going to focus only on a few people, then focus on those who were actually part of it."

Lore made an impatient gesture. "But in the interests of appealing to a wider audience – "

"If you're writing a historical book, write a historical book," said Neville forcefully. "And if you're writing to appeal to a wider audience, do that. But don't try to make it sound like it's accurate history and

then stretch the truth to sell it to a 'wider audience.'"

"But –"

"We built Diggory House," said Hermione, indicating the entire group. "We built it together. Don't denigrate that by spinning things for popular appeal."

Dean Thomas spoke up. "Personally I think you should talk about people outside the House who contributed. But not just the famous ones, or the DA members. Everyone. That was supposed to be the whole point of Diggory House."

"It's still supposed to be the point of Diggory House," said Anthony.

Draco glanced at Astoria, who looked amused.



DECEMBER 1, 1998: A SAFE PLACE

"I can't keep them safe. Nobody can," said Astoria worriedly. "We've already got Augustine here, but he's too scared to go back to his House, and he won't give up the guest room. I don't know what to do."

"They can come here," said Granger. "This could be a safe place for more than just Augustine."

"We can't put everyone in here, Hermione," said Goldstein, looking up from his Transfiguration essay. "We don't have the room."

"We could make extra room," said Draco.

The others turned to look at him, surprised to hear him speak. "Where?" said Goldstein. "The washroom? The common room?" He gestured

around the room, now equipped with plenty of nice couches and two small new yellow tables. "It's small enough already."

"There are two other rooms right on the other side of this wall."

Bones leaned forward. "D'you mean the rooms next to the Charms classroom?"

"Isn't one of those used for the Charms club and the choir?" asked Patil.

"That's only two days a week," Draco pointed out. "Surely they could find somewhere else to go. That space goes empty the rest of the time. And the one next door is mostly used for storage."

"But... what are you proposing, just blasting a hole in the wall?" asked Patil.

"Not blasting. That's what magic's for," he said impatiently.

"Why couldn't we use an enlarging spell, then?" asked Brown.

"Interferes too much with other magic," said Granger. "Draco's right, though, we could use magic to bring down these walls, and then we'd have access to..." she trailed off, staring at the wall as if imagining holes in it.

"The other room, that's used for storage of some Potions ingredients," said Patil.

"Yeah, we'd have to go through and neutralize everything," said Goldstein musingly.

"I take it we're saying, yes, then?" said Finnigan.

There was a small silence.

"Because personally I'm not keen on having a horde of little kids running around here. Our common room isn't big enough, for one thing."

Thomas snorted. "Come on, Seamus. Our comfort, for their education. You were a lot more crowded in the Room of Requirement last year, and I lived a lot rougher than having a slightly crowded common area."

Finnigan nodded, conceding the point.

"It would be a logistical headache," said Ernie Macmillan. "And it's inappropriate, to boot."

"Beats living in the hospital ward," said Draco.

"They need Houses," said Granger at the same time.

"They've got Houses," said Macmillan.

"Houses that don't want them," Draco shot back.

"And how long would they be here?" asked Patil.

"I don't know," said Astoria. "Until they feel they can go back?"

"Just how many children are you having trouble with?" asked Granger.

"About a dozen or so. More girls than boys."

"We can split the classrooms into a few separate dorms, can't we?"

"Each classroom is large enough for two, maybe three dorms," said Draco. "Make them three kids to a room. We could get up to three for the girls in the larger room..."

"And two for the boys in the other one," said

Granger.

"And forget House distinctions," said Draco.

Astoria was looking at him with approval, and it made Draco feel oddly warm to see admiration for him in her eyes. "Right. Let's go take a look at the rooms, then," she said. Draco stood up.

"Erm... Gra – Hermione, do you want to come too?" he asked, and Hermione smiled at him.



DECEMBER 1, 2017: AT THE LEAKY

The Leaky Cauldron, Under New Management, said the sign, and Draco opened the door. The place was a bit dark, but he soon spotted the group from the information session, in a corner of the room that shimmered a bit with magic. A privacy screen, he realized; probably spelled to make the group difficult to see by anyone who didn't belong to it.

"Draco! You made it!" said Neville, genuinely pleased. Draco was slightly taken aback, but returned his smile.

"I told you he would," said Hermione, smiling widely.

"I didn't think he would," said Weasley, and now Draco's smile was forced. "Thought he just came to the information part of it."

Hannah came bustling towards the table, slim, wiry, and energetic as always. She'd been plump, shy, round-faced and sweet-looking when they

were kids, Draco vaguely remembered, and the war had taken that away from her. It had given her cynicism and energy and an almost hostile extroversion along with a gorgeous body, but somehow Draco wished the sweet little Hannah had been able to grow naturally into what he saw today, instead of being wrenched there violently.

She hadn't done badly for herself, though. She'd gained people skills and confidence, just as Neville had gained courage and authority. He used his to teach about plants, and she used hers to sling ales, which seemed rather a waste of talent. Still, it seemed to work for them.

"Here you go," she said, plopping down drinks for eight different people at the table, magic helping her prevent any spillage. "Draco, can I get you anything? No? Are you sure? Here, come on, make room for him," she said to Patil and her wife, who moved aside without a comment or even a roll of their eyes. Hannah sat down next to Neville, drawing her chair close to his and laying her head on his shoulder.

"I'm so glad you came," she said, smiling at Draco. Neville smiled down at her and kissed the top of her head.

"All right, newlywed sweethearts," said Anthony. "Let's not have any unseemly displays of public affection here. It's been, what, six months since you tied the knot? Plenty of time to get it out of your systems."

Neville gave him a two-fingered salute and kissed Hannah again. "Sod off," he said good naturedly. "During the school year and in front of the customers we're decorous. We're among our own House now, and you can bloody well deal with it. We're still on our honeymoon as far as I'm concerned."

Anthony laughed, and nodded, and Draco glanced around the group.

Patil and Lavender Brown weren't particularly thrilled to see him. Who cared. Neither was Millicent, and Thomas had never lost his reserve with Draco, and probably never would. He still felt welcome here, though. How odd.

"So what did you think about Lore?" said Hermione.

"I think he's going about it wrong," said Neville right away. "I think if it's too focused on just us, it'll be inaccurate and uninteresting."

"What we did was important," said Brown. "What's wrong with wanting a little glory? If he's going to write about a dozen other people it'll all get lost."

"Actually I think it'll make it more important," said Hannah.

"I think he's talking about what'll be in the museum display. It wouldn't surprise me if the book has more room to explore other people outside of us."

"Is it really going to be a museum display?" said Finnigan.

"That's what they're planning," said Hermione.

"Damn. We're going to be part of a bloody museum."

"It's exciting, isn't it?" said Brown.

"It's bloody depressing, is what it is," said Finnigan. "Museums are for *old* things! I'm not old enough to be in a museum!"

"Oh bollocks. I hadn't thought of it that way," said Hannah.

"That is rather depressing," said Thomas. "Hannah, I've changed my mind – can I have some more ale? Or possibly Firewhisky."

"Get it yourself," said Hannah. "I'm afraid I'll break a hip on the way to getting it."

"You know, I was dead happy about being in a book," said Millicent. "Now I'm feeling like I'm ready for retirement."

"You've depressed my wife," said Neville to Finnigan. "Some friend you turned out to be."

"Not only that, he's reminded you that your brand-new wife is *old*," groaned Hannah.

"I don't mind," said Neville softly. "I'll still be happy with you, no matter how old you get."

"Keep it private, you two!" groaned Anthony.



DECEMBER 1, 1998: HANNAH

"Oh fuck – sorry!" Draco blurted, and backed out hastily, slamming the door. He really hadn't needed to see the Muggle-born's naked tits bouncing, her back arched, as she rode some sixth-year Ravenclaw boy in the Diggory girls' dorm while another boy

lay on the bed, very obviously spent and sated, watching the proceedings with a lazy smile. And he really didn't need the almost visceral jolt of arousal at the sight, despite the identity of the –

"What is it?" Granger said behind him, and Draco jumped and turned around.

"Erm." Draco was caught completely at a loss. He'd come here for a reason... hadn't he?

"Are you all right?" Granger asked.

"Yes, fine," said Draco curtly. "Why? What do you want?"

"I want to go into my dormitory," Granger said coolly, and started to reach for the handle.

"Don't!" Draco blurted

Granger's eyebrows leapt up. "Why not?"

"It's, erm, being occupied."

"For heaven's sake, I've got to –" she stopped. "Ah." She turned rather bright red, and Draco realized his face was probably every bit as rosy as her own.

"Right. I'll, erm, I can get my things later."

They stood in awkward silence for a beat.

"Were you... did you come here looking for someone?" asked Granger, and Draco blinked.

"Yes." Who... oh right! "You, actually." He cleared his throat and forced the distracting image still seared onto his mind's eye to go away. "It, erm, occurred to me that if we have students who aren't of age staying here, McGonagall will probably want us to put in the spells that prevent boys

from going into the girls' dormitories, like they have in the other Houses. I was wondering if you would have any idea of how to cast those."

Granger was immediately interested. "The chaperone spells? No, I don't, but I would love to learn them. HOGWARTS: A HISTORY mentions them – "

"But it doesn't give details as to how they're cast," said Draco.

Granger's mouth dropped open slightly. "You've actually read it?" she asked.

"Of course," Draco gave her a puzzled look. "So you don't know them either?"

"No, but I'm sure the library would have details... possibly in the Restricted Section so students don't try to undo them..." she trailed off, then looked at her watch. "Unfortunately it's close to closing time. Damn."

"Surely we can get permission to stay past closing, if it's for the good of the school."

"All the plans for expanding the House don't have to be finalized today," Granger pointed out. "We only just started talking about it this afternoon."

"I'd like to have as much ready as possible when we talk to McGonagall tomorrow."

"Well the library opens tomorrow at eight. I'll be happy to do research then."

"Good. Thanks."

They stood for a moment, only then remembering the awkwardness of their situation as they waited for Hannah and the two boys in the

dorm to finish up.

Bloody hell, at this rate, Draco was not only going to be the only Diggory House bloke other than Neville who'd never bedded Hannah Abbott; he would be possibly the only one over the age of sixteen who hadn't had the dubious pleasure.

Not so dubious. Those two boys certainly looked like she was making them fairly happy. So had Goldstein and Thomas and Finnigan and even stolid little Macmillan. And it suddenly occurred to him that it weren't for the blood status and over-friendliness of the girl, he certainly wouldn't mind losing his virginity at some point in the foreseeable future.

"Erm... does this happen a lot?" Draco asked, the intense discomfort of talking to one Muggle-born about another losing to his desire to not just stand here stupidly saying nothing.

Granger looked embarrassed. "Some," she said. "She's. She's acting out."

"Acting out what?"

"She's trying to deal with what she went through last year."

"How? By bedding half the castle?"

"Do you know what happened to Hannah last year?" Granger said, her voice hard.

"Was it any worse than what happened to you?" he asked. Granger frowned, but reluctantly shook her head. "Why aren't you out sleeping with

everyone in sight, then?"

"My parents are both still alive," Granger said. "And safe. Hannah lost her mother. And her father didn't want her to ever come back here. Don't you dare judge her."

"I lost my father too," Draco snapped. "He's not dead, but he might as well be. He'll never get out —"

"It isn't the same. Her father won't talk to her any more. She's got nobody, really. If this is how she chooses to deal with that, I won't judge her."

"Her father really didn't want her to come back?" Draco blinked. It had honestly never occurred to him that Muggles wouldn't jump at the chance to be part of the wizarding world, even vicariously though their children.

"The wizarding world wasn't terribly safe for people like us," Granger said evenly. "Would you want your children involved in a world this dangerous?"

He had no idea. "Why did your parents not take you away too, then?"

"I didn't give them the choice," said Granger. "I sent them away and gave them new memories to keep them safe, but I stayed because I had to."

Draco blinked. Somehow it had also never occurred to him that Granger must have had parents too, and that they might have had an opinion on their daughter's life.

"Don't presume to judge any of us, Draco," Granger said coldly, then turned on her heel and left.



DECEMBER 10, 2017: DEAR MOTHER

Dear Mother:

Please come to the station to pick me up. I'm sorry I said I wanted to get home by myself. Patsy's parents are coming to get her and she says they're a bit nervous about being in a wizarding place so I told her you and Father could help them find their way so they won't be too lost. She said when they dropped her off in September they weren't sure the wizarding world was a safe place, but I said if they meet people who've always lived in the wizarding world they'll see it's not so scary. Could you also get Tiggy to come? Patsy wants her parents to meet a house elf.

Scorpius

Dear Scorpius:

Your father and I will be glad to see you and meet your friend Patsy's parents. And Tiggy will be delighted. She's a little dotty right now, but the elf Healers said she should be all right by Christmas, as long as we don't wear anything green too close to her. Please tell your friend to pass along the warning to her parents. She

won't do anything scary if they forget, but she will sing, and I don't think that would make for a very good impression of the wizarding world.

-Mother



DECEMBER 10, 1998: GET OVER YOURSELF

"There's a lot of students not going home for Christmas this year," said Astoria.

"How many?" asked Draco.

"A lot of them. Some of them are very young, but they no longer have families to go home to. Or... well, in the case of a few of the Slytherins, they no longer have families they *want* to go home to."

"Why?"

"Two of them are still spouting the same rubbish their parents spouted, but their parents have changed their tune – at least in public – so that's bound to make for a Happy Christmas for all concerned. Two others have taken up friendships with Muggle-borns. It hasn't gone over well."

"They can come here," Draco said. He looked around the common room. "Any objections?"

A chorus of No's answered him, and Astoria gave him a grateful smile.

"Are you going home?" he asked.

"No," she said, and Queenie frowned.

"Mum's going to go mental," she said.

"I really don't care, Queenie," said Astoria. "I'm

needed here."

"Astoria," snapped Queenie. "Look, with all due respect to your lofty and terribly important Head Girliness? You're not that indispensable. Do us all a favour and get over yourself, please." She stood up and stalked back to her dormitory.



DECEMBER 25, 2017: DEAR DRACO

Dear Draco:

Please let Astoria know that her Christmas Eve dinner was lovely. The meal was excellent and the refreshments tastefully presented. Your house elf, however, could use some firm, kind discipline. I will be happy to help if Astoria is unsure of how to proceed in that area. As well, the decorations were charming, but missed some of the elegance that your home deserves. If Astoria is unwilling to learn how to improve in that area, I would be happy to do it for her next year.

Scorpius is turning into a fine young man. You must be proud.

I neglected to let you know last night: I received an owl from your father, who reports that he is well, though still a bit under the weather from the

Pozrebin Flu a few weeks ago. His release plan is proceeding well, and he will hopefully be able to celebrate Christmas with us next year.

Do give my regards to your lovely wife, and thank her for a charming dinner despite its minor shortcomings.

Love,

— Mother



DECEMBER 25, 1998: HOME ALONE

Draco took an appreciative sip of his cognac. It wasn't that bad, Christmas alone with just the two of them. Mother had been sent a few invitations to social functions, and had graciously declined, sending flowers and expressing deep regret at being unable to attend and inviting the families in question to the manor after Christmas. She hadn't said, but Draco suspected that she had not been at all sure that she could pull off being a single woman at a society function at a time like this, and that she didn't feel like putting herself out there to be mocked or ostracized, but that she might be willing to be social again next year, assuming she was invited anywhere.

So they had eaten Christmas dinner alone, and then retired to the fireplace in the parlour.

He looked around the room approvingly. The manor was slowly being rebuilt. The atrium was a mess and the entire east wing was off-limits — Mother said it was due to dangerous magic residue from the Dark Lord's stay here, but Draco suspected it had more to do with horrible memories and significantly depleted funds with which to repair the place. Which probably also contributed to why they weren't being seen in society much these days.

"Is there anybody special in your life, Draco?" asked Mother out of the blue.

Draco blinked, startled. "As in..."

"Is there any girl you are particularly friendly with these days?"

Draco was literally left speechless. His mother's tone was calm, as if this were a perfectly normal question, and not the first time she'd ever asked anything of the kind of him.

"Oh. Erm. No, not really."

"That's too bad."

Silence descended again. Good. She'd only brought it up to make conversation, then. Draco searched his mind for something to say, wondering if perhaps she felt the stilted nature of their relationship as keenly as he did. Funny how neither had ever realized just how completely Father dominated their lives until he was gone.

"I heard Astoria Greengrass is doing well as Head Girl this year," said Mother.

Draco nodded, his face flushing slightly.
"What about her?"
"What about her... what?" he asked.
"She's a pretty girl, I've heard."
Draco closed his eyes, mortified. "Mother..."
"Have you thought about her in that way?"
"I – no, I, it's been a busy year."
"Do you find her attractive?"
"Mother!" His cheeks heated up and he stared into the fire, determinedly avoiding his mother's gaze.
"You could do worse than her, you know."
"I don't – this is ridiculous," he said, putting down his cognac.
"Ridiculous? In what way?"
"I am not going to ask out a girl just because you tell me to!"
"Why not? If it makes sense, and the girl is attractive enough, and –"
"Mother! I am old enough to figure out who I want to date!"
"Well you aren't finding anyone on your own, are you?"
"But –"
"You're a handsome young man, you're intelligent and well-brought up, you –" she cut herself off and Draco could hear the hastily abandoned 'You come from one of the finest wizarding families'. "Your father and I were quite pleased when it appeared that you and Pansy Parkinson were

an item," she said, and Draco swallowed hard, utterly mortified. "She may not have been what we wanted for you as far as looks and personality, but she was from a good family. The Parkinsons are very good friends of ours, and it was good that –"
"Mother, please."

"You're a young man, you need to find a nice young woman to settle down with –"

"Merlin, Mother!" snapped Draco. "I'm not interested in settling down!"

"You have to think of your future. Even if it didn't end up lasting, it could be very advantageous for you to be seen with –"

"I am not going to talk about this any more," Draco said firmly, stood up, and left the parlour. Enough was enough.

Mother didn't understand. She didn't understand that what had been exciting and easy with Pansy was impossible with Astoria. The family background was only part of it. He didn't have the confidence any more, and Astoria did. She was almost untainted by the war, or was at least able to act like it. He? Was soaked in it.



JANUARY 9, 2018: LET'S DO LUNCH

"I miss her so much," said Hermione. "It's only been a week, but the house feels even emptier than when she left in September. She's so far

away." She picked up her wine glass and gazed into it thoughtfully.

"She's doing well, according to Scorpius," said Draco.

Hermione gave him a small smile. "I keep thinking next year Hugo will be gone too and I don't know what I'll do. The house will be so empty... it's funny but when they were small sometimes I wished I could have back the quiet, tidy house we had before they came along." She took a sip of her wine. "And now I feel as though a home with no children isn't really a home at all."

Draco dropped his eyes and moved his pasta around on his plate aimlessly for a moment.

Hermione made a sudden soft sound of distress. "Oh, God I'm sorry." She covered her eyes with her hand. "I... God, I'm so sorry. I forgot. I didn't mean..."

Draco shrugged. "It's all right. Our home is feeling a bit empty at the moment, but I'm sure we'll adapt quickly enough."

"Don't you miss him?"

"Yes," Draco said shortly, and took a bite of his pasta. Every day. He missed his son, hearing his voice, listening to his odd little conversations, playing chess with him. Who on earth had decided that it was a good idea to break up wizarding families for the last seven years of a child's childhood? It was insane. "Yes, a bit. We're keeping busy, though."

"Yes, I heard." She paused. "You know, that's

something that you should talk about."

Draco stiffened and drew back. "I don't much want to, Granger."

"Don't be angry."

"I'm not angry."

"You fall back to last names when you're angry," she said patiently.

"Do I?"

Hermione chuckled. "Yes. Astoria and I noticed that a long time ago."

"You know, I really don't need my wife and you conspiring against me."

"Then do as we say. We usually have your best interests at heart."

"What do you mean?"

"At that information meeting, d'you remember how Lore sounded? He's still going in the same direction. The book, the museum exhibit, it's all going to be about the DA, and the other famous people — including the ones who weren't even bloody well there — and nothing about the ones who did just as much or more. Like you, and Astoria."

"That's what the public wants."

"Draco, you worked hard to create what we made. And you've worked hard ever since. People deserve to know that. Your family deserves for you to tell the world." She paused. "And Scorpius deserves it most of all."



JANUARY 9, 1999: SUGAR QUILLS

"Astoria, do you want to go to Hogsmeade?" asked Draco casually in the corridor, and wondered if an outsider – namely, Astoria – would be able to hear how little of his nonchalance was genuine.

Astoria blinked and looked up at him, her mouth slightly open. "Are you asking me out on a date?"

Draco's eyebrows shot up. What?

What kind of girl asked such a thing? This wasn't how it was supposed to be played. A girl was supposed to try to divine the intentions of the boy who asked her, try to figure out what the boy wanted, what she wanted, how to encourage him if they both wanted the same thing and discourage him if they didn't – who did Astoria think she was, Loony Lovegood? Just blindly blundering through a delicate social interaction with all the grace of a troll? He really would've expected better from her.

"I am asking if you're going to Hogsmeade," he said stiffly. "A few of the other Diggory House people are going, and I have to go to Honeydukes. My mother likes Sugar Quills. I was going to go with Millicent, she knows which ones my mother likes, but she's still at her parents' until Monday."

Astoria looked unsure, and Draco felt a surge of annoyance. He wasn't really up to his usual social standards here; his excuse sounded just

like what it was, an excuse. He'd planned to use if she'd said no, as a face-saving out, but the way she'd just blurted the question made his own planned gesture sound blurted as well.

And yet Astoria hadn't said no, he realized.

"So are you going?" he asked, and this time he did sound nonchalant.

"Oh. Yes. Yes, I am."

They started to head down towards Hogsmeade, and Draco paused. "Oh – we should wait for Queenie," he said, knowing Queenie was probably at the village already, but wanting to make it clear that he had not really intended this to be a romantic outing.

Astoria gave him a strange look. "She's down there already."

"Oh is she?" he said. "That's too bad. We can catch up with her when we get there, if you'd like."

"No, that's all right. I see enough of her," said Astoria.

"What did you think of your exams?" Draco asked after a few moments as they made their way through the snow.

"They were all right," said Astoria indifferently. "I haven't really had a chance to do much studying this year."

"You don't want to leave them to the last minute," said Draco.

"How were yours last year?" she asked pointedly.

Draco stiffened slightly. "Touché. I don't think there were many of us who were doing well, though."

"Less competition, though, from the brains who were missing or in prison," said Astoria, and it was very difficult to figure out what she meant from her bland tone.

"I suppose so."

They got to Honeydukes, and he found it was rather pleasant, spending time with her in a setting outside of the school. Interesting, too, to be in Hogsmeade on what was not really a Hogsmeade weekend. There was almost nobody there except for Diggory House students and some professors. It was fairly enjoyable, picking out sweets, chatting about their Christmas holidays – not that either had much to say, as she had spent it at the school and Draco had spent almost all of it alone with his mother – and it all felt almost relaxing and natural until they were headed out to The Three Broomsticks and she turned and faced him again.

"Draco, why did you ask me here?"

Draco frowned. "I told you, I was coming to Hogsmeade and –"

"I don't think so. You've been somewhat more attentive towards me ever since you came back from Christmas hols."

"Have I?" said Draco.

Astoria gave him a level look, then pushed open the door to the Broomsticks and went in. They moved to one of the many empty tables, politely averting their gaze from the corner

where Thomas and Susan Bones were holding hands and gazing deeply into each other's eyes, and she said nothing further until their order of Butterbeer arrived.

"You have been acting differently towards me since you came back," she said.

"Different how?"

"Different, as in, talking to me a great deal more. Seeking me out."

"I had a rather dull holiday," said Draco. "Ten days cooped up in the Manor with my mother wasn't exactly thrilling. It's nice to talk about something other than what the roses will look like on the south lawn this year."

"Did you and your mother talk about anything else, then?" said Astoria.

Draco dropped his eyes. Bugger it all, why did he feel he couldn't lie to her? Where was his suave smoothness, his casual air of indifference, which had always worked so well on Pansy and the other Slytherin girls?

Granted, Pansy was thicker than a concussed troll, and Astoria was definitely not. Still.

"All right," said Draco, and went for a casual tone once more. "My mother did mention that she wanted to see me take more of an interest in social life."

"Was I mentioned specifically?"

"Why would you think so?"

"Because I'm here with you, Draco. You don't

appear to have asked Neville or Dean or even Queenie to help you pick out Sugar Quills for your mother."

"How do you know that I didn't, and got turned down?"

"Woman's intuition. Did your mother ask you to find some nice pureblooded girl to be seen with? Help rehabilitate the Malfoy name once more?"

"What if she did?" asked Draco. "There's nothing wrong with the idea."

"Unless she asked you make sure *I'm* the nice pureblooded girl."

Draco sat back, stung. "Why would that be out of the question?"

"It's not that you're not attractive, Draco," said Astoria, and Draco felt himself blushing. "And if it weren't for your family, I might even be in favour of seeing whether we were compatible as a couple."

Draco blinked, not sure he'd ever heard romance described in a more practical, crushingly cynical way. Even by his mother.

"But given that I'm also from a family that is desperately trying to move forward and step out of its own mess, it's not terribly likely that my parents would approve, is it?"

Draco dropped his gaze.

"And you must have known that," said Astoria.

"I did," Draco admitted.

"Then why go ahead with this?" She indicated the two of them.

Draco raised his head again. "My mother has

gone through a great deal, all right? I wanted to be able to tell her honestly that I had tried."

Astoria nodded, and brought her mug to her lips. She sipped delicately, then put down the mug. "Can I ask you something?" she said softly.

"Yes?"

"Was this... did you only ask me because of your mother?" she asked, fiddling with the ribbon on her box of Honeydukes chocolates.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, if your mother hadn't pushed you... would you be interested? In me?"

Draco sat speechless for a moment. Astoria's face was bright red and she looked like she was already deeply regretting having asked the question, and Draco couldn't quite believe she had either. It was the most completely un-Slytherin he'd seen her do so far.

He took a deep breath. Well, if they were going to be un-Slytherin...

"I would. I... I am," he said, his voice low. "Only... I thought it wouldn't be practical, what with your family and all."

Astoria nodded quickly. "I – I'm sorry, it was none of my business, only... sorry." She took another sip of her Butterbeer.

Draco gazed into the bubbles floating in his own mug. "Can I ask... if it weren't for your family, would you... would you be interested back?"

Astoria hunched her shoulders slightly, obviously incredibly uncomfortable. "It doesn't matter, does it? I won't go against them. I can't." She glanced up at him quickly. "And that's not a fair answer. I." She cleared her throat. "Yes, I would." She shrugged. "It doesn't make any difference, though."

"No," said Draco, then found himself smiling unexpectedly. "But it is nice to know."



JANUARY 11, 2018: THE HOUSE SURVIVES

Dear Mr. Malfoy:

Enclosed is the section you asked to read, from Part VIII of The Fifth House: The House Survives

By the end of the first year, Diggory House had grown far beyond its initial size. In addition to the original fourteen members, twelve others finished the year living in dormitories the Diggory House members created for them, with many others having spent days or weeks or months within their safe walls before venturing back into the traditional Houses.

The following school year saw a new crop of students move into Diggory House. What had been envisioned as a one-year arrangement to help students make up classes they'd missed and use their help in rebuilding the school was extended. Three of the new group were Muggle-borns who had missed their sixth year and had been unable to catch up, and were thus still a year behind. Two of the class of 1998, who had

declined to return to the school when it first reopened, came back after all. Two sixth-year Slytherin students who had spent a great deal of the previous year in Diggory House petitioned to be allowed to do their entire seventh year in Diggory, and were permitted to do so.

And two of the founding members returned for another year. Anthony Goldstein had decided to study at Hogwarts for another year, using the library to conduct very advanced studies into Gem Transfigurations, going far beyond what is usually expected of students at NEWT level. Neville Longbottom also returned, taking part in a sort of apprenticeship with Herbology Professor Pomona Sprout, to prepare him to take over her duties when she retired.

The year after that, Diggory House was once again occupied. Two of the previous year's members hadn't passed most of their NEWTs on the first try, and had been permitted another year to try to finish them out of consideration for disabilities incurred during the war. Four more students stayed on for additional education, as Anthony Goldstein had done. Three students were transferred from Slytherin to Diggory.

A year later, a married couple who had attended Beauxbatons asked to come and spend a year studying Professor Dumbledore's extensive work in Transfigurations, some of which had never been published, in an effort to bring more of his groundbreaking research to the wider public. They stayed in Diggory House for convenience, rather than rent a house in Hogsmeade

as foreign researchers at Hogwarts had always done. Their work, published in various publications such as "Transfiguration Today", "Tricky Transfigurations", and "Transfigurations Theory and Practice", and later published in its entirety in Albus Dumbledore and the Transfigured Treasures, brought major developments to the field and is still regarded as a definitive work on the subject of Useful Tool-to-Animal transfigurations.

The foreign scholars were joined in Diggory House that year by three of the permanently transferred Slytherins, two sets of twins who had been Sorted into separate Houses, and three post-NEWT students. The school decided that year to make the post-NEWT positions a permanent fixture in the school, and established eighth-year positions for post-NEWT studies in Potions, Herbology, Astronomy, and Runes.

The next year, Arithmancy and Muggle Studies were added to the list.

Today Diggory House contains up to nine post-NEWT students, assorted transferees from other Hogwarts Houses – though transferring is still discouraged – and an ever-shifting collection of scholars from around the British Isles and the larger wizarding world who come to Hogwarts to study. There are generally ten to twenty students in residence. As of 2013 the House even has its own Quodpot team, though putting together a seven-player Quidditch team may not ever be feasible.

The road to this current state was not without con-

troversy. Perhaps the most difficult was the decision as to whether or not to allow persons who had been convicted of crimes against other students to move in to Diggory once their sentences were served. As well, the decision to allow younger students – especially Slytherin students – to move in to the House permanently met with much debate.

[Note: this part of the chapter is not yet finished. We have had trouble deciding what to include and exclude from this section. Our archivists have set themselves a deadline of February 12th, at which point they will either throw a sheaf of parchments containing the different proposed subsections into the air and publish whichever one lands closest to our statue of Bathilda Bagshott, or scrap the subsection altogether.]



JANUARY 11, 1999: GREGORY GOYLE

"Greg Goyle's been released from prison," said Draco. Ernie Macmillan's quill froze in mid-letter.

"And?" asked Patil.

"He wants to come to school. His trial said he could."

"He's on probation," she said.

"So was Draco," Astoria reminded Patil. "Until a month ago."

"Are you asking if he can bunk here with us?" asked Thomas.

"Not a chance," said Neville immediately, and

Finnigan and Goldstein concurred.

Thomas's brow furrowed. "Why not? Granted, he wasn't the most friendly bloke, but –"

"But you weren't here last year," said Finnigan, his normally good-natured face set and bitter. "You didn't see what he did."

Macmillan swallowed hard and put down his quill with a shaking hand. Hannah Abbott moved closer to him, taking his hand in hers and Draco's eyebrows went up as Macmillan turned to her and hugged her close, shivering. He'd have sworn those two hadn't been together since before Christmas, but she was stroking his hair and he was visibly calming down at her touch.

"He wouldn't have to go in a dormitory," said Astoria. "He could go in the guest room. It's empty right now –"

"No," said Hannah forcefully. "Not a chance. We won't have him here. It's supposed to be a *safe* place." Draco suddenly realized he hadn't heard her say more than a few words all year. Moans didn't count.

"He's not even a student, anyway," said Finnigan.

"Neither am I," said Neville. "I'm mostly here to help Professor Sprout; I already had most of my NEWTs anyway. And Susan mostly helps in the library and the owlery, so she's not really a student either. That's not the point."

Astoria sat back. "What is the point?" she asked softly. "He hurt too many of us."

"There are other students staying here who hurt people," said Draco. "You couldn't really succeed in some classes without doing it."

"I can't. All right?" Macmillan looked up and there were tears in his eyes. "I can't. I'm sorry, but I'm not going to sleep in the same room as the boy who – who –"

"He had to," said Draco, completely off-balance. He didn't know what he'd expected, but it wasn't this. After how calmly his House had accepted letting in some other students, even those who were still spouting unpopular opinions, he'd assumed it would be a given that soon he wouldn't be the only Slytherin in the boys' dorm, the only non-member of the DA. "It was for class."

"Don't give me that rubbish!" Neville snapped, and Draco gaped at him. "He enjoyed it, you know he did!" he said, and Draco hadn't seen him this angry since he'd sliced off that horrible snake's head. "And he didn't even do me so bad, but I still hear Tim Ogilvie screaming – bloody hell, Draco, he was thirteen years old!"

Astoria nodded. "I'm sorry. You're right. I'm... we shouldn't even have asked." Draco blinked and opened his mouth to protest but she shook her head at him quickly. "I honestly didn't mean to bring back painful memories for any of you." She swallowed hard. "Ernie, I'm so sorry."

Macmillan pressed his lips together and

nodded shakily.

Astoria nodded. "Right. I'll let McGonagall know. Is it... we may not have a choice about this, as it's partly the Wizengamot's decision to make, but what should I say about whether or not he can attend classes?"

Neville glanced around the gathered students, then hesitated. "I think... I can't speak for everyone. But if he's only attending a few classes... I think we'd be all right with that." He hesitated. "Would we?"

Macmillan nodded. "You may want to ask some of the others, though."

"The others who came up at his trial?" said Astoria.

"Yeah. I'll give you a list – no, that would be inappropriate. I'll... I'll talk to them."

"Thank you," said Astoria, and Draco felt a shiver go down his spine as he realized Macmillan was referring to the eleven other students Goyle had been convicted of torturing far past the limits of what had been required for class.

That didn't bear thinking about. He stood up, his thoughts whirling, and noted distantly that Astoria was hastily standing as well.

"Thank you, Ernie. I'm truly sorry about this," she was saying quickly but earnestly as she followed Draco. "Draco, hold on, please, I forgot I needed to talk to you about the chaperone spells –" she hurried up to him. "Are you going to the library?"

Draco blinked, having had no goal in mind when he'd stood up other than leaving the

common room as quickly as possible. "Yes. I need to... pick up a book."

"Good, we can talk on the way," said Astoria, and they left the House.

Draco stopped outside the Diggory door. "What about the chaperone spells?" he said brusquely.

Astoria blinked. "What?"

"You needed to talk to me about it?"

"No, you dolt, that was just an excuse."

Draco frowned. "Why did you follow me, then?"

"I... I wanted to say I was sorry about Goyle –"

Draco narrowed his eyes, anger flashing through him. "Are you? Really? You certainly didn't seem so in there."

"They felt pretty strongly about –"

"How could you? You just cut him loose! You didn't do that for anybody else we let in – why was Goyle any different?"

"Are you serious? Did you see how they felt in there? Do you honestly think we had a hope in hell of convincing them?" Astoria shook her head. "I am not going to go out on a limb for a cause I cannot possibly win. We need to be logical and practical, Draco. Some battles are not worth fighting. We would lose, and gain nothing but bitterness and hostility from the rest of them."

"So Goyle is just a battle to be thrown, is he?"

"Frankly? Yes," she said, and turned on her heel and stalked away, leaving Draco gaping after her.



JANUARY 15, 2018: DEAR MR. LORE

Dear Mr. Lore:

In reply to your letter of January 10, 2018, regarding a time to discuss matters pertaining to Diggory House, I would be amenable to meeting on the 20th for a few hours.

*Respectfully,
Draco Malfoy*

Dear Mr. Malfoy:

I am delighted that you are considering taking part in this project. I have felt for a long time that the story is not complete without telling the Slytherin side of the tale. I feel that it will be a splendid addition to the history of the revolutionary House that you all created together. Indeed, I was speaking to Mr. Pranger the other day and...

Draco groaned quietly as he skimmed over the rest of the letter. He'd known all along that this would come about eventually. Astoria and Hermione did usually have his best interests at heart. But as he put the long parchment away without finishing reading it, he reflected that he'd be lucky

to have a single thing to say when they did meet. The man was bombastic and pompous and Draco got the distinct feeling that he was utterly uninterested in truth or accuracy or anything but making himself famous. Like Rita Skeeter, only boring.



JANUARY 15, 1999: WITH OUR APPROVAL

Draco stood at the window and watched Goyle make his way down the hill to his small flat in Hogsmeade, ducking his head against the cold, snowy wind.

"This is wrong," Draco said bitterly. "He shouldn't have to go down there."

"Are you serious?" said Astoria. "You still think they should've allowed him into the dorm?"

"Yes. Don't you?"

"Have you ever heard of post-traumatic stress disorder?" she asked, and rolled her eyes. "No, of course not, it's a Muggle idea. Still, what do you think it'd do to your housemates to see the boy who tortured them in their home space?"

"I don't know, but —"

"I do know. I deal with that kind of thing every day."

"Still. Aren't we supposed to be forgiving and moving forward and all that rot? Bloody hypocrites."

"I don't blame them for Goyle," said Astoria quietly.

"It's not just him," Draco jerked his chin at the snow-covered hill and Goyle's form growing smaller and smaller. "It's... they're... they're

bloody insufferable. They expect us all to just bow down to their greater righteousness, say we're sorry a million times, even if they won't forgive us or forget what we did – as if any of them wouldn't have done the same things."

"Such as?"

"Come on, you know they would've done anything, if they'd been in power."

"They *were* in power, Draco," said Astoria mildly. "For quite a few years. And there were remarkably few instances of Crucio being taught in the school while they were."

"That we know of."

"Precious few reports of Crucio being used now either," she said.

"They're still hypocrites. Last year, *everybody* cast those curses. I did, you did, most of the students spitting at Slytherins this year did –"

"Ginny Weasley didn't. Nor did Neville, or Luna, or *any* of Dumbledore's Army except for Zacharias Smith and Amy Compton."

Draco's eyes widened. He'd had no idea. He searched his mind for a comeback. "Well what about their own precious hero, Potter? He used *Secumsempra*, which, all right, he didn't know, but he also used Crucio and Imperio, and *nobody* cares, but suddenly when it comes to forgiving Goyle –"

"Potter admitted to using them, and had a trial," Astoria said evenly. "He was fined a thousand

Galleons and paid it, and put on probation for five years. Despite the fact that THE PROPHET was flooded with owls from readers saying he'd had every right to use both."

"That was a publicity stunt and you know it," Draco sneered. "He has scads of money anyway, what did the fine mean to him? It only made him look like a hero yet again, 'facing his past sins with integrity and courage' and all the other rot the papers said about him. And he was still allowed into the Auror program." Draco blew out his breath angrily. "It comes down to this: we tried to do things differently from them; it didn't work, and now we're doing things their way, but they won't let us put the past behind us because they still resent us for not believing the same things they did –"

"Draco," Astoria interrupted. "They're not just upset at us because of our beliefs. You cannot call sending children to Azkaban a difference in beliefs. You cannot call having people Demen-tor-kissed because they didn't have magical parents a mere difference in political philosophy."

"We believed they were criminals, stealing –"

"We believed no such thing!" Astoria snapped. "You know as well as I do that the theory of magical theft was a load of bosh, designed to stigmatize people on the basis of racism, pure and simple."

"But if it kept them out of our gene pool, and prevented them from corrupting our ideals and traditions –"

"You honestly believe that?"

"That our traditions and bloodlines are worth protecting? Yes, I do. Don't you?"

"Not that way, no."

Draco blinked. "Look... I know things got out of hand. But the people who made things get out of hand are all dead or in Azkaban now anyway. Why keep punishing the rest of us? Even those who did nothing wrong?"

"Nothing but go along with racism and oppression and murder?"

"All's fair in love and war, Astoria." He glared at her. "Look, I know you're playing devil's advocate here, but —"

"As a matter of fact, I'm not."

Draco blinked. "What?"

"Draco," said Astoria with some impatience, "has it ever occurred to you that we should be saying we were wrong because we were?"

"What?"

"It's not just empty words. I'm not just mouthing what others want to hear, like your father did in the years between one bout of pureblood batshittery and another. I mean it. My family were bloody idiots. I could see, being all of thirteen, that the Dark Lord had more than a few legs missing from his cauldron. It was as plain as the slitty little excuse for a nose on his face. He was terrifying, and I didn't believe a word that came out of his mouth, even though I went along with

it. And all right, maybe your family didn't catch on to just how insane he was as quickly as they should have, but bloody hell, Draco. He practically castrated your father. He had that horrid snake of his terrifying your ridiculous peacocks —"

"What does that —"

"And yet we still followed him. Maybe near the end we did it out of fear. But at the beginning it was out of lust for power and sadism and bigotry and hatred, and anybody who denies that is lying to themselves. And frankly, the reason I want to distance myself from all of that isn't all political. It's because it makes me ill to even think about what went on *with our approval!*"



JANUARY 20, 2018: OF WHOM YOU SPEAK, WITH WHOM YOU SPEAK

Dear Mother:

Rose is beating me in Muggle Studies, Potions, and Charms, and she's insufferable about it. I'm beating her in Defence Against the Dark Arts, Transfiguration, Herbology, and History of Magic. She says that her dad told her to beat me but that's not why she's doing it, she says it's just that she wants to be top of her class like her mum was. Her mum is rather nice. Why would Rose's dad

want her to beat me in particular?

- Scorpius

Dear Scorpius:

Don't let it bother you. Your dad and Rose's were nasty little boys in school. They're grown-ups now, and should try to act like it.

Grandmother sends her love.

- Mother

Dear Mrs. Malfoy:

Scorpius told me what he wrote to you. My mum says Dad should get over it, but I'm not sure what that means. I'm sorry Scorpius told you, because I didn't want him to. Mum also says I should be more careful with what I say to people. She sent me a poem written by a Muggle a really long time ago, that I thought was very wise:

If wisdom's ways you wisely seek,

Five things observe with care:

With whom you speak,

Of whom you speak,

And how, and when, and where.

Scorpius is a very nice boy. You must be very proud of him.

- Rose Weasley

Dear Rose:

Thank you for your letter. Your mother would be proud of you for writing it, I think. It's difficult to realize you've said something you shouldn't, but I think your mother

would be proud of you for apologizing. That's a very good poem, by the way: I may make a copy of it and put it next to my desk in the study.

Scorpius thinks very highly of you too. I'm very glad you've become friends.

— Mrs. Malfoy



JANUARY 20, 1999: FIREWHISKY AND BOGGARTS

Draco stopped short at the doorway of the boys' dorm. His dorm-mates were all sitting in a circle on the floor, Exploding Snap cards sitting in smoking heaps around them, a half-empty bottle of Firewhisky steaming in their midst.

"Draco," Neville called out, a mite unsteadily, "come in." He waved a hand vaguely at the floor next to them.

"What is this?" asked Draco cautiously.

"Firewhisky," said Finnigan.

"I gathered that. Here?"

"Why not here? We're all of age, aren't we?" said Macmillan, and downed the contents of his goblet in one gulp, coughing mightily afterwards. "'Snot against any rules," he wheezed out between spasms.

"Why are you all getting drunk?" asked Draco.

"None of your —" Thomas began, but Neville cut him off.

"My parents," said Neville. "They both caught the Floo Flu this year, and my gran doesn't think

they'll be around much longer."

Draco swallowed. "Ah. I'm... I'm sorry." He backed up. "I'll leave you to it, then," he began, and Neville shook his head.

"No, come on, join us."

"Him?" said Goldstein.

"Why not? He's part of the dorm, isn't he?" Neville scowled at Goldstein. "Come on, Seamus, deal him in."

Finnigan glanced at the other boys, then shrugged and dealt out a Dragon Deck of cards. Draco sat down cautiously among them, feeling rather surreal. It wasn't that he was deliberately ostracized in this room, but the other five boys did have a lot more in common with each other than with him. While Neville was fairly friendly, the other four hadn't exactly made any efforts to include him in their social group, and he hadn't tried to get close to any of them either.

"What are we playing?" asked Draco.

"Whatever Neville wants, right?" said Thomas, his voice edged. "Here." He plonked a goblet in front of Draco. "Say when." He started to pour the whisky and Draco winced as it hissed into the glass.

"Did you see them a lot?" asked Macmillan quietly after the cards were dealt.

"Not much," said Neville. "I go at Christmastime. My mum always gives me something – used to be wrappers from sweets, but I suppose she noticed I was growing up, because this year she gave me

the label from a bottle of Firewhisky, believe it or not. No idea how she got her hands on it."

They played silently for a few hands, and Draco was starting to feel the warmth of the Firewhisky working itself through him, insidiously making him let down his guard, feel like relaxing, feel like he was safe. Like he was almost having fun, despite a dismal hand containing nothing of value but the Sorceress of Horntails. A bit like that day with Astoria at Hogsmeade, but less tense.

"Have they ever been... all right?" asked Goldstein, breaking the companionable silence and discarding a Three of Horntails.

Neville shook his head. "I don't remember them ever being. They went mad when I was hardly more than a year old."

Draco swallowed hard.

"I used to have nightmares about what happened to them," Neville said slowly. "I used to wonder what it would be like to be hurt like that, to hurt for so long that eventually you went mad. Used to wonder, if I was ever in a situation like that, what would I do. Would I break, and betray my friends, or would I just take it, like they did." He gulped down some Firewhisky.

"Guess you know now, then," said Draco quietly. Neville met his eyes, startled.

"I still have nightmares, though," he said after a moment.

"We all have nightmares, Longbottom," said Draco dryly. He'd lost track of the times one of them had woken up the dorm with one of those.

"Yeah," said Thomas. He paused, then looked at Draco. "What are your nightmares about?"

Draco picked up an Apprentice of Ridgebacks. "Death Eaters in our home," he said, his voice low, and then wanted to bite his tongue because Merlin that was such a predictable thing for somebody to say if he was trying to suck up to the side of the blessed Light.

"Yeah?" Neville's face was neutral, but none of the others had scoffed at Draco yet and Neville's quiet voice seemed to invite confidences; seemed to stay the others' desire to mock Draco, too.

When had Neville Longbottom turned into a leader?

Probably around the time he pulled a sword from a burning hat and sliced off a snake's head and helped to finish off a madman.

"What else?" asked Neville, discarding a Ten of Ridgebacks.

Draco studied his cards for a moment, moving around the Ridgebacks. "Torturing people. Having to watch people be tortured." He took a deep breath. "Not killing Dumbledore. Charity Burbage. Yours?"

"Burning," said Neville softly. "Being Cruciated."

"Goyle," said Macmillan, staring at his cards.

"Watching giant spiders come into the Great Hall," said Goldstein, shuddering.

"Running," said Thomas. He took a swallow of Firewhisky, then looked at Draco. "Being in your bloody dungeon."

There was a silence.

"Having you in my bloody dungeon," Draco shot back. Thomas sat back, nodding thoughtfully.

"Screaming," said Finnigan. "Bloody screaming."

"Colin Creevey," said Neville.

"Fred Weasley," said Thomas with a shudder.

"Justin," said Macmillan.

"Fenrir Greyback," said Finnigan.

"Flames," said Draco.

"Green light," said Thomas.

"The scars on Corner's back," said Goldstein. There was another silence, and Thomas dropped a Warlock of Ridgebacks.

"Can you imagine what a Boggart would do in this room?" said Finnigan musingly, and they had all drunk far too much Firewhisky, because all of a sudden it was hilarious, and they all started to laugh uproariously, Draco joining in as helplessly as the others.

"Merlin, I just want to forget," said Neville softly, after they'd all calmed down somewhat.

"Why don't you..." Finnigan cleared his throat and looked oddly hesitant. "I didn't want to remember a lot of stuff about last year. Hannah... she helped, you know?"

Thomas nodded. "It was hard, being on the run. Hannah really... you just forget everything

when you're with her."

"I don't want to use her," said Neville.

Finnigan looked away. "I didn't use her. We both wanted – what's so wrong about doing something with a friend, who you like? It's not as though I treated her like a slut afterwards."

"Besides, she wants to," Macmillan said softly. "Wouldn't do it if she didn't."

Neville shrugged uncomfortably. "It's not that I don't want to," he said. "Especially after... you know that night she stayed over with you?" he said to Finnigan, and Draco had a vivid, most probably Firewhisky-enhanced memory of waking up to see Hannah, her shirt half-off and her skirts still in disarray, dragging herself out of Finnigan's bed, pulling her skirt right, glancing over and seeing Draco staring at her, and raising her chin defiantly before walking out of their room as if she'd had every right to be there.

Finnigan blushed and nodded. "I wanted to," said Neville. "Fuck, I wanted to." Draco choked on his Firewhisky a bit, not sure he'd ever heard Neville Longbottom swear before.

"You... you were so bloody tense, before," said Neville. "And then you spent some time with her, and every time I looked over, you were all tangled up with her, and you weren't so scared of things any more, and it's not that I don't want to. She's... she's beautiful. But I can't. I don't want to

just... not with her, you know?"

Draco nodded.

"I s'pose you think you're too good for her," said Macmillan, and it took Draco a moment to realize he was being spoken to. The tone wasn't really hostile, though.

"Me? No," said Draco before he'd really thought about it. "She wouldn't want me, for one thing."

"Have you ever?"

"Ever what?"

"Fucked anyone," said Finnigan.

"No," said Draco before he could think that one over either.

"So it's just you and me as the virgins in this room, is it?" said Neville, and the others chuckled.

"I suppose so," said Draco, and smiled as Neville knocked their goblets together in what he supposed was a silent toast to virginity.

"I hadn't either, before Hannah," said Finnigan. "Thought I'd muck it up, to be honest."

"Did you?" said Thomas, laughing.

"Don't think so. She didn't seem to care, if I did." He sighed. "Still think of her a lot."

"Yeah, I hadn't either," said Thomas. "Didn't know what I was missing. Fuck, she was hot."

"She's a cherry-collector, is what she is," said Goldstein in mock dismay. "Got mine too, the tart."

Macmillan was laughing too now, though also blushing darkly. "Mine too."

"Yeah? Where'd she do you first?" asked Goldstein.

"In the Potions storage room, with Slughorn right outside," said Macmillan, and the others guffawed. "Swear to Merlin, she shoved me up against the shrivelfigs and had my – you know, my trousers down, and her knickers out of the way, and all I could think was, I don't know if eighth-years can get demerit points for doing this – " and then they were all laughing too hard for him to finish.

"She sucked my cock right next to the Transfigurations classroom once," said Goldstein. "The school was still empty, but – "

"Oh God!" said Neville. "Can you imagine McGonagall coming across you like that?"

"I'd never get it up again, sorry," sniggered Thomas.

"Oh yeah, you would, mate," said Goldstein. "If she was doing that thing with her tongue, where she – you know, her, erm – "

"Oh you mean where she – fuck, yeah, I would, then," said Thomas. "You'd have to be dead not to get it up for that. Just about wanked myself raw so fucking many times just to the memory of that..." he shook his head, smiling faintly, then looked down in dismay and put the heel of his hand on his groin, pressing down. "Right. Still gets to me, I guess," he said sheepishly. "Don't tell Susan. Outside of McGonagall's office, though?"

"We did it next to Snape's portrait once," said Finnigan.

"Fuck me!" Goldstein said, spluttering out a mouthful of Firewhisky. "You're joking," he said, wiping his mouth.

"No, mate, I'm serious, if he hadn't been dead already he'd have died. You know he refuses to go into anybody else's portrait, but I swear, I thought his canvas was going to light on fire."

They all broke down again and Draco was gasping with laughter, imagining Snape's sallow face going greenish with dismay. Finnigan smirked but brought his knees up and clasped his arms around them, and Draco could well imagine that despite the Firewhisky, he was also feeling the effects of their conversation. He tried to ignore the effects on himself. Damn it.

"Did he say anything?" asked Draco, more to distract himself than anything else, because if talking about Snape couldn't get rid of an unwanted stiffe, what could?

Finnigan grinned. "Not much, no. He cleared his throat a bunch of times and shouted something like 'Cease this immediately!' but we didn't pay any attention to him. Next time I was able to, you know, look around, he had his head stuck so far down a cauldron all you could see was his skinny arse sticking out. And he was sort of... humming, I guess, because you know how Hannah's kind of loud when she's, you know..."

"Damn. I'm not feeling nearly so noble now,"

said Neville. "If only to make Snape's portrait go into a tizzy, I should've maybe said yes to her..."

"You said no to her?" asked Thomas, his eyes wide. "To *Hannah*?"

Neville blinked. "I. Erm. Yeah."

"Why?"

Neville looked away.

"Why, Neville?" asked Draco, realizing that he really did want to know.

Neville shrugged his shoulders, looking for a moment as nervous and tongue-tied as he ever had when they were kids. He discarded a Five of Shortsnouts. "Dunno. I... I want her for real, I guess. I don't just want to have her. I know she probably can't feel like that about anybody, but I don't care."

Draco nodded slowly.

"Probably how you feel about Astoria, yeah?" asked Goldstein quietly, and Draco felt the words like a splash of cold water.

"Pardon me?" he said icily, but Goldstein didn't turn away, and the rest of them were watching him with knowing eyes.

"You've got a thing for our Head Girl," said Thomas. "But she won't give you the time of day, will she?"

"Dean!" snapped Neville.

"What?" said Thomas, startled.

"This is a pity party for me, right? The bloke whose parents are gonna die after having been completely insane for the whole time I've known them? If you're

going to be an arse, do it somewhere else."

Thomas sat back. "Sorry, Malfoy."

"That's all right," said Draco automatically, feeling hollow.

Him and Neville Longbottom, the only two virgins in the room. But in Neville's case, he'd declined the opportunity to lose his virginity because he was in love with the girl who'd propositioned him. In Draco's case, she'd not only never asked; she never would. The yearning he felt, the need to be close to another human being, to touch Astoria's hand and kiss her lips and feel the breasts concealed under her school robes, the ache to find the kind of release that Goldstein and Finnigan and Thomas and Macmillan and bloody well everyone but Neville and himself had found this year, would go unrelieved.

Draco put down his winning hand of Ridgebacks and took a large gulp of Firewhisky, feeling it sear him all the way down, and relished the burn.



FEBRUARY 1, 2018: PAROLE

"May I come in and see him?" Draco asked Officer Crupkey patiently.

"That would be inadvisable."

What a surprise. Draco went through this with the Azkaban authorities every February, and only four times in the last nineteen years had he been

allowed to see Father at all.

"My mother would very much like to see him."

"That would also be inadvisable." The officer hesitated. "He's... not well."

"Physically or mentally?"

"Mr. Malfoy, your father was not a well man when he came here," said the prison's Healer. "I'm sure he was not well before, which in my opinion explains many of his crimes..."

Father was perfectly well and sane, he just liked to torture people, thought Draco impatiently. He didn't say that out loud, though. "It would mean a great deal to my mother to know when he will be coming home. I know the general plan has been that it would happen sometime in the next two years, but —"

"Mr. Malfoy," Crupkey broke in reluctantly. "I... I'm afraid... I'm afraid there has been a change of plans in that department. We've decided that we probably cannot let him out. He is physically strong enough to do any number of nefarious things, and if his mental status doesn't improve... I'm afraid the only way we can let him out is if he has no magic. I realize that this will be a disappointment to —"

"Do it."

The Healer blinked in confusion. "Do what?"

"If there's a way to remove his magic, and he agrees to it, do it. Please."

The Healer and Officer Crupkey gaped at him in shock.

"Is there a way?"

"Well, yes, of course," the Healer began. "But it's hardly ever — that is to say, I have never done it myself because of the understandable objections of —"

"He will never use magic again, am I correct?" Draco asked, and the two other men blinked. "He cannot use it while in Azkaban, and you are basically saying that he will have to remain in Azkaban for the rest of his life — or at least as long as he still has magic powers. Is that essentially correct?"

"Well. Yes," said Crupkey.

"But, Mr. Malfoy," said the Healer, "if we remove his magic for good... he would essentially be crippled."

"I understand that."

"And you would agree to that?"

"Yes."

"He might not, though. And if he did, what would he do once he got home? How would he care for himself?"

"We have a house elf who could care for him," said Draco.

"But... a house elf..." Crupkey trailed off uneasily.

"They do have certain rights, Mr. Malfoy," said the Healer.

"Yes, they do. And I wouldn't ask her to do this against her wishes, which I'm sure will not be a problem."

"Your father is still fairly strong-willed, though," said the Healer, "and considering his mental instability —"

"We would arrange things so that one of the

elf's orders would be to *not* allow him to take advantage of her, and to report to us any suspicious activity on his part," said Draco. "Besides, she's insane enough herself that she and my father might get along quite well."

The two men glanced at each other, obviously not sure if Draco was speaking seriously or making a joke.

"Erm. Quite." Cruppkey cleared his throat. "However, there is also the question of your father getting in touch with persons who may wish to re-start all of the ugliness of –"

"You've got to be joking," said Draco.

The officer bristled. "You do remember what happened when Stephen Cornfoot was released from prison? He and his colleagues caused quite enough damage before –"

"That was seventeen years ago," Draco pointed out. "My father has been in prison for almost twenty years. He doesn't have it in him to do anything."

"He could still –"

"My father can't do a bloody thing without a wand," said Draco. "He would feel it humiliating to face other wizards wandless. He wouldn't have the guts to try to organize anything with people who might possibly pity him for being crippled."

"You may be right." Cruppkey regarded him for a long time. "Sir, I can see that you've thought about this a fair bit. But I don't want you to take the threat of your father's influence lightly."

"Officer Cruppkey," said Draco, toning down his impatience. "Believe me, I don't. But he will be living with me, without the ability to do magic, and with an elf he has no power over watching his every move. My wife and I have worked too hard to mend the damage he did to allow him to do any more harm. I swear to you – and I will take an Unbreakable Vow if you would like – that I will take the threat he poses very seriously, and that if I suspect in any way that he is trying to stir up any trouble at all, I will personally turn him in."

Cruppkey stared at him.

"I love my father, sir," Draco said simply. "And I want him home, for his sake and for my mother's. But my own wife and son are more important to me. I will not let my father do anything to harm them."

The two men exchanged a glance, then nodded slowly.



FEBRUARY 1, 1999: BRING BACK THE DEMENTORS

Draco suppressed a sigh of boredom and gazed blankly over his notes. Runes, not his favourite subject, but it gave him something to do, anyway. And it beat Muggle Studies.

Goyle sat next to him, the slow scratch of his quill getting on Draco's nerves. Goyle had come back from Azkaban slower, somehow, than before, which Draco would have previously sworn was impossible. Thinner, too, and looking tired all the

time. Somehow Draco had forgotten how completely uninteresting and dull Goyle could be. Not that he wasn't glad Goyle was out of Azkaban, but as far as intellectual companionship, Goyle left a great deal to be desired.

Goyle hadn't said anything about Azkaban. It wasn't really something they could talk about, what with Draco's dad – and Goyle's – being set to stay there for the next thirty years.

He still couldn't really reconcile himself to the fact that his housemates had refused to let Goyle join them at Diggory. Goyle, who was so stupid he still had difficulty tying his own shoes, was no threat to them now that he had nobody around to tell him to hurt others. And they all knew that, though Draco supposed that this week they'd had more reason to congratulate themselves for their decision.

He couldn't shake the image of Ernie Macmillan's tear-filled eyes, though, and the way he'd shivered in Hannah's arms.

He glanced at the wall beside him and noticed a group of scrawled designs. He narrowed his eyes – was that Danish Futhark Runic, or... no, it was English, just badly written...

Death Eater spawn die, miserable fuckers said one messy scrawl. Hope your parents die slowly and painfully said a neater piece near that. Bring back the Dementors and Daddy's never coming home again, you stupid bigoted fucks said the last two.

Fuck.

Who would write that? And why right here? So that anybody could read it, including small children, who, even if they agreed with their parents politically, were too young to form their own opinions?

Draco stared down at his parchment, the words swimming in his brain. *Hope your parents die slowly and painfully.* Father was in Azkaban, and all right, maybe he deserved to not be free any more, but still the idea of Father alone and cold and miserable, Mother alone for the rest of her life, Father dying, in pain... and the amount of hatred that had been behind the scrawled words, and knowing it had been aimed at *him*, and people like him, knowing too what it was to feel that much hatred because he'd been there before, had felt that hatred, for people like Hermione and Hannah and Dean Thomas and Lisa Turpin, and he'd said things that were hateful before, but this was also aimed at innocents – not that Hermione and Hannah and Thomas weren't innocent, but – "Mr. Malfoy!"

Draco started and looked to the front of the classroom. Professor Eddic was frowning at him expectantly.

"Would you care to translate this for us, Mr. Malfoy?" she said, sounding as though she'd said the same thing a few times.

Draco stared at the board behind her. The squiggles meant nothing to him. He made him-

self focus... still nothing. The letters made sense, and one of the words was "forever" and another was "milk" but other than that...

"Mr. Malfoy! Can you please translate this?" the Professor repeated.

"No, Professor," Draco said.

"It's simple. Follow me through again. This," she pointed to the first word, "Sets up the tense, which is future imperfectable. Can you decode the next symbol?"

"No, Professor," said Draco, his jaw set as a titter broke out in the room.

"Let me guide you through, then. It refers to one of the elements, can you figure it out from there?"

"No, Professor."

"It's fairly simple, Mr. Malfoy. Let me —"

"It's ether, Professor," said Anthony Goldstein, and Draco shot him a grateful glance. "The rune is a Possible Prophecy, referring to future uses for ether."

Eddic blinked, then gave Draco a level stare and returned to the board.

Draco blew out his breath. The words on the wall had been written recently, it seemed on closer inspection. And by three different people, to judge from the forms of the letters. It was probably because of the recent expulsion of Anne Carstairs, a sixth-year Slytherin, and Sally Jones, a seventh-year Ravenclaw, who had ended up hexing one another in the Great Hall under the very nose of the entire faculty and student body.

And it hadn't helped that Anne Carstairs was no innocent flower, unfairly attacked just for being a Slytherin: she had been spouting so much anti-Muggle-born hatred that her own housemates had no longer wanted anything to do with her and asked Diggory House to take her in. A perfect case of 'maybe we were wrong'. Plus she'd been suspected in the 'accidental' hexings of many younger students, particularly from Gryffindor House, and you couldn't blame people for being angry about that, but still, targeting this at everybody — even those that deserved it — and showing so much hate and implacable anger and —

Goyle's sharp elbow to the ribs startled him.

"Mr. Malfoy!" Professor Eddic's voice rang out again.

"Yes?"

"This rune, Mr. Malfoy," said the Professor. "Can you do this one for us, at least?"

Draco looked at the scribbles on the board. "No, Professor."

"I'm so sorry for disturbing your sleep, Mr. Malfoy, but let's get some classwork done, shall we?"

"I'm sorry, Professor," said Draco tightly, ignoring the sniggers from the other students.

"Come now, I will lead you through it once more. What does this mean?" she pointed at the board.

Draco crossed his arms. "I don't know, Professor."

"I'm sorry, are we being too mundane for you, Mr. Malfoy? Not intellectually stimulating enough?"

"Sorry, Professor, I wasn't paying attention."

"And why is that?"

"Because somebody wrote 'Death Eater spawn die, miserable fuckers' on the wall and I'm trying to figure out how to get rid of it," he said, and the room froze.

"I... beg your pardon?"

He took out his wand and aimed it at the wall, and muttered "*Reducto Hostili.*" He put his wand down. "I think they made their point, got a Junior Death Eater bothered, let's move on," he said tightly.

There was a moment's awkward silence. "Erm. Very well, then," said the professor, and shakily continued.



FEBRUARY 5, 2018: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Dear Mr. Malfoy:

As per your request, here is a sample of the kinds of questions that may be asked during our interview:

Why did you decide to come back to Hogwarts for eighth year? Would you have done so if it had not been a condition of your parole?

What did you do? You already had seven NEWTs.

What did you think of being forced to take Muggle Studies?

What did you think of the choice of name for the Fifth House? Did you know Cedric Dig-gory personally?

What did you think of the other choices for names considered at the time?

Were you close to any of the other members of the Fifth House before you became housemates?

What was the atmosphere like in the Fifth House when the year began? Were you accepted by your peers?

What did you think of sharing a dormitory with five boys who had been in Dumbledore's Army?

Was there more tension with some than others?

Did it bother you to be in school or in a House with people who had been victimized by your family during the war?

Did it bother you to be in a House with Muggle-borns?

How did you get along with Dean Thomas?

Did you feel the House was integrating well as the year went on?

What did you think of allowing younger students to come into the House?

What did you think of your peers' rejection of Gregory Goyle?

What did you think of Anne and David Carstairs' eventual expulsion from the school?

What did you think of the continuation of the Fifth House past your year?

Did being in the House change your attitudes towards wizarding society? If so, in what way?

What do you think of the current status of Diggory House?

What was the impact of Diggory House on your life?

What contribution do you think you made to Diggory House?



FEBRUARY 5, 1999: ADJUSTMENTS

The place was growing. Little Augustine Cornfoot had dropped out of Hogwarts over the Christmas hols, but the extra dormitories had three first-year girls in one room and four first-year boys in another, as well as ten boys and eleven girls from other years who were staying at Diggory mostly permanently. Some were younger family members of people who had become infamous during the war. Some, mostly Slytherins, had been guilty of crimes during the war. Some had merely been guilty of talking at the wrong time and expressing the wrong sentiments. The residents of Diggory House had gone from a preponderance of anti-Dark Lord types to a distinct majority of Slytherins and other like-minded students. And many Slytherins were using the Diggory common room to study in, knowing they wouldn't

be attacked there.

It wasn't that simple, though. Two of the new girls were from families pure as the driven snow, friends with Theresa Nott, cousin of Theo Nott. When Theresa had been attacked and decided to move into Diggory House, her friends had asked if they could move with her. And it was possible that they would be joined in the next month by two members of eighth year who had decided to come back and do their NEWTs after all.

It was interesting. They'd all had to make adjustments.

They now even had a second floor. One of the rooms they'd appropriated on the other side of the common room wall had eventually become part of the common room itself, once they'd taken over a seldom-used classroom directly above them and filled it with girls' dormitories and an extra washroom, with a rotating staircase to take the younger girls up, and a pole they could use to slide back down.

Diggory House had even ended up getting Prefects after all — Neville and Hannah — mostly to make sure no funny business was going on among the boys and girls of dating age. The irony of Hannah Abbott acting as chaperone protecting any other girl's virtue was rather hilarious, considering her complete disregard for her own.

Draco wasn't about to judge her, though. He made his way past a group of kids playing Exploding Snap next to the fireplace and a girl sorting

new additions to their common room bookshelf, and found a comfortable – though, unfortunately, frill-covered – seat to read his Muggle Studies, plowing through steadily and determined to get to through both his readings and his six-inch assignment so he could look at Astronomy.

Ten minutes into the writing, he put down his parchment with a sigh. He was never going to get the hang of this ballpoint pen thing. It didn't have the same beauty and elegance as a quill, not to mention it was ugly as sin. But he was supposed to write the assignment using it, so...

"Why are you using that?" asked one of the younger boys, maybe thirteen years old.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I don't like Muggle pens," said the boy, wrinkling his nose. "Why are you using one?"

"I have to write this paper using one," said Draco.

"Muggle Studies?"

"Yes."

"Brilliant, isn't it?" said the boy, revealing a gap-toothed grin. "I didn't know much about Muggles, but their internet is brilliant. Wish we could see it here."

"Electricity is too weak to function around magic," said Draco.

"I know, I know, I just wish it wasn't. Don't you?"

Draco debated the merits of lying versus telling the truth to a very young boy. "Not really," he said finally. "The Muggle things I've seen aren't

as familiar to me as the wizarding ones."

The boy nodded.

"They're also not as pretty, some of them," said a little girl, popping her head over Draco's shoulder. "Like ballpoint pens. If you want nice Muggle things, you should try something like this," she said, and took out a blue pen.

"What is that?" asked Draco.

"Muggle fountain pen," she said proudly. "It's ink, just like a quill, but it holds the ink inside."

"Like a self-inking quill?"

"Sort of. Here, try it," she said.

Draco found himself holding the little thing, then bemusedly using it. His eyebrows went up. "That's not bad," he said, surprised. "It's fairly smooth."

"I know. My mum gave it to me." She hesitated, then lifted her chin slightly. "She's Muggle-born, you see. She has lots of brilliant Muggle things at home."

Draco nodded.

"You can use it to write your paper, if you want," the little girl said.

Draco hesitated, then shrugged. "All right. Thanks."

"Give it back when you're done, though. It was from my mum."

"I will."



FEBRUARY 14, 2018: FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR
MALFOY INVESTMENTS

Dear Mr. Malfoy:
 Enclosed please find Malfoy Investments' financial statement summary for February 2018.

Asset	Dec. 2017 Value	Earnings	Losses/ Expenditures	Jan. 2018 Net Change
Anderson's Garden Services Shares	1000	80	0	80
Bones Telecommunications Shares	8500	520	(20)	500
Borgin and Burkes Shares	820	25	0	25
Creevey Photography Shares	900	95	(20)	75
Ellemere Robes for All Occasions Shares	350	50	(55)	(5)
Gladrags Shares	230	43	0	43
Macmillan Magical Matchmakers Shares	700	125	(5)	120
Mortiana Potions Ltd Shares	8900	330	(80)	250
Muggle Fashions Ltd Shares	5300	320	0	320
Nott Notions Ltd Shares	710	15	(5)	10
Ogden's Whiskies Share	12900	750	0	750
The Leaky Cauldron Shares	2200	120	(20)	100

Asset	Dec. 2017 Value	Earnings	Losses/ Expenditures	Jan. 2018 Net Change
Transformations Unlimited Shares	9700	330	0	330
Totals	40990	2083	165	1923

Jan. 2018, Expense	Type	Expenditures
DAGM Marketing and Research Salaries and Wages	Business Expense	500
Diggory House Advertising	Charity	20
Diggory House Maintenance	Charity	25
Diggory House Scholarship	Charity	30
Hogsmeade Student Services	Charity	25
Flint Fuels	Loan	120
Habitats Unlimited	Charity	30
Hogsmeade Student Services	Loan	20
Hogwarts Finch-Fletchley Scholarship	Charity	30
St. Mungo's Permanent Resident Fund	Charity	35
Trust fund, Scorpius Malfoy	Personal	50
Widows and Orphans Association	Charity	50
Total:		935



FEBRUARY 14, 1999: SLYTHERIN HEAD GIRL

The Valentine's dance was going fairly well, to Draco's surprise. He had ended up asking Millie

to dance, and then forcing himself to get past his instinctive revulsion and ask Hermione, and it hadn't gone too badly. And then, to his shock, Hannah Abbott had come up behind him and asked him to dance. He'd been almost frozen with terror, wondering if she was going to try anything funny with him and wondering if he would be able to stomach not just touching a Muggle-born, but having to deal with her sexually in any way, shape, or form, and it crossed his mind that if she did try anything and he turned her down, the other boys in his dorm would quite likely kill him. It hadn't helped at all that at that precise moment he'd looked up and spotted Finnigan, Thomas, and Macmillan all standing at the edge of the dance floor with arms crossed and set expressions on their faces, staring at him as if daring him to make even the slightest misstep with Hannah, and give them a reason to hex him on the spot.

It had been with extreme relief that he'd thanked Hannah for the dance once it had ended with no untoward advances or hexes thrown in his direction. She'd smiled at him quite prettily before skipping off to dance with a seventh-year, and Draco had left the dance floor almost giddy with relief.

And that was probably enough stress on his nerves for one night. He made his way up the stairs, stopping as he spotted Astoria standing by herself on the landing, gazing down at the couples below.

She looked gorgeous. Objectively he knew she wasn't more than just passably pretty, but in the cream-coloured dress she was wearing, which somehow brought out the highlights in her unremarkable brown hair, the skirt flaring a bit and the waist cinched in showing off her shape far more than the severe school uniform did, she looked like everything Draco had ever wanted...

He shook himself. What ridiculous and sentimental drivel.

Draco approached her, stopping a few feet away from her as he took in the tense set of her shoulders, the tired air about her. "Are you all right?" Astoria looked at him, startled. "Why are you here?"

"Because I'm the Head Girl."

"Why aren't you down there dancing?"

"Because I'm the Head Girl," she repeated impatiently.

Draco blinked. "What does that have to do with it?"

"There are two couples who've asked me to act as go-between tonight," she said. "Hannah Abbott is going to get drunk and make a fool of herself if I'm not there to stop her. Two third-year girls just broke up with their boyfriends and they need me to soothe away their heartbreak. And I need to make sure Scott Jones and David Carstairs don't murder each other."

"Why is all of that your problem?" asked Draco.

"Because I'm Head Girl."

"That doesn't mean you have to take on the

problems of the entire school."

"I took on this responsibility and I'm going to be the best Head Girl Hogwarts has ever had," she said grimly. "And to do that, I have to be perfect. All the time."

"Who told you that?"

Astoria ignored his question. "Do you know how many Slytherin students have been Head Girl?"

Draco blinked. "I don't know. About as many as have been Headmaster or Headmistress?"

Astoria smiled, unexpectedly. "Ah, not quite. There's only been two Slytherin Headmasters."

"And a lot of people say Snape shouldn't count," said Draco. "So there have been more than two Slytherin Head Girls?"

"In a thousand years, you'd think, what with being so bloody ambitious, more than a fourth of the Head Girls would be Slytherins, right?"

"And were they?"

"No. Try eighteen percent."

Draco shrugged. "Close enough."

"We're *ambitious*, Draco."

"Well maybe most of them felt there were other things to be ambitious about, and by the time they got to seventh year they were off doing those things, not holding little children's hands."

Astoria glared at him.

"Not that that's all you've done this year," he said, backtracking hastily. "You've had a harder

job than most, and you've done it very well. I'm just saying maybe the reason Slytherins aren't appointed is that they're not looking to be. It doesn't have to be prejudice."

"I didn't want this position, you know," said Astoria abruptly.

Draco blinked at the non sequitur. "What?"

"I didn't want the position. I was sick of everything that happened in the school last year, and I wanted to just sail through this year without worrying about anything other than my grades and my friends."

Draco was baffled. "Why on earth did you become Head Girl, then?"

"McGonagall asked me to."

"Why didn't you tell her to sod off?"

"She told me I had to help build bridges. She said she thought I could do it, and Snape thought highly of me..."

Draco tried to remember anything about Astoria Greengrass before this year and came up completely blank. Snape thought highly of what? Being a non-entity?

"I was good at Transfigurations, and Potions," Astoria was saying. "And I kept my head down and didn't get involved in any of the political stuff going on in Slytherin."

Sounded about right. Though why Snape and McGonagall had thought this was a good thing

was rather beyond Draco.

"So McGonagall told me she needed me, and the Slytherins needed me. Told me Ginny Weasley had done her bit, and I hadn't."

Draco's eyebrows went up.

"Slughorn didn't think much of me when I was his student, though I was good enough at Potions. He's been a lot friendlier this year, surprise, surprise."

Draco nodded cautiously. Astoria's thought processes were leaving him feeling off-balance and befuddled, but for some reason he was unwilling to just leave her and go spend time with... well, maybe that was why he didn't want to leave her. He had nowhere better to be.

"I felt like I had to do it. And then there were my parents, telling me I had to... and I wanted to do something good."

"You have," said Draco.

"Have I?"

Draco scowled. "Don't give me that. You know you have. Don't you?"

"I've helped some kids stay in school. I've helped the school carry on, I've mended some fences. I've helped Diggory House, and I've been a spokesperson for the Slytherins."

"That's not enough for you?"

"Eighteen kids have left anyway," she said bleakly. "Despite everything I've done. Goyle didn't even last a month. And I'm going to fail

my NEWTs, all of them. Even Transfigurations and Potions. And..." she looked over the dancing students. "And I'm here, while I want to be there," she said, her voice dropping to an anguished whisper.

Draco was stunned.

"I don't want to be the responsible Head Girl any more. I want to have fun, gossip with my friends... but I don't have any, not any more," she said, her words tumbling out faster and faster. "I feel like I've lost the last chance I had to be a child. And... it wasn't worth it!"

"Astoria..." Draco felt helpless. Bugger, whenever Pansy got upset, he could joke around and make her feel better, or snog her, or make an excuse to get away from her. With Astoria... he didn't know what to do.

He didn't know this lonely girl. He'd only seen what she wanted him to see of her. He'd seen the calm, controlled, focused, ruthless politician. He'd never guessed that behind that was a young girl who had grown up too fast, just as he had, and now regretted it.

He hung motionless for a long moment, as Astoria looked out at the crowd bleakly, and there was nothing he could do to help. If she hadn't rejected him so logically and thoroughly he might have reached out for her, pulled her close, not because he wanted to feel her warm body against his, but because he wanted to make her feel better. But after what she'd just said, all she'd sacrificed, he

could hardly put her family's good name in more trouble by taking her into his arms and risking anybody seeing them together.

He bit his lip and stayed next to her.

"Is there anything I can do?" he finally asked hesitantly.

She glanced at him. "No, you've been very helpful this year," she said, and her voice, though a bit shaky, was closer to her usual calm control.

Draco shook his head. "That's not... I mean right now. Is there anything I can do right now?"

Astoria turned to him, an eyebrow raised, and studied him thoughtfully. "No. But thank you."

"For what?"

"For asking," she said, and put a hand on his arm briefly. "Excuse me, I have to go see Professor Slughorn. I promised him a dance."



MARCH 1, 2018: THIS IS MY MUM AND DAD

"Look, they may not even be there," said Astoria, brushing her hair at the mirror. "The Potters certainly won't; they had nothing to do with Diggory House. And who knows, Ron may be busy as well." She tsk'd at him as she met his eyes in the mirror. "I swear, Scorpius wasn't this recalcitrant when he was a toddler."

"He was," said Draco, doing up his cufflinks. "If you wanted to get him to do something he really,

really didn't want to do."

"You agreed to be involved," said Astoria. "And you should be setting a good example for him." She set the brush down and murmured a spell to keep her hair out of her face while still allowing it to flow down loosely in a smooth chestnut mass.

"Well he's not here now, is he?" asked Draco, admiring the effect.

Astoria turned. "You will behave when we get there, won't you?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "Yes. Of course." He finished straightening his tie, drew his cloak around himself, and took Astoria's arm.

They Apparated outside the gates of Hogwarts and were soon ushered into a Great Hall bustling with people of all ages. Draco glanced around curiously, pleased that the Hall didn't look crowded despite having all four tables filled, the teacher's table, and the Diggory table expanded to fit almost seventy people, including the current group of Diggorys.

Somehow, even after all this time, it never seemed quite right to use Diggory's name the way one used Slytherin's, Gryffindor's, Ravenclaw's and Hufflepuff's. Salazar, Godric, Rowena and Helga had been dead over a thousand years; Cedric less than thirty. Draco could still remember the boy, still picture him smiling and serious and confident and scared and triumphant and dead. When

he'd been in eighth year, he and his housemates had been called the "members of Diggory House." Not "Diggorys", as if they were clones of Cedric.

The people holding the name now had never had a chance to know him at all. There were twelve of them this year, and the only one who had even been alive before Cedric Diggory died had come from New Zealand.

Draco and Astoria approached the Diggory table, and Astoria smiled warmly at Hermione as she spotted her.

"Hermione! I'm so glad to see you here!" she said, and they hugged.

"It's exciting, isn't it?" said Hermione. "Hello, Draco," she said happily, and gave Draco a peck on the cheek. "It's so wonderful that you're here. I did tell you we'd win in the end, didn't I?"

Draco rolled his eyes, but couldn't help smiling back at her. "Yes, you did. You were right."

Hermione's eyebrows went up. "I'm... not sure I heard you right," she said. "Sorry, could you say that a little louder?"

"You were right," he repeated patiently.

"I'm going to have to write that in my calendar," she said to Astoria, who laughed. "Oh, Ron," she said, and stepped aside. "See, I told you Draco and Astoria would come."

Weasley gave Astoria a polite smile, and Draco a forced one.

"Good to see you," he said, and somehow managed to direct his words at Astoria only.

"Likewise," she said. "Have you gone to see the kids yet?" She looked in the direction of the Ravenclaw table, but it was impossible to see anybody through the crowd.

"No, we just got here," said Hermione. "I'd like to see Rose before the speeches start, though. I must admit I probably wouldn't be here if it weren't for the opportunity to see her." She smiled at Draco and Astoria. "Shall we go, then?"

Draco found himself exchanging a mildly annoyed look with Weasley, because yes, of course he wanted to visit with his son. And he had no objection to meeting Scorpius' little friend Rose. But having Rose's father right there...

He was struck by the thought that Weasley was probably thinking the exact same thing.

They made their way through the crowd milling about the Diggory table, and Draco quickly spotted his son's white-blond hair, right next to a fiery bushy head that could only belong to Rose Weasley. Both were beaming at their parents, hardly able to sit still, and Draco felt his own face break into a grin that only his son's bright smile could provoke.

As they passed the Gryffindor table and Draco suddenly recognized Albus Potter, Harry and Ginny's son, talking animatedly with some other boys and moving his hands around – most probably

recounting some mad Quidditch move. He really was a younger version of his father, thought Draco. He hadn't really noticed it at King's Cross last September, but the resemblance was uncanny. Much like the resemblance between himself and Scorpius. And thank God Scorpius had no use whatsoever for Albus Potter. Not only was he a Gryffindor and "therefore probably too thick to do up his own shirt buttons" according to Scorpius, but he was obsessed with Potions and Quidditch and had no use for anything Scorpius was interested in.

His son and Potter's, who could have carried on the childhood rivalry between the two of them into the next generation if they had chosen to, not only had no hatred for each other; they didn't even register one another's presence.

"Rose!" cried out Hermione, and hugged her daughter close for a moment before Weasley picked them both up, sweeping them around in a circle and making them both laugh and Hermione protest, "Ron! Put me down! For heaven's sake!"

Draco shook Scorpius' hand warmly, and both of them ignored Astoria's discreet wiping of her eyes. Scorpius was jiggling with excitement and despite the lack of decorum Draco couldn't help grinning at his enthusiasm.

"Did you see the Diggory table?" said Scorpius. "It's huge! I didn't know there were so many of you!"

"Well it does also include spouses —" Draco began.

"Father! This is Rose!" interrupted Scorpius, obviously not interested. "And this is Patsy! And this is Wendy! And this is Philip! This is my mum and dad!"

"Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy," came a chorus of children's voices, and Draco smiled at their open, friendly faces.

"But you already know Patsy from Christmas," said Scorpius. "Did Tiggy come tonight?"

"No, she couldn't," said Draco. "She's not feeling well right now. She did ask us to bring you this, though." He pulled out a box of home-made Honey Ducks, their quiet quacking hardly noticeable in the din of the huge, crowded room.

"Brilliant!" Scorpius said, and turned to his friends. "I'll share them when we get back to the dorm, yeah?"

"Ladies and gentlemen," the Headmaster's voice amplified floated over the large room, "if you can all take your seats, we shall begin our dinner."

"We'll see you after dinner, Scorpius," said Astoria, and the four of them headed back to their table.



MARCH 1, 1999: WHICH BROTHER IS THAT, DRACO?

Draco wrinkled his nose in distaste. Grang — *Hermione* was glowing and he was, he supposed, glad for her sake that Weasley had come to visit her on his birthday, but he couldn't help feel-

ing impatient and eager for the visit to end. He glanced at his watch and sighed. Supposedly Weasley and Hermione would be going to Hogsmeade for a birthday date after dinner, but dinner time was far, far away and until then Weasley looked good to stay put, his arse firmly planted on the maroon loveseat that had been Diggory House's latest acquisition, with an uncharacteristically giggling Hermione on his lap. Around them, the other former Gryffindor boys were sitting and reminiscing about old times, asking Weasley about Auror training, some of the younger students were staring at Weasley in fascination, and Draco wanted nothing more than to escape to the library. Except that Astoria was here, and he hadn't seen her much lately. And she didn't look like she was going to clear off any time soon either as she listened in what looked like rapt attention to Weasley's story about the centaur and the banshee that the Auror Trainees had been sent to practice with – and who had apparently accidentally damaged Potter. Which was probably the first time Draco had felt anything like sympathy towards either species.

Draco didn't mind not really being part of the group. He'd only exchanged a handful of words with Weasley when Weasley had arrived and said "So, you're staying here too, then?" with awkward politeness.

"Yes," Draco had said.

"D'you like it?"

"It's all right," Draco had said.

Weasley was older now, Draco realized. Not that all of them weren't, but Weasley was out there doing things, getting on with grown-up life, for all that he was studying too. And he was serious, now. A lot more serious than he had been in school. Draco watched the faces of the people around them, comparing what he remembered to what he saw now.

They'd all aged. Sometime during the year that Thomas was on the run, then imprisoned, then hiding with the Order, he'd grown up. Neville, Goldstein, Finnigan, Ernie – they'd all endured torture and risked their lives and fought and come out men, not boys. Hermione too, was no longer a schoolgirl. She might be a student, but she was a woman who had endured and accomplished the almost impossible, and when he saw her and Weasley together, so happy to be together and acting silly, it made him wonder when he had lost his own childhood and if the change had been as visible on him as it was on the Gryffindors.

He turned to his Muggle Studies homework, plunging into the nigh-incomprehensible morass of Muggle politics. He had learned that the Muggle's equivalent of Minister For Magic was called a Prime Minister, the current one was named

Tony Blair, the only female one had been Margery Thatcher, and the Muggle Wizengamot consisted of parties, which were a bit like Houses, but for adults. And they Sorted themselves, apparently. And although he'd read up on all of them, and memorized the most popular ones, and had decided Labour was the closest to Hufflepuff he could see, for the life of him he could not figure out which of the Conservative and Liberal Democrats was Gryffindor and which was Ravenclaw. Or why on earth any self-respecting wizard would need to know *any* of this.

He was musing on a few unfortunate similarities between the British National Party and Slytherin House when a general rustle of movement broke his concentration.

"All right, then, let's go," Weasley was saying, and the other older students stood up too.

"Draco, are you coming to the Great Hall?" said Hermione.

"What?" Weasley turned to her, baffled. "Why would you ask Malf –"

"The invitation was for all of Diggory House, Ron, remember?" Hermione said through a slightly strained smile. "*Draco* is part of that."

"No, that's all right," said Draco hastily. "I have... I have a paper to write for Mug – I mean, for Arithmancy."

Weasley looked relieved, though probably

not nearly as Draco was himself. He paused for a moment, watching the others get ready to go, then made himself approach Weasley and speak to him as the others bustled about.

"Weasley," he said, his voice low, "I... I never told you, by the way." Draco took a deep breath. "I'm sorry about your brother."

Weasley's eyes widened slightly, then narrowed and his lips pressed together. "Really?" he said, and his voice was loud enough that the others looked towards them. "Which brother is that, Draco? The one in the ground? Or the one whose face looks like mincemeat?" Draco blinked, startled, and Hermione's mouth fell into an O and she covered it with one hand. "Or is it the one who spent Christmas on the suicide ward, and then got to read all about it in the papers when he came out?" Draco stepped back, not sure whether Weasley was about to punch him or not, but Weasley was strangely calm. "Oh, sorry, that's old news. You must have read the new stories from your friend Skeeter – d'you mean the one who feels so guilty about leaving the family that he's developed a bit of an alcohol problem, and can't get a job to save his life? Or the one who's too scared to go near a dragon now and is working at Gringott's and living at home again?"

"Those stories were true?" Draco asked stupidly, and Weasley sneered at him.

"Bloody hell, Weasley," said Astoria. "I hadn't even heard about the drinking thing." Weasley looked at her, startled. Her face reflected pity, and profound distaste. "Skeeter was all over that one, was she?"

"Yeah. Surprised you didn't read it."

Astoria's lip curled. "After reading the tripe she wrote about Dumbledore? Not that I was the man's biggest fan, sorry to say, but that rubbish was only good for –"

"You didn't like Dumbledore?"

Astoria looked uncomfortable. "I... sorry. Don't mean to speak ill of the dead."

Weasley gazed at her thoughtfully. "No, I don't suppose Slytherins would be that appreciative of him."

"It wasn't really a Slytherin thing... not really." She cleared her throat. "He was very powerful, though. And he meant to do good. I think it's... overly high expectations. And it's easy to feel resentment towards him. Forget it."

Weasley nodded slowly.

"And your brother Charlie, he can't work with dragons any more?"

"No," said Weasley.

"God, that's terrible. He was amazing."

"How do you know what Charlie was like?"

"Our cousin Elenora... had a sort of a crush on your brother," she said, embarrassed.

"A crush on a Gryffindor?"

"Are you joking? Charlie Weasley, the Quidditch

captain who went to work with dragons. It's not that hard to believe. He really can't do that any more?"

Weasley shook his head. "He could, but... he was hit with a fire hex during the battle. Not Fiendfyre, but close. And he saw two Death Eaters get incinerated in front of him. He's afraid of fire, now. Plus he'd be away from the family, and..." he closed his mouth. "And it's private," he said, his eyes narrowing in suspicion.

"Right. Yeah. Sorry," said Astoria quickly. "I didn't mean to... right, I'll shut up now." She cleared her throat awkwardly. "I just... I only wanted to say I'm sorry."

She turned and left, leaving Weasley staring after her.



MARCH 1, 2018: GRIT AND DETERMINATION

The speeches were over, the visits were done, and the children had gone to bed still buzzing with excitement. It had been wonderful meeting Scorpius' friends and seeing that although he wasn't hugely popular (a little too jittery, apparently) he had found at least some other children who seemed to understand and appreciate him.

Less wonderful had been spotting the signs of subtle disapproval that Scorpius didn't notice. Some of the older students at the Ravenclaw table, who nudged and whispered to each other when

they saw Draco and Astoria. Some of the other former members of Diggory House, who had also come in order to visit with their children, who'd nodded coolly at Draco, then looked with distrust at Scorpius and whispered to their children things Draco didn't want to imagine.

Raising a child in the wizarding world was such a tricky thing. Until age eleven, most were home schooled and never exposed to anybody their parents found objectionable in any way... and then they were suddenly thrown into a foreign environment and expected to sink or swim among people their parents had never even met.

He and Astoria had raised Scorpius to be happy and secure and free of prejudice. They had carefully kept him away from anybody who might have taught him the bigotry that both of their families had espoused for generations. Draco still had to suppress the instinctive revulsion against Muggles and Muggle-borns that he'd been raised with, no matter how much he respected, admired, and even cared about various Muggle-borns and, by extension, their families. He had vowed that Scorpius would be exposed to none of that. He had even refused to allow Narcissa to be around him when he had overheard her making disparaging remarks about Muggle-borns near Scorpius, until she had promised to never do so again. And they had explained to him that both of their

families had espoused some objectionable beliefs, that some people still resented them for that, and that that resentment was not Scorpius' fault.

And then they'd sent him here.

Draco sat alone at the Ravenclaw table, nursing a Butterbeer, and gazed out over the Great Hall, where small knots of people here and there were getting ready to go. Not all the members of his year at Diggory had shown up; only himself, Hermione, Neville of course (sitting at the Diggory table and not the teachers' table, to his students' amusement), Hannah, Millicent, and Ernie. The rest were from other years. There were so many of them...

And so many of them still didn't trust him. His own housemates. There was still that slight chill in the air when they spoke to him.

"Glad we came?" asked Astoria, breaking into his reverie and sitting down near him.

"It was nice to see Scorpius," said Draco.

"It was nice," said Hermione, sitting down as well. "And I'm sure there'll be some good press for Diggory House. Did you notice the PROPHET photographer?"

"It was just a small dinner celebration," said Draco. "Besides, the larger story has already been over-hyped."

Weasley snorted, joining them and putting an arm around Hermione, who leaned back against him. "Couldn't *not* be over-hyped," he said. "A former Slytherin made Minister For Magic?"

That's the first time in... well, since before Voldemort, that's certain."

"Since 1956," Draco informed him. "Slytherins prefer to be the power behind the throne. Besides, you'll notice she chose to do her inaugural dinner here, and like *this*," he waved a hand at the Great Hall. "Nicely done. Homey, familiar, and surrounded by children. And no doubt hoping to make people identify her more with Diggory House than Slytherin."

"Whyever she did it, it's good press for Diggory," said Hermione. "People are already very excited about the museum exhibit. And the book."

"As excited as anyone can be over a museum," said Draco.

"Didn't you see the advert in THE PROPHECY? It's being hailed as a tribute to 'how the wizarding world not only healed its wounds, but came together to build a shining future, united in peace.'"

"Ugh," Draco grimaced. "A Hufflepuff came up with that slogan."

"That doesn't make it less true," said Astoria.

"And it's due in part to you," said Hermione.

Draco rolled his eyes.

"It is." Astoria shook her head. "We helped build this. What we did mattered. We didn't build it through political intrigue and power games. We did it on grit and determination and accepting that we were wrong. Apologizing and atoning.

That's what mattered. That we went forward, instead of back. Why can't you value that?"

"It's just a House," said Draco.

"The Fifth House, Draco. Do you know how many important wizards and witches now are former members of your House?"

"Well obviously the new Minister For Magic," said Draco. "And the Headmaster, which is why he let this happen here."

"And that's an accomplishment to be proud of," said Hermione earnestly. "Because all the holding hands in the world would not have mattered a damn if you hadn't been there too. If the old money had just sat and sulked, or fled to wherever and started their pureblooded shit somewhere else."

"Some did," Draco pointed out.

"A lot didn't," said Weasley. "Because of you."

Draco blinked.

"Because you helped them see they could still be part of a school, or a House, or society in general," said Hermione. "And you should be proud of what you've done." She paused. "Speaking of which, have you done your interview yet?"

"No. Doing it in a few weeks."

"I'm so glad. It wouldn't be the full story without you."



MARCH 1, 1999: YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BE PERFECT

Astoria walked out of the common room, and

hurried down the corridor. Draco went after her.

"Astoria! Wait!"

"What?" she said, turning around.

"Are you all right?"

She scowled at him. "I just told Ron Weasley, one of the heroes of the war, that Saint Dumbledore was an idiot. Do you think I'm all right? Why the *fuck* did I do that?"

"Because he was?"

Astoria gave him an impatient look. "I know better than that!" she raged at herself. "What is the matter with me?"

"You're tired of saying everything they believe is right."

"But I believe it –"

"Not all of it. Dumbledore may have been a great wizard but he was also barmy as a bat and you shouldn't be scared to say so."

"Oh, grow up and live in the real world, Draco!" Astoria shouted at him. "People like us cannot afford that type of attitude!"

"I thought you were being pretty diplomatic, to be honest," he said.

"I wasn't," she snapped. "I let down my guard, and I shouldn't have."

"You don't have to keep your guard up all the time!" he shot back. "You can't always be perfect!"

"I have to be! I told you that!"

"And that's rubbish!"

"People are looking at me, Draco! They watch me for every misstep –"

"Get over yourself! People don't care that much!"

"Oh really? I should take my cue from you, then? The school pariah whose own House doesn't want him?"

Draco stepped back, literally speechless for a moment.

Astoria covered her mouth with her hand in horror. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I... I didn't mean that."

"Yes, you did," he said.

"I didn't – that was true before, but not now, you know you have friends in your House –" she reached out for him and he stepped back.

"Get away from me," he said coldly. He turned on his heel and started to leave. No idea where he was going, really, only that he wanted it to be far away from her.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" she said, and there were sobs between her words. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't... I'm sorry."

Draco stopped and turned around. Tears were streaming down her face, and she was staring at the ground. "You're... you're the only person I don't have to watch myself around," she said. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to..."

He hesitated, then slowly made his way back to her, and glanced down the corridor. Nobody there. He reached out to her and she came into his arms, and tried to stifle her sobs. He patted her back awkwardly, and wondered how he could help at

all. She'd been holding in so much all year, and it was starting to show. She'd driven herself harder than anybody should, and...

He held her, not knowing whether what he was doing was any help at all.

Finally she sniffled, getting control of herself once more. "I'm sorry," she repeated quietly.

"It's all right," he said. And didn't know what else to say.

She looked up at him, and then as if it was the most natural thing in the world, he wiped away her tears. And she smiled hesitantly, then glanced down at his lips.

The atmosphere suddenly felt very, very different. And then, without a warning, she kissed him.



APRIL 3, 2018: DEAR FATHER

Dear Father:

Thank you for your letter of last week. It's always good to hear from you.

We're doing fairly well so far this year. Scorpius is doing relatively well at school. In answer to your question, yes, in addition to getting good marks he has also made many good friends in Ravenclaw, among them Wendy Nott, Filomena Carewe, Rose Weasley, Jonathan

Eddings, and Patsy Nicholson. No, we don't know why he mostly has friends among the girls. He has reported two incidents of unpleasantness due to his family name, but seems to be genuinely enjoying his year so far, and is mostly unconcerned with the two incidents.

Mother has been in poor health this year but it has mostly consisted of minor illnesses, nothing alarming. She is quite pleased to think that you will be home by next year. Thank you, again, for agreeing to the procedure suggested by the Healer.

Astoria and I are keeping busy. The family investments take up a great deal of my time, and Astoria continues to do work with various charities. We do not have a terribly full social life, but are content with our hobbies. Astoria has taken up Charmed Needlework, and I have been redesigning the hedges with the help of Anderson's Garden Services. You recall I invested in them when Anderson left Hogwarts a few years ago and began his business. He has now grown quite profitable, was featured in Beautiful Home Witchcraft Magazine last month, and wished to thank me for my help by doing

all of our gardens for free.

*We look forward to your next letter, and to
having you home next year.*

Yours,

Draco



APRIL 3, 1999: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

"All I know is if Hannah doesn't take care, she's going to get hurt," Astoria was saying in the corridor one day as she and Draco headed for the Great Hall. "Devlin Pierce is dangerous, Draco. You know how he ranted about Muggle-borns last year. And now he's sniffing her out like a dog in heat. It's frightening."

"He could've changed his mind," said Draco without much confidence.

Astoria shook her head. "He hasn't. He's sick, Draco. The only reason he didn't end up in Azkaban too was that he was only fifteen. But he's sixteen now, he's angry and he's bitter and he's heard that Hannah'll give it up for anything with a prick and he's... he's almost stalking her. And he's got nothing at all to lose. His family's all already in Azkaban, both parents and his older sister, he's failing all of his courses..."

Draco shuddered. Pretty, trusting, reckless, slutty little Hannah Abbott, in the hands of Devlin

Pierce, was an alarming thought. He absently stepped aside for one of the more belligerent fourth-year Hufflepuffs, Bruce Hexley, who'd grown gangly and awkward and righteously violent since the war, and had already sent five students – all Slytherins – to the Hospital with serious "accidental" injuries. Draco had no desire to become yet another victim. The boy looked up at him and sneered as he passed, spotted Astoria behind him, and gave them both a look of suspicion and undisguised malice.

Merlin, it was always a bit of a kick in the bollocks when he saw that kind of thing and realized just how wise it was for Astoria to insist on discretion in their relationship. She got enough hatred just for hanging about him as a friend; what would people like Hexley do if she were openly dating him?

He brought his attention back to Astoria and Devlin Pierce. "Have you thought of talking to Hannah?"

"I don't know how. She... she's almost compulsive about this. I think part of her almost *wants* one of these boys to hurt her. I'd be afraid of encouraging her."

"Maybe I can talk to the other boys in my dorm," he said, musing aloud. "I think they'd all be willing to try to keep an eye on her, make sure she's always safe –" and he broke off as he was shoved from behind and stumbled a few paces, whipping

around with his wand in his hand.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?" Bruce Hexley, the belligerent Hufflepuff, was yelling at a scared little Slytherin girl, waving his wand wildly. The little girl ducked her head, bringing her arms over her head and cringing, and suddenly Draco had had enough.

"What the *fuck* is the matter with you?" he snapped, grabbed Hexley's wand out of his hand, and snapped it in half.

A horrified silence fell upon the crowd. Everyone was gaping at him, and he couldn't quite believe what he'd done, but his heart was still beating triple-time and fury was coursing through him.

"What the hell?" said one of Hexley's friends.

"How could you –" began another.

"Because he's a bloody menace!" Draco said angrily. "He's been in and out of the Headmistress's office all bloody year –"

"It's accidental, it's just magic discontrol –" said another little snot-faced Hufflepuff.

"No it's not! He's a manipulative, lying little shit, and he doesn't deserve to be here."

"Takes one to know one, Malfoy!" sneered a fifth-year boy. "You don't know a bloody thing about what the rest of us went through during the war, you've no right to judge –"

"Yeah, maybe, but you don't see me hexing anybody, do you? Hexley's suffered, has he? Look at

some of the kids in Slytherin one of these days. They've suffered too. Hell, look at Longbottom one of these days, or Finnigan, or Hannah!"

"People react in different ways to trauma –" an older girl began.

"And Hexley's way of reacting is traumatizing more people. We shouldn't just leave him to it. If he were attacking anybody but Slytherins he'd have had his wand snapped in half months ago!"

"You bastard," Hexley said weakly, still gaping at his wand pieces, lying on the floor.

"Hexley, if the Headmistress says you should have your wand back, I will personally pay for it. In fact, I will personally give you the money right now –" he paused, and figured it out, "Ten Galleons, it'll buy you the finest wand anyone can have, but it's not going to do you a damn bit of good because you can't handle it!"

"It's not about money!" said Hexley.

"You're bloody well right it's not about money," said Astoria heatedly. "It's about safety and not continuing the hell that went on here last year!"

"You're defending him?"

"Absolutely," she said, and drew close to Draco, taking his hand in hers.

There was a collective gasp.

"Right. We have to go to the Headmistress with this, don't we?" she said crisply. "Who can be neutral here?"

"What?" said one of the Slytherin girl's friends. "We need to go to the Headmistress," said Astoria, her hand still clutching Draco's, so tightly it was starting to cut off circulation. "We'll need witnesses to what happened, and I need somebody who cannot be considered to be biased to gather them, as I am, naturally, considering that the 'victim' here was about to traumatize a Slytherin and the 'attacker' was another former Slytherin. And I'm too close to him. Who can take over here?"

Hannah Abbott stepped up. "I will," she said. "All right, who saw what happened?"

A gaggle of little kids started jumping up and down and chaos reigned, until Hannah finally got enough witnesses from both sides and marched them all down to the Headmistress's office.

Astoria's parents were going to be furious, Draco thought as they headed off.

But god, what a feeling, when Astoria took his hand in hers and threw away a year of appearing neutral and keeping her family name snow-white.

It didn't occur to him until later to wonder why he hadn't spared a thought as to what his own parents would say.



JUNE 19, 2018: WE'D LIKE TO KNOW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU FOR OUR FILES

(TRANSCRIPT OF DRACO MALFOY INTERVIEW, PART III)

And what do you think of the House system? Do you think Diggory House strengthened or weakened it?

What do you mean?

There are those who say that it's outmoded and divisive; others say it's one of our traditions and should therefore be maintained, regardless of whether it is beneficial or not.

I think there's merit to both points of view.

Your own son went into Hogwarts this year, didn't he? Which House was he Sorted into?

Erm, I would rather not have anything about my son in the interview. It wasn't among the questions you sent.

Oh. Erm... I've already asked a number of questions that weren't on the interview sheet. What was sent to you was only an idea of what we were likely to discuss, to get you familiar with the general thrust of our interviews —

Yes, I understand that. I just don't want my son anywhere in there. He's a little young to be in print.

Oh. Well, we won't include that question, then. Which also means... well, that's page five of my questions scuppered right there. No matter; there's still plenty of other things to talk about.

Why were they included?

Archivist Lore wanted to explore whether Diggory House has influenced the thinking of parents who've had children since then. But we got quite a bit on that

from some of the other parents.

That's good.

So, moving on... when did you decide to start supporting Diggory House financially?

During my NEWTs, actually. As I was writing the one for Muggle Studies.

You got E on that one, didn't you?

Yes, I did. It was one of the only courses I took that year that was completely new and unfamiliar to me. I studied like mad.

Why make a decision during a school test?

I remember thinking that although I knew the Muggle Studies material quite well, I was unlikely to ever need it for my future. Then I thought about NEWTs level Astronomy and couldn't see a use for that either. I wasn't likely to get a job using either one; and in fact I wasn't likely to get any job at all, considering my family background.

Were you worried about that?

Not financially, no. My family's funds were far lower than before the war, obviously, but still strong enough that I didn't need to work to make a living. But it didn't seem a satisfactory way to spend my life, merely living off the proceeds of my family's wealth. I didn't particularly want to pursue a career in what my wife referred to as "thumb twiddling."

And then?

I thought about what I actually had learned that year. And it didn't have much to do with academics;

it had much more to do with building things, working with people. But there wasn't much I could look forward to in that direction either; it wasn't likely that I'd find another group of people who would want to be associated with me outside of school.

No, I suppose not.

Then I thought of how I'd done fairly well at Arithmancy. And we had all of this money lying around. It seemed to make sense to try to use it for something useful.

And you began donating to the upkeep of Diggory House then?

I did. There were still things that were needed – the place had been rather bare. And some of the students who were going to be in it the next year didn't have parents who could easily afford to send them. There were a lot of places and people that were in need of a bit of help, financially.

And when did you start investing in Diggory House alumni?

The year after that.

Why was that?

Susan Bones had some interesting ideas about communication development, but couldn't get any loans or funds for her research. And I found out that Anthony Goldstein was hoping to start a gemology company. And Charlie Weasley had some ideas about dragon habitat preservation – forests were being severely depleted in Bulgaria, and

dragons were getting ill and vicious. More vicious, that is. He wasn't part of Diggory House, but Hermione Granger introduced us at her wedding, got us talking about how to deal with the situation.

But those were people you knew. Why decide to continue helping, people you never met? Just because they'd been part of Diggory House?

Almost by definition, people who ended up in Diggory were unusual and able to think outside the box. More likely to be able to use the help I gave to actually achieve things.

There must have been some who entered because they were lazy. Taking an eighth year to avoid going to work.

Yes, that's true, but they were the distinct minority. For most of those who entered Diggory – then and now – there had to be something driving them to be there. They were passionate about furthering their studies in one area, or they were willing to travel large distances and live in a foreign country, or they had something they very much wanted to do, that couldn't be done by merely following a path already laid down for them. I thought that was worth encouraging. I thought those people would bring value to the wizarding world.

Ironically, though, by making Diggory House an established part of the school, it is the path already trod by others.

Well, yes. There's not much to be done about that. It'll still never be the way of the majority, I don't think.

And when did you decide to get more involved? Because you don't just invest money; you also do advertising, market research, help them make connections... when did that start?

It started with Anthony's project. He had some brilliant ideas, but simply didn't know how to turn them into anything workable, and I realized that all the money in the world wasn't going to change that. So I asked if I could get involved as a silent partner, doing all of the business things that he didn't know how to do. And after I'd done it once, it was easy to continue from there.

Why a silent partner, though? Not just for him, but for all the companies and individuals you've helped since then? Why didn't you tell anybody about your investments? After the first few years, when you worked with alumni that you knew personally, all the rest has been done through a company called DAGM Research and Marketing. Your name is nowhere in there.

That was deliberate. I didn't think having my name included would help the people I was trying to help. The point of getting involved was not to make myself famous or fabulously wealthy –

Though most of your investments have paid off.

Oh, absolutely – and very well, too. It's never been a charitable exercise. But the point was to help people who might bring improvements to the lives of ordinary wizards and witches. Susan Bones created we-mail and text message parchments, so that we can com-

municate instantly like Muggles do, but in our own way, using magic. Claire Tachus has done work with gem preservation and pulverization that has revolutionized Potion-making. Charlie Weasley's work with dragon habitats has helped protect magical forests. Would their ideas have been as well-received, would they have worked at all, if they'd been closely tied to the Malfoy name? I don't think so.

Why are you going public now?

Because you're doing this project, showing people what Diggory House contributed to in the wizarding world, and this is part of that story. And because I think by this point people may be ready to see that the Malfoy family isn't the point here. We're no longer about pureblood prejudice. We have not brought up our son to believe any of that, and we have been supporting good wizards and witches regardless of blood status, regardless of family background.

Those don't seem like terribly Slytherin ideals, there. They're Diggory ideals.

Touché.

And maybe I'd also like to show that Slytherin ideals aren't necessary the opposite of Diggory ideals either. We Slytherins are ambitious, but ambition doesn't necessarily have to be selfish or harmful. My wife and I were ambitious about doing something good for the wizarding world, whether or not it knew we were doing it. And we were both Sorted into Slytherin.

I guess there is something to be said about that.

Severus Snape isn't the only example of a Slytherin who was able to do good in the world. Look at Professor Horace Slughorn, head of Slytherin House after Snape. He was working behind the scenes to move along wizarding society till the day he died, spotting people who he thought might do great things, getting them in touch with each other, encouraging them –

Harold Slughorn? I haven't heard of him.

Exactly. And it's Horace. Slytherin as they come, but not particularly interested in fame for himself.

I'll have to read up on him.

He's mentioned in the museum exhibit that was opened for the twentieth anniversary of the end of the war.

Did you go?

Yes. We went to the memorial service at Hogwarts in the morning, then took our son out of school to see the Museum in the afternoon.

Well. Do you want to take a break before going on to the last set of questions?

Yes, I'd love to. Would you like another tea?

Oh, yes, thank you.

Tig – on second thought, wait here, I'll go get it.

You don't have a house elf? I thought all purebloods still had them.

We do. She's... not in best spirits right now.

Oh dear. What's wrong with her?

What isn't wrong with her. Somebody used cinnamon near her last week; she's been burning everything

she touches for days. Unless you'd like tea that smells like a camp fire, I'll be getting it for you.

Ah.

Back in a minute.



JUNE 19, 1999: CHILDHOOD'S END

"Sorry to go?" asked Astoria.

"A bit," said Draco. He glanced around the dormitory, now almost bare again. It had taken on life, sometime during the year, and he didn't know when its depressing bare walls and utilitarian furniture had turned into mismatched homeyness, but he was already missing Finnigan's plaid window seat, Anthony's photograph of the Bulgarian Quidditch team's Veela mascots, and knew he would miss Neville's weird little singing bonsai trees when they both left tomorrow, for all that he'd hated their off-tune wake-up warbles during the year.

Astoria pulled him close. "So it's just you and Neville staying here tonight, then?"

"Just us. And Hannah and Hermione and Millie in the girls' dorm."

"If only the bloody pipes hadn't gone down," she mused. "I'd still have the Head Girl's place for one last night."

"Where will you sleep instead?"

"Probably Slytherin. It's almost empty anyway."

Draco nodded, and Astoria laid her head on

his shoulder, then made a soft noise in her throat.

"D'you know something," she said, and moved her face to nuzzle his neck.

"Yes?" he asked, squirming a bit as her breath tickled him.

"The thing is," said Astoria, nibbling his neck and distracting him, "there's hardly anybody at the Slytherin dorm."

"I suppose not."

"So there's hardly anybody who would notice if I never made it back there."

Draco pulled back and looked down at her.

"What do you say we christen this place, then?" Astoria said.

Draco blinked. "As in... "

"How many people can say they've had sex in the brand new Hogwarts House?" She paused for a moment, then gave a most unladylike snort. "Ah. Let's not go there, considering Hannah. Still. How many have had sex in this very bed?"

Draco swallowed, his mouth dry. "Nobody."

"Have you ever?"

Draco shook his head. "Have you?"

"No." She paused. "D'you want to?"

Draco cleared his throat and looked down sheepishly. "Erm."

Astoria giggled and moved against him, sending a shiver through Draco and making him even harder. Did he want to. What kind of ques-

tion was that?

Yes. Yes, more than he'd ever wanted anything.

"You're leaving tomorrow, and so am I," he said quietly. "You're going back home. And your parents..."

Astoria's lips pressed together briefly. "They still don't approve of you. I don't care."

"You will, once you're with them."

"I don't care. They are my parents, but I'm of age. I'm going to go to the Salamanca Potions Institute in Spain, and they have to pay for that, but I will not let them tell me what to do."

Draco shook his head. "That's what you say now, but —"

"Listen," Astoria told him, and took his hand, gazing into his eyes intently. "You were there for me when nobody else wanted to do anything other than take from me, or help me with school-related things. You were the only one who cared how I felt outside of the whole Head Girl, what's-best-for-the-school thing. I'm not going to forget that, believe me."

Draco looked out the window, where the Quidditch pitch sat empty, no banners, no life.

She was the only person who he'd been *himself* with this year. Who knew how he still felt about Muggle-borns — how he'd probably always feel about Muggle-borns — and still accepted him. Who thought that he was worthy of the new wizarding world that was being built. Who made

him feel like he hadn't fallen so far down in the estimation of his world that there wasn't any point in hoping for anything any better.

But how long would this last, with her? She was leaving.

She touched his cheek gently, turning his gaze back towards her. "I'm going to my parents' house tomorrow. And then after that I will go to Salamanca, and spend fourteen months there. I can't pay for that on my own, so if my parents tell me I can't be in contact with you, I will not be. No Floo calls, no owls, no nothing." She took a deep breath. "And the day I get my certificate, I will call you and we'll see if you still want me. I know I'll want you."

"You can't make a promise like that," said Draco.

She nodded. "Well, if I change my mind during my studies, I will give you a call." The corner of her mouth twitched slightly. "I'll tell my parents I'm doing it, too, so they'll be proud of me. But if you don't hear from me, please assume that I still want you."

"And what happens after the Institute?" he asked.

"I'll be with you," she said simply. "And if my parents disown me, I will work and repay them all they spent on my education, plus interest." She paused. "After that, why don't we get married?"

Draco laughed. "Just like that?"

"Why not?"

Draco shook his head. "Weird. Harry Potter and me, both getting proposals from our girlfriends."

Astoria chuckled. "Or we can get married right here, right now."

"What?"

"How quickly you forget History of Magic." She shook her head in mock dismay. "Ancient wizards sometimes lived very far away from everybody else. And often they didn't have any clergy of their own, or any kind of civil government, so there was nobody to officiate weddings. So in order to get married, a couple just had to share a bed, a meal, and a spell. Let's do that."

"Right now?"

"Right now. I would say lunch in the Great Hall counts as a meal, so that's step one. Yes?"

Draco nodded slowly, and took the hand she held out to him. She drew him to his bed, and pulled him down on it, and their mouths met and it was a little surreal, that after all the times they'd snogged in the corridors and in her Head Girl's room, always with the door partly ajar to remind themselves to keep things from going too far... they were actually going to go too far. Deliberately, knowing what they were doing, not carried away by their hormones into doing something both would regret as soon as it was over.

He'd kissed her before, but never like this. He'd been hard for her before, wanting to go farther, frustrated and impatient, but never let himself *want* so damn much.

He'd imagined this a dozen times at least. But every time he'd imagined it, it was something beyond their control, something unexpected. Her self-control swept away by desire, or by their mutual need, or by an unexpected opportunity to be perfectly alone.

Although as far as 'unexpected' went... he certainly hadn't expected this. And although they weren't alone, since Neville and the Diggory House girls could come in at any time, once Astoria drew the drapes around his bed and they cast spells on them to make them soundproof, it felt as though they were in an entire world of their own. They were lying down and kissing more passionately than they ever had before, and she was undoing his shirt buttons, and the only slight downside to their current situation was that Draco was becoming increasingly certain that he was going to embarrass himself before it was over. Because if he was this hard, and this close to coming, at this relatively early stage of the game...

He started to unbutton Astoria's shirt, his heart skipping a beat as she shifted to help him. This was as far as he'd ever gone with Pansy. From here on, it was unexplored territory. He drew Astoria's shirt off her shoulders, and cupped her small breasts, marveling at their softness, at the fact that he could do this at all, after wanting to, so much, for so long.

She drew him close and their mouths came together again, and he sighed as she fit her body against his, her hair falling back in a curtain onto the bed. He moved over her, exploring her tongue with his, caressing her, relishing the soft moans coming from her throat almost as if she couldn't stop them.

There was so much to do, so much to touch, so much to gaze upon. He'd felt her up a few times when they were snogging in her room, but with the door ajar there was no way they would've gone as far as undoing any clothing. Now her breasts lay bare before him, and feeling them over her school robes was no substitute for feeling their warmth and weight in his hand, the silky feel of them, the nipples hard little points, the small cries falling from her lips as he touched them.

He brought his mouth down to her nipple tentatively and she cried out, jerking up slightly, startling him into backing up and he narrowly missed hitting his head on her chin. They were as clumsy as kittens, not really knowing what went where and how, but it didn't matter. She squirmed under him, and then pulled him on top of her fully so that his length was pressed against her hip. There was a moment of confusion when the feel of her against him was electrifying but unsatisfactory, awkward somehow – and then she moved and suddenly her thighs parted and somehow he

was resting against her, feeling the warmth of her through her knickers, and he couldn't help thrusting instinctively. He was so close, only a few layers of cloth between them.

She reached down, awkwardly undoing his trousers, and he tried to calm himself, resting his forehead against hers and closing his eyes as she reached into his trousers.

"Merlin stop I'm going to – oh, stop," he moaned, and she held still. He breathed slowly, trying desperately to bring himself back from the edge. So close, so very very close... he needed to thrust against her, but he didn't want this to be over too quickly and it would be, wouldn't it, if he didn't stop it right now...

Astoria whimpered softly and he opened his eyes, finding her gazing up at him, her pupils wide, her features flushed and her lips parted. He brought his lips down to hers and kissed her deeply, forcing himself to concentrate on her, on her movements, her small cries, the way she pressed herself against him, held him close...

He broke off their kiss, and with trembling hands undid the buttons of her skirt, pulling it away. She took his hand and brought it to her knickers and he slipped his hand inside, and she gasped, warm and wet and grinding herself against him.

He caressed her, trying to be gentle and finding that she really didn't want that as she pressed herself up, took his hand and pushed it against

her, showing him how to stroke her, firmly, making her writhe.

"I..." Merlin, how to tell her how much he needed to... he pushed his trousers and pants off, helping her with her own skirt and knickers, and suddenly they were naked, together, and he wanted to fill his eyes with the sight of her body, her chest rising and falling quickly, but there was no time, the need to do more than look was too urgently overpowering. She kissed him again and he closed his eyes, losing himself in her, making himself think of her instead of what he so wanted and needed to do...

She broke off their kiss and shifted again, and suddenly he was at her entrance.

"Oh – wait, wait," he said quickly, his senses almost on overload and the words he needed hiding out of sight. "You – I don't, we have to be safe, I don't want –"

"I've been taking a potion for a while," she whispered, "just in case." She moved – and suddenly he was inside her. And he didn't know what he'd ever expected but it wasn't this, the incredible pressure and heat and Astoria's small cry of pain.

"Did – did I –"

"It's all right," she said, gasping. "Please –"

And he came on the first thrust, going quickly from shivering delight and relief to mortification to relief again as Astoria cried out, thrusting

up against him several times, then shivered and sighed in what he could only assume was pleasure. He panted for breath, still nestled inside her, his mind perfectly at peace.

She gazed at him, her eyes glistening, then pulled him close and kissed him, and it felt more real than anything ever had in his life. Like something that had been hurt and alone inside him for a long, long time, was finally well and whole again.



OPENING DAY

Draco, Astoria, and Scorpius made their way into the newly expanded hall of the British Wizarding History Museum, walking through the galleries with the alarming newspaper headlines from Voldemort's first rising, and THE PROPHECY'S headline from October 31, 1981 (HARRY POTTER, THE BOY WHO LIVED, DEFEATS YOU-KNOW-WHO). They went past the displays for Albus Dumbledore, Severus Snape, and Potter, Snape's expression still forbidding and gloomy despite the glowing words of praise surrounding him. They passed a portrait of Dumbledore's Army, all of them so young, so very very young, and a diorama of the Room of Requirement, where the DA had come together to practice as a phoenix song played in the background.

Another gallery, put together to look like the Great Hall the day of the final battle, far too life-

like and far too reminiscent of what Draco still saw in his nightmares, twenty years later. Carefully drawn maps of who was where, which tunnels the Death Eaters had tried to enter, where they'd been beaten back, where they'd blasted their way in, where Voldemort had come in from the Shrieking Shack. It looked so well-planned and neatly organized. Nothing like the chaos it had really been, despite the simulated ruin and stone dust hanging in the air of the gallery.

Another gallery, this one of the Hogwarts dead. Remus Lupin. Nymphadora Tonks. Fred Weasley. Colin Creevey. Justin Finch-Fletchley.

Vincent Crabbe.

Scorpius slowed them down in the next section, and they stopped to watch the Beauxbatons flying horses bringing in school supplies from France to Hogwarts. Photographs of people rebuilding the castle. A display of Muggle tools that had been used, because the castle had held so much ancient magic that it was deemed too dangerous to do too much by magic alone. He spotted a picture of Dean Thomas, using a power tool to drill into stone, and then a picture of himself, listening sullenly as Hermione showed him and Millicent how to use a Hoover to remove dust from one of the rebuilt rooms.

And here it was, the newest part of the exhibit.

Cedric Diggory's handsome young face grinned down at them from the branches of a tree — a

photograph apparently taken by his father, as he mouthed the words "Come on up, Dad!"

Draco gazed at Cedric's smooth features and thanked God for his and Astoria's laugh lines, for the streaks of silver through her dark hair, for his own slowly receding hairline, badges of middle age they were lucky to bear. Cedric Diggory never got a chance to have any of that. Or to get married, or have children, or do any of the hundreds of other things the members of the House named in his honour did.

They gave the security wizard their names, and were allowed into the exhibit room proper. He nodded a greeting to Susan, who was gazing at a picture of Cedric Diggory from *THE PROPHET* — his name misspelled, because Harry Potter had also been picked as Hogwarts Champion and that was all the news people wanted to hear about.

Queenie was showing her daughters a "POTTER STINKS" badge, still blinking "Support Cedric Diggory, The Real Hogwarts Champion".

Hermione gave Draco and Astoria hugs and shook Scorpius' hand, then returned to Weasley, who was showing Rose and Hugo two articles telling of Cedric's death. The first had been written at the time, declaring it to be accidental; the other was from *THE QUIBLER*, in Harry Potter's words.

More newspaper clippings, this time from after the war, proposing a Fifth House. Anthony, rather stout now, was showing his wife some of

the drastically summarized transcripts of the debate that had broken out in the Wizengamot, discussing the pros and cons of the idea until Kingsley Shacklebolt had bluntly told them they didn't have time to fart around interfering in the school, and should bloody well let Hogwarts run itself and get back to the business of rebuilding their shattered society. The summary of his speech was far kinder and more diplomatic than Shacklebolt himself had been at the time.

Lavender Brown gave him a small smile as she gently ran her fingers over the names on a copy of the plaque that still hung on a wall of Diggory House:

ABBOTT, HANNAH
BONES, SUSAN
BROWN, LAVENDER
BULSTRODE, MILLICENT
FINNIGAN, SEAMUS
GOLDSTEIN, ANTHONY
GRANGER, HERMIONE
GREENGRASS, DAPHNE
LONGBOTTOM, NEVILLE
MACMILLAN, ERNEST
MALFOY, DRACO
PATIL, PARVATI
THOMAS, DEAN
TURPIN, LISA

Lisa Turpin was listening to a recording of

Headmistress McGonagall's speech, incomprehensibly described as 'inspiring' by the museum staff. Gah. Draco remembered it as one of the only things that had made him actively miss weird old Dumbledore and his "tweak, oddment and flibbergit" or whatever bizarre thing he'd said at the time.

Ernie Macmillan was showing his daughter the only group picture ever taken of all fourteen of them, taken during the speech. And there was Draco, looking so damnably young, and so nervous, at the edge of the Diggory table. He wanted so much to reach out to the boy he had been, tell him life got better eventually, he found love, he grew up...

Letters from parents to their children in Diggory House.

A letter from Millicent to a friend overseas.

One of Finnigan's weird exploding shamrocks.

A brittle old journal, open to a page that started with the neatly formed words *There were forty-one of us when we were Sorted eight years ago.*

A teddy bear labeled as Parvati Patil's.

One of Neville's horrible little singing bonsai, or possibly one of their descendants.

Pictures. So many pictures. Including one of Draco and Hannah Abbott, dancing together at the Valentine's Day dance, smiling at each other. And his was a genuine smile, for all that he'd still felt uneasy around her, still felt instinctively deep down that she didn't belong in his world. Some-

how she'd wormed herself onto his good side.

Pictures of some of the kids who'd taken refuge in Diggory during the year. Little Augustine Cornfoot, whose bio claimed had moved to South Africa and become a Herbology practitioner, and never returned to England.

Brief "where are they now" bios of the other kids, most of whom had gone back to their real Houses eventually, some of whom had left and never finished their education. One committed suicide, two others died of bad recreational potion reactions. Two had ended up in Azkaban. They hadn't saved everyone.

The seven new Diggory House members from the following year.

The names of every member of Diggory House, though after the second year not all had pictures or bios attached, just general descriptions.

Schoolbooks.

Valentines.

Uniforms.

Dean Thomas' sketches of West Ham football players.

The gold and purple insignia of Diggory House, when somebody finally got around to designing it, six years later.

He and Astoria stopped, stunned, before a large display case for DAGM and Malfoy Investments, a long list of former Diggory House members who got their start because of him acting as centrepiece.

Heartfelt letters of thanks from many of them.

The Goldstein's Gemologists logo, a copy of the first we-mail, a wedding announcement from a couple brought together by Macmillan Magical Matchmakers. A photograph of Draco and Charlie Weasley, watching a dragon's cage being opened, and the dragon flying out with a burst of flame, and disappearing into the sky.

"Dad! Is that really you?" asked Scorpius, but Draco could tell it didn't really interest him that much, what with the four miniature players of the 2016 Diggory Quodpot Team shooting around the exhibit, tossing their Quodpot Cup back and forth. A twelve-year-old boy had better things to think about than investments.

"Yes, that's really me." Astoria squeezed his hand. He looked around the exhibit. "It's really us."

A picture of Herman Blackstone, the first Hogwarts Headmaster from Diggory House – also the second youngest person ever to be made Headmaster.

A picture of Philippa Cassidy, the first Minister For Magic from Diggory House.

And the woman herself, coming into the exhibit and clearing her throat, standing next to Archivist Maximus Lore, who beamed at them all.

"My friends, welcome to the opening of the Diggory House Wing of the British Wizarding History Museum," said the Minister For Magic. "If you would all follow me to the lobby, we will be holding the official opening ceremony there, after which

time the general public will be permitted to enter this wing." She turned to Archivist Lore. "Shall we?" she asked, and he took her arm and led her out.

Draco smiled at Astoria, and together they each took one of their son's hands and followed the Minister, and their friends, out of the exhibit and to the lobby.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

The poem quoted by Rose Weasley (FIVE THINGS OBSERVE WITH CARE) was either written by W.E. Norris, of whom I know nothing, or Laura Ingalls' mother Caroline, from LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE. I've always envisioned Hermione passing on her love of obscure books to her daughter ;)

Future imperfectable is not a real verb tense. Unless you speak a language used by people who can do Divination.

Margery Thatcher never ruled over any country, let alone Britain. That would be *Margaret* Thatcher. Hey, if they can get eckeltricity and fellytones wrong, even the Iron Lady herself might find herself mislabeled by wizards, right?

COLOPHON

The layout and formatting of this document was created in Adobe InDesign. Page decorations were constructed utilizing commercial clip art from the incomparable Marwan Aridi. Additional motifs were selected from the Liquid library collection available from Getty Images. These were all modified in Adobe Photoshop, Cover was created in Adobe Photoshop.

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Special mention should probably also be extended to Jack Davis and Linea Dayton for their efforts in producing The Photoshop 7 One-Click WOW Book.

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