

The Golden Snitch and A Silver Lining

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The Golden Snitch and A Silver Lining

by [HealthyishObsession](#)

Summary

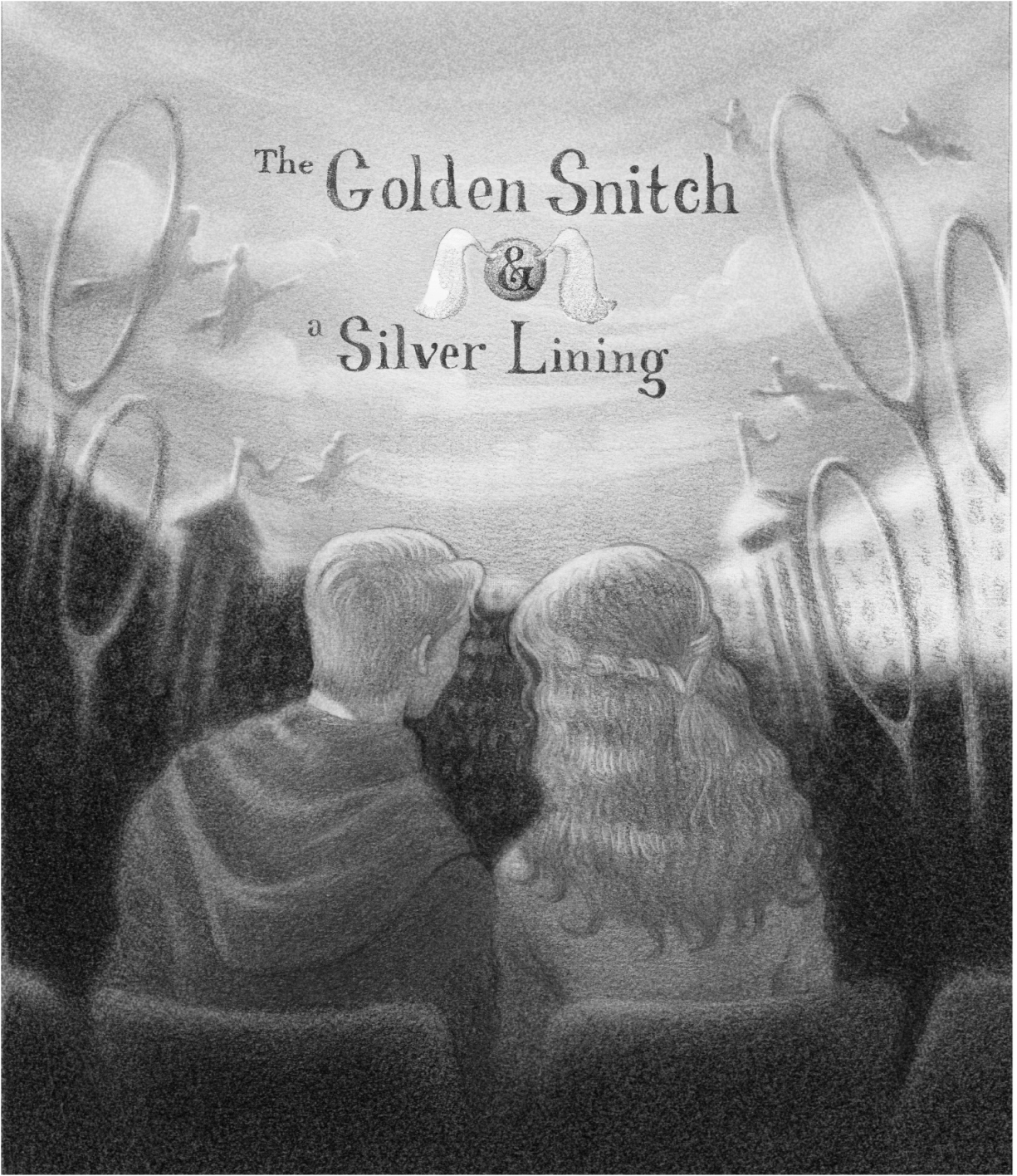
“Malfoy, why are you here?” Granger demanded.

“Flying. Obviously. Try to keep up.” Draco smirked. “I thought you were supposed to be smart.”

“I’m glad to see the system works,” she said condescendingly. “You seem completely reformed.”

The Golden Snitch and a Silver Lining is a fun, banter-filled enemies-to-lovers story featuring Healer Hermione Granger and Quidditch Team Owner Draco Malfoy. It has the heart and found family vibe of Ted Lasso mixed with the whimsical charm of the Wizarding World, full of broom thighs and brooding glances.

Notes



Dear Reader,

When I had the idea for this story, I had no plans to write it. Incredibly, after I'd drafted a 40,000 word outline, I still didn't. And yet, thanks to the unflagging and passionate support of my friends and family, here we are >100,000 words and I'm posting it on AO3. It's been surreal and an amazing way to give back to the amazing community of Dramione writers and artists (astute readers will spot references to some of our favourite fics in this story).

This is my first fic and has been an absolute joy. This work has been enthusiastically alpha and beta read by half a dozen of my friends and family (we've worked through >2000 editing comments!), but all errors are my own. My team and I have been selfishly giggling, brainstorming, and editing this fic... and now it's time to share it with the broader community! We're so excited for you to join us! If you would like to engage with our Falmouth Falcons' team by creating art, a translation, a podfic, a playlist, a spin-off story, etc. please let me know so I can link it here and on our [website](#). And I'd like to start by sincerely acknowledging the amazing cover art generously created by Harrison Wood Hsiang for this fic.

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I hope you have as much fun reading this as I had writing it!

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

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Chapter 1: Malfoy Manor. September 2000.

Draco

Draco Malfoy had been enjoying an unearned nap when he felt the manor's protective wards shudder, announcing uninvited guests.

"You're looking more and more like a vampire each time we visit."

Draco groaned. "Visit is a strong word, Theo. I personally might suggest the term trespassing."

Draco watched with dismay as his former classmate, Theodore Nott, entered the drawing room and dropped into a leather wingback chair opposite his chaise lounge. Despite his best efforts, Theo had decided on both of their behalves that he and Draco were destined to become the "very best of friends" (Theo's words, not his). They were both Heirs to Sacred Twenty-Eight families, both had Death Eater fathers, and they had both exhausted themselves chasing Granger's perfect marks. And although Theo was quite possibly the most obnoxious, distractible, nose-yeven-for-high-society-standards wizard he had ever met, there was something so earnest in the way he had always looked out for Draco. Theo seemed to sense what was bothering him, sometimes even before Draco himself had time to process. If he hadn't witnessed the sorting ceremony himself, he might have pinned Theo as a 'Puff, given his proclivity for loyalty.

Draco felt the wards shudder again signalling yet another arrival and then another.

"Just how many people have you invited to my home, Theo?" Draco demanded, making eye contact, but not sitting up. Theo said nothing, choosing instead to shrug and nervously drag a hand through his unruly brown curls.

"Is he feeling any better?" a familiar low tone asked from the doorway. Draco watched as another Slytherin entered his drawing room, his former roommate Blaise Zabini. Blaise's polished presence, fitted with a sharp Italian suit, filled the doorway as he carried a stack of papers. Blaise was more pragmatic than Theo, but was still a bit caught up in mothering Draco in ways his mother never bothered to.

"About the same," replied Theo, now settling into his seat as if determined to overstay his welcome, "I'm afraid he might be a bit worse actually. Perhaps we shouldn't have stayed away so long."

"Aw, don't be so hard on yourself, Theo," Blaise soothed. Draco watched as his friend crossed the room to the small server crowned with a crystal decanter and matching glasses. "You've been so busy with your training rotation at St. Mungo's."

Theo hummed in agreement.

“Plus, they’ve got you up at all hours, day and night,” Blaise mused, sounding almost scandalized at the thought. Blaise might not be Sacred Twenty-Eight, but his famous socialite mother and multiple Italian vineyards placed him firmly in the club.

Draco refused to give them the satisfaction of turning his head, but he knew Pansy Parkinson had also entered next from the clack of her heels, and basic logic. She came to stand in front of him holding a small house plant.

“Lovely spot you’ve picked for today’s sulk, Draco,” said Pansy gesturing to the bleak drawing room. The glass from the fallen chandelier had been mostly swept up, but the room itself was a monument to neglect. The air was stale and dusty. The marble fireplace still bore the mark of a stray curse and the dark green gilded wallpaper was peeling in several places. It was one of the only rooms left Pansy hadn’t remodeled yet with his mother. “Was the cellar too cold or was it too much effort to crawl down there?”

Pansy, at least, he could count on for the toughest truths. Her words were as sharp as her severe bob and stiletto heels. Today again, she nailed it. He was in the drawing room brooding precisely because it was the only room left in the manor that fit his mood, but just because he realized that fact, wasn’t enough to stop his wallow.

Getting no response from him, she turned to address Blaise and Theo, “He’s not pretending to be dead again is he?”

That was one time... maybe twice.

“Not today,” said Blaise. “I just heard him snarking at Theo.”

Draco shifted on the antique chaise lounge he had flopped across and stared unseeing at dust floating through a slant of late afternoon sun and illuminated a small shard of crystal embedded in the rug, proof of all the terrible things that had happened right here not long ago. He flipped a bit of his white blond fringe to cut across his eyes so his friends would know just how pathetic he was- too world weary to even move the hair off his face, since he’d been made and could no longer play dead.

Blaise handed Theo a crystal tumbler and settled into a chair opposite him. “Do you think he’ll go for it?”

“He’d better,” replied Pansy in a clipped tone. “It’s been a month since he’s been home and I’m already exhausted by his theatrical melancholy shite.”

“As a healer, I’m worried it might not be all theatrics this time,” said Theo in a rare bout of thoughtfulness. “I think he really needs this.”

Pansy put her plant on a side table and sank down onto an ottoman. “We agreed to stay positive, right? We have a plan. We’re going to fix this.”

Draco didn’t know what fresh hell they were on about, but it was easy for them to “stay positive”. None of them received any post war punishment from the Wizengamot, but then none of them were ever tried for:

Attempted Murder (target Albus Dumbledore),

Use of Unforgivables (extended and repeated use of the Imperius Curse in 6th year),

Conspiracy to Commit Crimes against the Wizarding World (primarily assisted terrorists in seizing control of a boarding school full of minors).

He was guilty of all of it, of course, so he was lucky his extremely well-paid barrister was able to get him leniency with a mere 2 year sentence based on the coercion he faced, his status as a minor himself, and of course a certain pair of war hero character witnesses vouching for his reluctance and his “war-winning” actions.

Meddlesome Gryffindors. You’d think he was a true hero because he didn’t identify them when he had the chance that day at the manor. It figured the Gryffindors would celebrate something he didn’t even do. His greatest achievement to date? Getting disarmed by Potter. His wand had defeated the Dark Lord while he sat on the sidelines dithering. Thus his greatest accomplishments were all related to him not accomplishing something. Pathetic.

He’d served his time and tried to improve himself in Azkaban. He’d studied and thought and apologized and did what he could to atone from within those walls. The day he was released Harry the Boy-That-Wouldn’t-Die Potter, an Auror now, had been there to collect him on the island and reality had hit. The guards had clearly just finished some complex paperwork with Potter and they were fawning and shaking his hand as Draco was roughly pushed to his knees in the atrium. If he was honest with himself, and he would take this admission to the grave, he had actually been pleased to see Potter. Except for a few of his father’s incarcerated friends, and McGonagall, he hadn’t seen anyone he knew in two years. He almost smiled with nostalgic joy at the thought of the competitive rivalry he used to share with Potter. Those had been simpler times.

“Come on, Malfoy,” said Potter. “Let’s get out of here.” Potter could have used the moment to his advantage: “Harry Potter and the Defeated Death Eater”, but perhaps they had all been changed by the war. With a flick of his wand, Potter removed his restraints and offered him a hand and the open door. They walked shoulder to shoulder into the twilight and down to the enchanted boat that would take them to the mainland. Draco didn’t know what to say. It was all a bit overwhelming: Potter, the fresh air, had the sky always been so big?

“Thank you for your letter,” Potter said, breaking the silence as they sped away. “You didn’t need to send it though, Hermione and I meant what we said at your trial. It wasn’t your fault, not really. Oh, right. I have something for you.” Potter rummaged around in his robes for a moment and withdrew a wand. Not just any wand, but Draco’s own hawthorn wood wand with a unicorn hair core. “After the Battle of Hogwarts I had to submit it to the Wizengamot for Prior Incantato testing, but I demanded it back. Chosen One and all,” he added sheepishly. “I’ve kept it for you, in case you wanted it.”

The moment Draco took hold of the wand he felt as though he was eleven years old in Ollivander’s shop. The almost overwhelming thrum of magic flowed through his veins. He hadn’t realized how much he had missed this connection.

“Thanks Potter,” he said, his voice gravelly with disuse and emotion. Potter just shrugged, like it wasn’t a big deal and they rode the rest of the way in silence. Draco felt cautiously optimistic that it was a new world and that he was being given a second chance after paying his debt to wizarding society.

As they neared the dock, Draco could already see his dreams of quietly slipping back home were dashed. A crowd had formed awaiting his arrival. It was a media circus or perhaps a protest, everyone trying to get the scoop on his release from Azkaban or perhaps revel in his fall from grace. As soon as their boat hit the dock, the journalists descended: “Lord Malfoy look over here”, “Draco show us your Dark Mark”, “How’s it feel to be the only free Death Eater?” The chaos and noise was overwhelming and he felt his hands start to shake. Someone spat on him and the crowd pushed closer. Potter did his best to push back the mob so they could reach the apparition point and pulled Draco in his wake.

But it was no use really, the vultures published their headline “Draco's Dreadful Deeds: Heir to Evil Released from Azkaban”. The accompanying front page photo showed him with dirty lank blond hair and a terrible scraggly beard (which he took care of immediately upon returning to the manor). He looked haunted and afraid, recoiling from the protestors. To finish the article off someone had the foresight to include a “before” shot, of him smiling in his dress robes at his mother’s last New Year’s Eve gala, just to ensure the public could recognize him and see how far he’d fallen. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

“Draco?” said Pansy, looking at him quizzically. Had they been trying to talk to him instead of over him? That would be a first. “Are you alright?”

“Am I alright? Am I alright? That’s a dumb fucking question, Parks,” drawled Draco. “Let’s see I’ve just been released from Azkaban to find that my debt to society has apparently not been paid, at least in the eyes of the press. The weight of the legacy and name of my ancient Sacred Twenty-Eight family has solely been placed upon my shoulders since my father will be enjoying life in prison. And if that’s not enough, I have the burden of my own guilt to contend with. My whole life I’ve been expected to be this enviable Malfoy Heir but all I’ve inherited is a legacy of bigotry, hatred, and cowardice. So I’m peachy, Parks, thanks for asking.” The sarcasm dropped from Draco’s tone and he suddenly sounded superficially friendly, “How was the latest charity ball you either attended or organized? Did you design your own dress?”

Before she could even consider a response Draco cut her off. “Splendid. I do so enjoy our little chats. I trust you can see yourself, and your plant, out.”

“See?” said Theo smugly. “Not dead.”

“Draco,” said Blaise. “Don’t be a prick.”

“Fine,” he continued. “By all means leave the plant, I haven’t attempted to murder anything lately. But the fact is, if I tried to kill it, it would be safe with me, wouldn’t it? I can’t do anything I set my mind to properly. I couldn’t even kill Dumbledore.”

“But you didn’t want to kill him...?” started Blaise.

“Of course not, but that’s not the point. I ruin everything I touch. I barely ever caught the Snitch as Slytherin Seeker, I hurt Weasley and Katie Bell through cowardice. The Inquisitorial Squad was just a corrupt extension of the Ministry, the Death Eaters just hurt people for no gain, only guilt and misery. . . . And the saddest part is, I thought I was doing better now. I really felt like I was improving myself, like I was going to leave Azkaban, and everything would be okay again. But clearly I was delusional and frankly the crushing weight of reality is hard to bear.”

Instead of placating him or explaining why he was a good person, Blaise simply looked at his, presumably astronomically expensive, watch then asked in a bored voice, “When was the last time you had something besides Dreamless Sleep potion or Ogden’s Old Firewhiskey?”

Draco shrugged noncommittally ignoring his friends’ meaningful glances. He was really warming up and pleased by the dramatic and introspective nature of his rant now.

“And I really did do all of it. Everything I was accused of. I wanted to save my family’s honour. I was proud of the work I’d been chosen to do in service of the Dark Lord; proud of my Dark Mark; I cast Unforgivables with aplomb. And then it was all a lie. Now my forearm is branded for life. It became obvious fairly quickly that I had only been given the Mark to punish my family as they watched me struggle with an impossible task. I was a pawn. But by the time I realized that, what could I do? I was trapped. When I had the chance to do better, I failed again. I’m a terrible person. I didn’t even save Granger that day and she was right there, laying right at my feet. The Prophet was right - I am the ‘Heir to Evil’.”

That was his most haunting memory of the war, the day he did nothing. The day the Gryffindors had praised him for at his trial. He knew from too much personal experience what it felt like to be under the wand of Bellatrix and the Dark Lord. He wished he could have done something, anything to help her. She had looked up at him with her big golden eyes from right there on the floor and he hadn’t done anything. Draco noticed that his hands had begun to tremble again at the thought (another gift from the Dark Lord), and he crossed his arms to hide the tremors from his friends.

“Are you quite finished?” asked Pansy in a bored manner. She stood and lazily flicked her wand to open all the curtains, flooding the room with sunlight, and settled her plant on the sill. The light hurt his pale eyes. When had he last been outdoors?

“Right, mate, you’ve got to pull yourself together,” said Theo. “I think you’re imagining or exaggerating a lot of this bollocks. Take Hermione for example. She’s fine. I see her everyday. She’s doing the trainee healer rotations with me at St. Mungo’s. Get over yourself. You’re not evil and look,” he said as he fumbled with the stack of Daily Prophets they’d brought. He muttered to himself as he flipped pages, “Hermione is always complaining about being in nearly every issue.” Finding something, Theo threw the paper at Draco open to the Quidditch section dated a few months back, “There she is, right as rain.”

There was a photo of Granger, her unmistakable mass of brown curls glinting gold in the sunlight, hugging the Weasel in his full Quidditch Keeper’s kit on the pitch with one of his arms slung around Potter’s shoulder after some Chudley Cannons victory. The caption read: “A Trio of Wins for Golden Trio’s Star Keeper.” Draco felt his stomach clench, he hated Weasley, and hated Granger’s ridiculous curly hair. If he was honest with himself, that hate

was covering a deep pool of guilt, both of them nearly died because of his cowardice. Surely there was something more he could have done to help them that day at the manor. He still didn't like thinking about it. And he'd had a lot of time to think over his two year sabbatical in Azkaban.

Draco fiddled with his Malfoy and Black signet rings. He received the heavy silver rings from his mother upon release from prison last month, before she fucked off to some other Malfoy property. He couldn't be bothered to ask which one. Now he felt the weight of being the official head of the family as a constant reminder, a burden on his shoulders as well as his hand. As a child he never imagined it would all feel like such a burden. He never imagined he'd be doing all of this so alone and starting with his family's reputation brought so low.

Pansy started tutting about the state of the drawing room and began vanishing empty bottles of Ogden's, while Theo and Blaise settled at the coffee table. Curiously they spread out their collection of Daily Prophets' front pages and Quidditch sections, along with issues of Seeker Weekly.

Draco had always loved Quidditch. Freedom, exhilaration, ... but he hadn't been able to fly in years. He couldn't remember when he was last on a broom, obviously not counting that cursed flight through fiendfyre with Potter. Certainly before Azkaban, before the war... maybe at the end of 5th year or that summer? Had he flown 6th year at all? Another thing to be depressed about. Where were his brooms?

"Have you been following the Falmouth Falcons' scandal?" asked Blaise. "Here read this." Blaise found a particular Daily Prophet and handed it to Draco.

The sodding Falcons scandal. Now something he loved, and was untouched by the Dark Lord, had brought ruin on itself. This news about the Falcons was too hard to bear. He had been purposefully avoiding reading about it much. Resigned to his friends' insistence, he summoned his reading glasses from across the room and sat up to read the front page.

Perhaps if he complied they would leave him alone sooner.

"Falmouth Falcons' Futile Fraud Fight Finally Finished! Scandal-Ridden Club Crumbles Under Weight of Their Own Malfeasance!"

By: Rita Skeeter

After months of excruciatingly dramatic revelations and legal wrangling, it is official: the Falmouth Falcons Quidditch team, a once-proud name now synonymous with ignominy, is utterly done for! As though finishing at the very bottom of the league wasn't quite enough public humiliation, they have finally lost the last, desperate gasp of their ongoing court battles. The team, predictably, was found guilty on all charges (including conspiracy to commit bribery, grievous bodily harm, and criminal damage) much to the quiet satisfaction of upright citizens everywhere. The former owners are now awaiting trial in a civil case, though one must wonder how they intend to continue their futile fight as both incriminating evidence and crippling legal fees continue to mount, not to mention the truly eye-watering fines issued by the venerable British and Irish Quidditch League.

Now that everyone involved in this colossal scandal has been banned for life from professional Quidditch (a fate well-deserved, if your humble reporter may say so), it is patently clear that the Falmouth Falcons will need to be sold. We've heard that quiet inquiries are already being made – but, dear readers, who would truly throw good money after bad on this abysmally disgraced, utterly putrid husk of a team? Only someone incredibly wealthy, perhaps with more money than sense and nothing left to lose, would dare tie their fate to this rapidly sinking ship!

Naturally, your humble reporter sought insight from the veritable oracle of the game, Kennilworthy Whisp, renowned Quidditch expert and author of the definitive tome, 'Quidditch Through the Ages'. Mr. Whisp declared, "I've never seen anything like it – this might just be the worst cheating scandal in nearly a thousand years of Quidditch history! The astounding part is how utterly deliberate it all was, how it impacted every single part of the team. You've got bribes, blackmail, Curses – why, I even heard whispers they had the landscaping crew planting Venomous Tentacula outside the away team's locker rooms! Nasty, underhanded stuff, but certainly one for the history books!" Indeed, a perfect anecdote for his eagerly anticipated, second edition of Quidditch Through the Ages: Revised, available at Flourish and Blotts next year – a timely release, wouldn't you say? Always the opportunist, that Whisp!

Draco let the pages fall to the ground in disgust, “Thanks for coming here and informing me that my favourite team is as much of a disaster as I am.” He looked at each of them in turn. “I want you to know,” he paused to put a hand over his heart and layered his tone to be filled with meaning, “with my deepest sincerity, that you are absolute shite at cheering me up.”

He flopped back down on his chaise, threw off his glasses, and rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands. Why wouldn't they just leave him to his thoughts? Although, maybe he should get outside. Later he could go and meaningfully toss stones into the lake and look out towards the horizon thinking about his sad things. Now he could add the downfall of his Quidditch team to his ever increasing list of preferred dark musings.

Unfortunately, his friends seemed to have warmed to the purpose of their intervention. When he opened his eyes, they were throwing excited glances at each other. Draco didn't know what the fuck they were on about.

Blaise began in a controlled tone, “Draco... we have an amazing idea.”

“But please,” continued Pansy, “try to be open minded.”

“In case you hate it,” added Theo, “it was Blaise's idea.”

What plan? What was going on? He was just going to sit in his manor and brood for the foreseeable future. There was no other “plan”.

Blaise shot Theo a glare and continued, “Look Draco, you're wrong, about a lot of things-”

“Well, partially wrong.”

“Shut up, Theo,” snapped Pansy.

“You might have inherited, what was it?” said Blaise trying to recall. “A legacy of bigotry, hatred, and cowardice’ but you’ve also inherited the largest fortune in wizarding England. Now we are going to get you out of this forsaken drawing room-”

“This room is ghastly,” added Theo. “Pansy, you should convince Narcissa to re-do this one soon.”

“-get some Sober-Up potion-,” continued Blaise as though Theo hadn't interrupted.

“Maybe a shower? Scourgify at least?”

“-and some food-”

“He looks malnourished.”

“Shut up, Theo,” snapped Pansy again.

“- and please, please hear us out.”

Chapter 2: Hermione's London Flat/St. Mungo's. October 2000.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

Ron took a deep breath. “Mione, I’ve been thinking and you shouldn’t come to my matches for the next League Cup season,” he said far too casually over breakfast in their kitchen. He was the picture of ease sipping tea and eating yet another piece of toast, the Quidditch section of the Daily Prophet opened next to him, but she knew all his tells. From the set of his shoulders she knew he was bracing himself. Waiting for something, her ire probably. She suspected he had planned this moment all morning, purposely acting calm with his sleeves partially rolled up showing his strong forearms in a clean (for once) Oxford that showed off his broad Keeper’s shoulders and bright red hair and close cropped beard. Hermione narrowed her eyes, he was playing his lumber-sexual card, she realized, to avoid conflict and soothe her like a skittish hippogriff.

Whatever this was about, Hermione wasn’t having it. She was supremely uninterested in having whatever this conversation was on her way out the door to St. Mungo’s. Ron knew she had a shift this morning.

“Ronald, don’t be ridiculous,” she said, draining her tea. Then with practiced ease, she flicked her wand and the tea cup washed itself in the sink before settling back in the cupboard.

“I just thought with the new League season starting again soon, maybe you don't need to force yourself to come to all the matches.”

“I’ve been to literally every British and Irish Quidditch League match you’ve ever played.” He loved it when she came to his matches. He made a big show about scanning for her in the crowd and hugging her on the pitch afterward. Godric forbid if she had a commitment during one of his matches. She always had to grudgingly reschedule to sit there in the stands alone. His uninviting her was a strange gesture, almost thoughtful, if it hadn't felt so utterly misguided. “What’s this really about?” she said suspiciously.

"Nothing ‘Mione, I just thought... look, it's no secret that you hate Quidditch. I'm a professional Quidditch player and you barely even watch the matches. You don't need to keep forcing your enthusiasm. I know you're busy training to be a healer," he continued in his same steady tone.

Her shoulders slumped in defeat, she was so tired of this circular argument, did she really want to keep doing this? In a dismissive tone she snapped back, "By that logic my hatred of Quidditch equates to a dislike of you. If I attend, I'm not enthusiastic enough, but if I don't show up to a match, that means I'm not supporting you. I can't win."

"What? No, I just - Why do you care, Hermione? I thought you'd be happy," Ron said with growing frustration. "Do you even know the rules of Quidditch? Every time the Quaffle goes through a hoop you get 10 points and when you catch the Golden Snitch you get 150 points and the match ends."

That was low. "Don't you dare patronize me, Ronald." His words twisted her stomach. Was this some clumsy attempt at kindness or a deliberate push? Their relationship had become such a patch of Devil's Snare, she couldn't untangle it.

She marched out of the room in search of her lime green healer robes. They were probably somewhere by the Floo, but in the clutter of their flat there was no telling where they could have ended up after her late shift last night.

He followed her into the sitting room. "Hermione, what is this really about? I don't understand you sometimes."

Well, now wasn't that the truth? The feeling was mutual. She stopped in front of a mirror by the Floo and scooped up her long curls into a messy bun. In the mirror she could see a frustrated Ron standing in the middle of the flat, but also see the flat for what it was. They had originally decorated it, unsurprisingly in red and gold, in a nod to their shared Gryffindor pride, but that had been slowly covered over with Ron's layer of garish orange Chudley Cannons embellishments. It made her lime green healer's robes, draped over a chair, immediately apparent; she felt like an interloper in the midst of her own home. She saw Ron's dishes on the table and piled in the sink, all the crummy "gifts" he'd purchased last minute. She decided right then that it was done.

"You know what Ron?" she said, turning to face him with a certainty she suddenly knew to be true. "I don't understand you either. We might be best friends but this is becoming a bad relationship. I can't do this anymore."

"Fine, Hermione," he said, suddenly resigned. She thought he'd argue with her more, part of her hoped he would fight for her. "Have it your way. You always do. Maybe I'm tired of making this work too."

Oh that was rich. "You've been making it work have you? Then I'd hate to see what happens when you aren't trying."

"Piss off," he said, rising to the bait. "It's not like you even try to spend time with me. Or have fun... ever. We fought the war, Hermione. It's done. Don't you think we deserve to just live now? I'm a professional Quidditch Keeper and you won't even let me help you learn to really fly a broom."

"Well, flying is dangerous," she muttered, but he barreled on without giving her the satisfaction of arguing over that well trodden ground.

“I’m tired of trying to initiate sex and getting shut down.”

“Well, you’re part of that too. Maybe you just never bothered to discover what I like.”

“Of course ‘Mione,” he conceded ruefully, “you always have to know best.”

“Well, I do always know better than you,” but she silently conceded that by saying that she had just proved his point. Damn it.

“The worst thing is you’re always working so I barely see you except when you grumpily attend games but as far as I can tell, training to be a Healer makes you miserable.”

Hermione dismissed his first points out of hand, but she realized that this one actually sort of hit the mark. Of course she worked hard. She always had been a Muggle-born witch perpetually working harder than her pureblood counterparts for a fraction of the credit, even in the best of times. Only a few years ago the Muggle-born Registration Commission had been taking wands and imprisoning Muggle-borns just like her. How dare Ron, a pureblood wizard who had barely worked at anything in his life, criticize her work ethic? He couldn’t understand that her job wasn’t simply a career; it was proof that they had won.

But the “miserable” part sent an uncomfortable chill down her spine. No. It couldn’t be true. Her goal had always been to improve the Wizarding World. She couldn’t rest while many of the same witches and wizards who had run the Muggle-born Registration Commission were still sitting on the Wizengamot. Obviously being a healer wasn’t directly stopping the subjugation of Muggle-borns, but it was still good, meaningful, important, work. Ergo she was obviously not miserable and was actively pursuing and achieving her goals. So, why did Ron’s words feel like a stone settling in her stomach? He knew her so well, too well in some ways, but not enough in others.

She could have continued lashing out, but what was the point? If her current training rotation in Memory Care had taught her anything, it was that some things couldn’t be fixed. This needed to end.

“Okay, Ronald, I think we’re done. This is no longer working.” Even though she was sure about her decision, she was surprised as a lump formed in her throat making her voice thick with emotion.

Ron nodded sadly. “Maybe you’re right Hermione. Maybe, I don’t want to keep my fingers crossed and hope for the best anymore.” Hermione smiled sadly at the bittersweet sentiment, then stopped.

Wait. Did he just? No. Of all the unbelievable...“Ron, did you just quote the Chudley Cannons' motto to me mid break-up?”

Ron grinned sheepishly, embarrassed to be caught and shrugged. “I suppose, it seemed appropriate.”

Hermione sighed, not sure why she expected any better of him. “I love you Ron, I’m sure I’ll always love you, but I’m not in love with you anymore. This has been a long time coming.”

She turned her back toward him, heading towards the Floo.

“Hermione, I’m so sorry.”

“I’m sorry too, Ron,” said Hermione with a watery smile. She had known for a while now that Ron wasn’t her ideal match, but he was her first partner, first love, her best friend. She was gripped by sadness, not for the break-up per se, but the end of an era. She really would miss him.

She wanted to hug him, but didn’t want to give him the wrong idea either. So they just stood there, unsure what to do next.

“I have to get to Mungo’s,” said Hermione finally.

“I’ll... um... I’ll go stay at the Burrow for a few nights, then I’ll be in Germany with the Cannons playing in a friendly.”

Of course he was. Quidditch had an unending annual cycle starting with the British and Irish Quidditch League Cup followed by all the European Cups, interspersed with various larger international cups or the World Cup, liberally sprinkled with international friendlies. Hermione sighed and felt the familiar weight of his Quidditch schedule lifting. As of this moment, the Cannons’ current standing in the European Manticore Cup, or whatever, was no longer her problem.

“Okay, I’ll owl you. Goodbye Ron,” and with that she stepped into the Floo to St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

A moment later, Hermione emerged in St. Mungo’s employee entrance and immediately turned to the canteen for another tea. She took several deep breaths as she walked and tried to focus on the task at hand. She has always been good at focusing on work. She could cry at home... in her flat... that Ron would be leaving soon. Unless she got her own flat? Something else to worry about. A part of her needed a good cry, but she had work to do, patients to see, worlds to save. She needed to focus.

“Hey Hermione,” called Theo. She was so lost in thought, she barely noticed him. “How’s it - oh, Salazar, what did that wanker do now?”

“No, it’s good. I’m good, that is, well, um, Ron and I broke-up. Just now, this minute, but I’m fine. Good even.”

“You’re not ‘fine’ and definitely not ‘good’. You look like shit, Hermione.”

Hermione winced. Theo was a good friend, even if he seldom stopped to think before speaking. He was her best friend at St. Mungo’s, not that they had ever left the hospital together, but then she rarely left at all, so that was nothing on him. Theo Nott was in her year at Hogwarts, but she never really paid much attention to him. Who could when he was roommates with Malfoy and his band of enforcers? They were always commanding attention with slurs at best and hexes at worst. She’d never let her guard down long enough to befriend any of the Slytherins before the war, but she sort of wished she could have back then. She had

worked closely with Theo during the “eighth” year at Hogwarts in the Healer program. He was clever, funny, and full of mischief.

Ron never understood her platonic friendship with Theo, often becoming jealous over the amount of time they spent together. She tried to explain that her feelings for Theo were similar to how she felt about Harry and Neville. Ron always just ranted about how it was unnatural for a Slytherin to be a Healer. He was always telling her to watch her back because Theo must have an ulterior motive. But, over many a terrible canteen meal, Theo and Hermione had beat that unicorn to death and decided that each house leads one to become a healer for different reasons: Gryffindor heroes in Accident & Emergency (A&E)/life saving thrills; Hufflepuff pediatrics/patient care; Ravenclaw specialists/academic challenge; Slytherin elite medi-mages/want to be seen as the best-of-best. They were quite pleased with their analysis, but it had never been sufficient to convince Ron. Theo snapped his fingers to get her attention.

“What happened?”

“Nothing, well, I mean, he told me not to go to his Quidditch matches anymore and one thing led to another and now, I’m just done.” She cleared her throat to keep the emotion out of her voice. “We’re done. It’s over. Maybe we’ve just been best friends this whole time, and the entire relationship was a mistake?”

“Not a mistake. Hermione, don’t be so hard on yourself.”

“It’s fine, I’m fine. I just want to move on. Let’s talk about something else.”

“Tea?”

“Yes, please.”

They made their way through the short canteen line. While not the best tea, holding the warm beverage in her hands was soothing. As they walked back down the hallway toward their current wards, they moved aside as a mediwitch pulled a floating wizard down the hall. She had him tied to a string like a kite. Hermione and Theo winced as the mediwitch tugged him sharply around a low hanging light fixture.

“That’ll be me soon,” said Theo.

“Theo you’ve had some strange ideas, but this tops all.”

“No, I mean I’ve decided to do my next rotation in A&E. It’s always full of hero-complex Gryffindors, we need some snakes in there to shake things up.”

The next rotation. Of course. Chief Healer Laece had sent a memo asking for their preferences. Hermione needed to choose her next rotation soon. She only had a couple of weeks left in Memory Care.

Memory Care had been an utterly depressing choice. In the moment, the work was fulfilling but at the end of a day Memory Care left her emotionally exhausted and unable to

realistically achieve her goals of improving the Wizarding World beyond her daily grind. She had initially hoped to learn more about her parents' situation, but nothing came of it. They were so happy in Australia and she had learned time and again from this rotation, that the brain was a fragile thing. When she had obliterated her parents before the war she had been lucky they hadn't been damaged beyond her intentions. They were alive and thriving - even if it was without knowledge of her - she'd take it. But now, on the cusp of a new rotation, she knew that she needed a real change. Maybe Ron had been right about one thing, she needed to let herself have a little fun.

"What types of healing are truly meaningful or at least happy? I need a happy rotation. Babies? Aren't babies the happiest type of medical work?"

"Absolutely not," said Theo emphatically. "Hermione, do you want to have kids?"

"Um, Theo, I just broke up with my first serious boyfriend minutes ago. This isn't really the time."

"I'm just saying, if you want to have kids, and I'm pretty sure you're the type, Hermione. Do. Not. Work. In. The. Labour. Ward. I regret this rotation. The first birth was amazing. It was a miracle. The second birth was a bit of a party trick. Ta Da! I've pulled a baby out of... where?! But then by the third one onward it's so much fluid. Fluid just everywhere. It's disgusting. That's why I'm headed to A&E next. I'll take a bit of blood over whatever it is you get covered with in Labour anyway."

Hermione laughed. "I'm convinced! OK, not the Labour Ward. But what else would be happy? Ron said healing is making me miserable. I mean 100% of our patients still die, right? We just delay their deaths."

"Hermione, that is far too bleak for this early in the morning. Here's an idea - yes, I've got it, a great idea. Drum roll please."

"No."

"Here's my idea anyway, sans drum roll." Theo held up a finger for each point, "One, it's 'happy'. Two, you get to move into a new apartment. Three, you'll get out of St. Mungo's for a bit. And finally four, there are fit wizards." Theo's voice went sing-song for his last point. "Hermione, I've decided that you should take your next rotation with the new Falmouth Falcons Quidditch team as their athletic healer. All their previous employees were sacked and I have it on good authority that Mungo's agreed to help them find a Healer for the League Cup season."

"Absolutely not," she said immediately. "Wild Abraxans couldn't drag me to voluntarily work in Quidditch."

"You wouldn't be volunteering. It would be a normal training rotation, just located at The Nest's medical center. You'd still be paid by your St. Mungo's fellowship. It's a golden opportunity."

Quidditch? Surely he was joking. Hermione Granger, on a Quidditch pitch? Working right in the Falmouth Falcon's "Nest" stadium?

"Still though, it's Quidditch," said Hermione. "I don't want to work for a bunch of insufferable self-satisfied old-money purebloods."

"You'll be working for St. Mungo's while healing a bunch of insufferable self-satisfied old-money purebloods," said Theo. "Just imagine how good it'll feel to tell them off for being idiots while smugly saving their sorry little lives."

Theo was right, it did sort of appeal to her heroic Gryffindor side. She could imagine herself running out onto the pitch in her lime green robes and healing a fallen player. It could be exciting, like A&E, but outside and with more stretching. Although, it didn't seem very important and it wouldn't save the Wizarding World... but it might be fun. More enjoyable than Memory Care at least. Maybe she'd even have extra time between matches and training to do something useful, important even.

She really did know a lot about Quidditch despite not really caring for it. And she could move to Falmouth without looking like she was running away from Ron and their flat. Yes, now that would be just the thing. It was a silver lining. Theo was right, she had always loved fit Quidditch wizards, the leathers, the broom thighs... she had only ever dated cute Quidditch players: Ron Weasley, Viktor Krum, and, she supposed, Cormac McLaggen, although he was a git. Plus, she'd never admit it to Theo, but Ron hated the Falcons. He said she didn't care about Quidditch, well fine. This would be perfect for her and a bit of a rebellion to boot.

"Theo, you're a genius."

"I know. I get that a lot."

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 3: Falcons' Stadium. November 2000.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

Hermione ran her fingers over her new desk overlooking the pitch as she continued her tour of the Falmouth Falcons' medical center. It was a surprisingly state-of-the-art facility that must have been remodeled before the team went to pieces. There were a few cots, a training room, and a shockingly nice potions lab, which she vainly hoped they hadn't been using to brew anything illegal, but her favourite part was her private office with massive windows overlooking the pitch. The entire facility was right at ground level under the far side of the stands and behind the home team's goal posts so she could run out directly on the pitch in case of emergency. The anti-apparition wards at the stadium might make sense for properly monitoring the crowd and keeping the play fair, but as the team's healer, Hermione wished she could have the option of apparating severely injured players to her medical center or St. Mungo's.

It was an odd sort of rotation, without anyone else from St. Mungo's here. She was just instructed to do her best, research on her own, and file reports directly to Chief Healer Laece, who, Hermione suspected, didn't take Quidditch safety and sports medicine very seriously. Hermione hadn't had any personal interactions with Chief Healer Laece, although she was inspired by her as a trailblazing role model. She was the first woman to hold the position of Medical Director at St. Mungo's. Hermione hoped her reports throughout this rotation would meet Chief Healer Laece's high standards... if she bothered to read them.

She wasn't officially starting until tomorrow. There was going to be a big meeting to kick-off the season in the team room tomorrow morning, but she couldn't resist taking a quick tour tonight. And she wasn't the only one. She had already seen a few of the staff bustling around getting everything ready in time for the opening. There was an excited buzz of anticipation in the air. After the disastrous scandals the Falcons had faced last season, everyone was new and filled with wonder and hope, or at the very least, happily escaping their previous circumstances. She imagined that, just like her, no one knew what to expect for the upcoming season.

Luckily she'd seen at least one familiar face already. Katie Bell had been touring the stadium when she arrived. Katie had been a Gryffindor Chaser and would be playing for the Falcons this season. Although Katie was a bit older and more of Harry's friend than hers at Hogwarts,

Hermione would take what she could get. Katie had been excited to see her too and both agreed it would be good to have a friend in a new place.

A new place, a new start, without Ron. She honestly wasn't cross with him. They never should have dated in the first place, they were better as friends. Hermione found that she liked being on her own and had fun setting up the small flat St. Mungo's had provided. It was cosy and practical and right in the adorable downtown harbor in Falmouth with a view of the sea. Crookshanks had already made himself at home. She wondered if it would be alright to bring him to the stadium sometimes. She was sure he'd love to roam around here.

"Excuse me." Her thoughts were broken by Marcus Flint, popping his head around her door. She remembered him as the captain of the Slytherin team when they were in their first few years at Hogwarts. His polite tone changed as he recognized her. "Are you lost? Perhaps here to visit your boyfriend?"

Perhaps she should have worn her lime green healer robes instead of dressing in her pencil skirt and blouse, it might have saved her time repeatedly explaining her new role. "Um, No?"

"Well then Granger, what the fuck are you doing here?"

"I work here. I'm the new trainee Healer working with the Falcons for the League Cup season."

"Gross. I can't believe they'd let someone like you work here."

"Oh, you mean a healer? I daresay the team will need one." He just glared at her. "No? A Gryffindor then? War hero? Order of Merlin, first class? Summa Curae in my Healer class?" she said with growing impatience for this bigot. She had initially rejected the Prophet coined "Brightest Witch of her Age" and "Golden Girl" labels. But after a few books on managing positive PR, she'd learn how to let insults slide and utilize her deserved titles to her advantage. Plus, they made excellent self affirmations.

Flint scoffed, "Don't give me that Brightest Witch bullshit. You can hide behind your Order of Whatever-class ribbons, but I know what you really are in your blood. Don't ever get your filthy hands on me."

"Then you'd best not get injured this season."

Hermione had stood her ground in front of plenty of Dementors, Death Eaters, Werewolves, Centaurs, and even Dolores Umbridge; she certainly wouldn't be cowed by Marcus sodding Flint. He gave her one last scowl again and left the medical center.

With Flint gone, she took a deep steadying breath to dissipate the tension gathering in her shoulders. Quidditch, she knew, was full of blood purity bias. Just get a few butterbeers in Harry and he'd go on his favourite rant. Most Muggle-borns never played professionally. Harry's natural talent, developed over only a few seasons at Hogwarts, could never be enough to play at a professional level. After all, he'd only started training at 11 and almost never in summers. The pureblood children had all the advantages: childhoods singularly focused on the sport, private lessons, junior leagues before Hogwarts even, camps in summer,

better gear because their parents knew the best brands, etc. She knew she was firmly in pureblood territory by being here. Maybe she never really liked Quidditch because she never felt fully welcome? She hoped this encounter wouldn't set the tone of the season. Was she wrong to choose this training rotation?

Hermione just needed some fresh air, that was all. She cast a warming charm on herself and walked out to the pitch. She could see someone was practicing on a broom high up at the far end, but the stadium appeared to be otherwise empty.

As she walked further out into her first night at the stadium, the pitch was quiet, beautiful, lit from above. She took a deep breath. She noticed that the pitch had been recently cut, yet was a bit unkempt and weedy for a professional pitch, especially around the edges. This Falcons team was such a mess, she supposed, even new landscapers would need to be hired. She loved the smell of freshly cut grass and the unmistakable scent of the sea too.

The previous owners had clearly deferred maintenance on much of the stadium. The stands were somewhere between decrepit and vintage, had patches of rust on their railings, while the grounds were overgrown and weedy, and inside, most of the rooms would need more than just a fresh coat of paint. Despite its current state of neglect, it really was a beautiful facility and the grey and white Falcons flags on the stands fluttered in the seabreeze as Falmouth cooled off at night. It was different from Hogwarts' pitch. The pitch itself was the same with the three hoops placed near each end, but the stands were so much bigger. Instead of the pillars that flanked the playing field, here the stands wrapped all the way around like a football stadium, only they reached much higher than the professional matches she'd been to with her dad. She stood for a moment and soaked in the still beauty of the stadium.

She watched the seemingly effortless rider in the distance as they swooped and dove. She knew enough Quidditch to hazard a guess that it was likely the new Seeker practicing. A Keeper would train nearer the three goal posts, a Beater would have a bat and Bludger, and a Chaser would be running drills across the main portion of the pitch. The only reason for the flyer's erratic movement and breathtaking risks at that height would be chasing a training Snitch.

She took another deep breath of that delicious air. Maybe she could love this, if the blood purists let her. Ginny loved Quidditch, and Ron, and Harry, and Viktor, obviously, and well, all her friends, actually. Maybe Quidditch could grow on her, she could at least try.

The flyer was so beautiful, graceful, and had clearly been flying his whole life. He was exhilarating to watch. She was intrigued. She wondered if she knew who it was. She already knew Katie Bell and Marcus Flint. Or perhaps it was someone new, perhaps one of those fit wizards Theo was telling her about. If she was honest with herself, she really did seem to have a thing for Quidditch-playing wizards. Broom thighs. Sexy Quidditch leathers. Mmmm.... She just stood there on the pitch watching him, mesmerized.

Draco

Draco let out a whoop of excitement as he caught his training Snitch and let it go once again. What a thrill. He had missed this while trapped in Azkaban. He felt more alive over the past

couple weeks than he had in years. Blaise had arranged this whole thing so quickly. It was incredible really. The team would be arriving tomorrow. It was like a dream. He was nervous, exhilarated. He had to hand it to the snakes, this was certainly preferable to languishing in his drawing room. How could this possibly be his life now? Everything was unbelievably different from a few months ago.

Even without Dementors, Azkaban had been terrible. He was afraid at first he might go mad from terror and boredom. Then, after only a few weeks into his sentence, on September 1st, Hogwarts came to him for a change - in the form of Professor McGonagall, now Headmistress at Hogwarts. At first he'd thought she was a hallucination, or a boggart. But she came to visit him each month after that and gave him textbooks (and ginger biscuits) for more NEWT courses each time. At first it was just the courses he'd nearly completed 7th year, but when he finished those she brought others for courses he had only taken through OWL level. Then she started bringing him books for courses he had never taken, that witch even made him do five years of Muggle Studies to get up to NEWT levels. Once he asked her why she cared, why was she doing so much for him. With a sniff, McGonagall answered "That night on the astronomy tower, Professor Dumbledore gave his life for yours, Mr. Malfoy. All I'm doing is dropping off some old books." That conversation haunted him. How in Salazar's name would he ever be worthy of such a sacrifice?

Once she'd run out of material, she had sent an examiner to visit him to conduct his Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests with a blunted wand. When he passed with a record-breaking number of NEWTS, he still had 6 months left on his sentence. A less creative sort would have simply stared at the wall and continued avoiding his father (who Draco had come to realize had only ever used him as a pawn at best, and a shield at worst). Instead he decided to try to continue improving himself. Just to keep himself sane. And then he started really thinking about his life. He'd started writing apology letters to, well everyone, and honestly meant them. Draco only got a few replies back, but he hadn't realistically expected any. He was the one that needed to answer for what he'd done.

And then he'd started working out. He was glad of it now and was in decent shape for just leaving prison. Admittedly, he was out of practice flying and still tired easily, but he was pleased that his previously atrophied form (a lingering effect of Azkaban's brutal hospitality) had begun to fill back out.

But, it was the emotional weight of leaving, of facing everything, that was still most difficult for him. He still felt so guilty, unsure, all the time. He found the best coping mechanism was to hide behind Occlumency walls or the Malfoy fail-safe of snark. He wasn't sure how to move on; how to make things right. And the press and Wizarding World at large were no help. Thank Merlin for Blaise, and Pansy, and even Theo and this certifiably insane scheme of theirs.

He stopped high above the pitch to take it all in. From his vantage point he could see the Falcons' Stadium truly lived up to its nickname, The Nest. Its signature architecture of interwoven beams supporting the stands rising high around the sides seemed to carefully nestle the pitch. At night, like this, it glowed like a bubble of light and magic against the inky black sky. It was overwhelming; the Falcons' dark grey and white insignia was emblazoned across the stands, the same one he'd worn and even used his first-ever sticking charm to fix to

his headboard. It was right there, proudly declaring membership in the British and Irish Quidditch League, based in beautiful seaside Falmouth. It felt like a dream. He just hoped Blaise knew what he was doing and this didn't turn into a nightmare.

He saw a glint of gold flutter by and dove toward it, missing it by several inches on his left. A miss on his dominant side like that was a mistake a Seeker who'd grown up on a broom simply didn't make. Fuck. He was already exhausted and hadn't been flying for that long. He hated that he was still weak from Azkaban. Draco called "Accio Training Snitch" and it flew into his hand. It was a handy, if unwelcome, feature of training Snitches. He didn't want the session to end that way, but it would be worse if he pushed too hard and hurt himself. Maybe he'd feel more confident once his new custom broom arrived.

He flew his borrowed training broom down toward the far end of the pitch near the door that led to the locker rooms and medical bay. There was a woman standing there in an incredibly tight skirt, watching him. The breeze blew her golden brown curls. Was that a Muggle skirt? He couldn't help but look at her legs. As he got closer he tore his eyes away and realized who it was... bloody hell.

It was Granger, without the Boy-Who-Wouldn't-Die and his pet Weasel for once. He could tell the minute she recognized him and her entire posture changed. She was suddenly on guard. He realized that he was suddenly on guard too. He felt a bit of panic inwardly, but quashed it. He came in to land not far away from her and added extra swagger to his step, the end of his broom casually slung over his shoulder. A smirk firmly planted on his face, his signature Malfoy armor. Why should he be on guard? He belonged here.

She asked "Malfoy? What in Godric's name are you doing here?"

"I think the real question, Granger, is what are you doing here?" he drawled with affected nonchalance.

"I'm a trainee Healer with St. Mungo's, taking a rotation with the Falcons," she said with a bit of an eye roll as though she's already explained this several times today.

Did Blaise hire her? He hired everyone else. Wait, St. Mungo's was going to provide them with a healer. If that was true, she didn't work for the Falcons, not really... but then how... This had Theo written all over it. Draco was suddenly positive that Theo had convinced her to take this rotation, while conveniently forgetting to tell her relevant details.

Draco turned and headed to the locker rooms, annoyed that Granger was being so indignant.

"Oh no. You aren't on the team, are you? Are you the new Seeker?" she said while making a futile attempt to pull her absurd hair back as the sea breeze teased her curls.

"No, I'm not on the team." He stopped and smirked at her to hide his feelings, although he felt his chest constrict painfully with longing. He did look the part, didn't he? He wished he could be the Seeker, but hadn't even voiced it aloud to Blaise when they were struggling with recruitment.

It was a stupid fantasy. He had been flying his whole life, but he knew he would never play Quidditch at the professional level. Too much had gotten in the way for him to train - another thing the Dark Lord had stolen from him. Now he was still too weak from Azkaban to even play a full length Slytherin match, much less a professional-level Falcons match. He couldn't remember the last time he had needed to Accio his training Snitch, probably before Hogwarts.

Trust Granger to immediately cut him to the quick, and without even realizing it. That's how their relationship had always been. Just by existing and being herself, her very being had always felt like a personal attack on him and the belief system he'd been ingrained with. She'd never done anything wrong. In fact, the more right she was the more it infuriated him. Everything about her got under his skin. It may have been a few years, but it was so easy to slip back into that vitriol.

He should just explain everything to her. She would find out tomorrow anyway, so why not tell her now? Her curls blew around her face. He felt a growing tension build between them. He hadn't really seen her since the war and his trial. He wrote her one of his apology letters, but she never replied.

He felt his fingers begin to tingle with the beginning of a tremor and balled his free hand, then shoved it into his pocket. Of course she'd never replied to his letter. Why would she? How could he expect her to forgive him and see beyond his past when all he'd ever been was an arse? Even now, he was refusing to explain himself while hiding behind a facade of carefully cultivated disdain. The silence between them grew increasingly awkward. He realized he needed to get away from her or he needed to make her leave.

"Malfoy, why are you here?" Granger demanded.

"Flying. Obviously. Try to keep up." Draco smirked. "I thought you were supposed to be smart."

"I'm glad to see the system works," she said condescendingly. "You seem completely reformed."

He flashed her a rude gesture and she stormed off the pitch. He shouldn't have done that. He should chase her down and apologize. His mother would be mortified by his terrible manners. He was mortified by his terrible manners. What was it about this witch that brought out his worst?

He should have told her why he was really there. He shouldn't have sassed her. Her testimony saved him from more time in Azkaban, for all he knew it might be the only reason he was released at all. He should be grateful. He should apologize - thank her even.

But as he watched her storm off in her absurd inappropriate Muggle clothes, the only thing he could do was hold his gaze on her, transfixed.

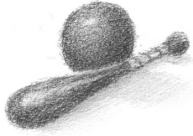
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Chapter 4: Falcons' Stadium. November 2000.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

The Team Room was full of snakes. Pureblood Slytherins that were all around her age dominated the room: Marcus Flint, Gregory Goyle, Adrian Pucey, Blaise Zabini, Pansy Parkinson, Millicent Bultstrode. Hermione took a sharp breath and felt her stomach clench. What was she getting herself into? She was thankful she had decided to wear her full lime green healer robes, emboldened by the authority they afforded her. She didn't particularly care for how they made her stand out, but their iconic status would clearly explain her presence without her having to repeat herself.

Entering the room more fully, she was first intercepted by Pansy Parkinson. Hermione immediately felt all her 13 year old insecurities again and had to remind herself that she was a famous war hero, Order of Merlin first class and not a timid first year looking for a toad on a train. That morning she had pulled her hair back into a formal twist. It wasn't the frizzy halo it had once been (the trick was never ever using a drying charm on it), but it was still a wild and barely manageable struggle. Hermione braced herself for an acerbic comment from Pansy, but none came. Pansy simply welcomed her warmly and thanked her for coming while giving her a warm air kiss and then drifted off to welcome other people. Hermione couldn't tell if it was some type of pureblood hostess training, if she was genuinely happy to see her, or some type of sick joke.

Hermione smiled back and tried to find a seat. She felt her shoulders immediately tense as she tried to casually glance around the rows of chairs for a friendly face or an open place to sit. She thought she had found a good spot, only to quickly change course upon seeing Cormac McLaggen chatting to Marcus Flint. It was a veritable who's who of people Hermione would happily never see again. What was she getting into and how could she spend the entire rotation with these people? How long could she be expected to work in a place entirely filled with all her childhood bullies? There were so many Slytherins. She imagined she could feel their derision wafting toward her.

Hermione wished Ginny was here instead of flying with the Holyhead Harpies. Her heart leapt to see Katie Bell sitting alone and she quickly slipped into the open seat next to her.

“Oh Godric, Hermione,” gushed Katie. “I'm so glad to have a friend here.”

“You and me both,” answered Hermione.

“I’ve never felt so out-numbered,” said Katie, then added in an undertone “and I fought in a literal war.”

“It’s like a fever dream in here, Pansy and Millicent used to bully me relentlessly along with most of the boys... speaking of, do you know who is missing? Malfoy. I saw him flying on the pitch yesterday.”

She looked around for that unmistakable shock of white blond hair, but couldn’t see him. Instead she accidentally locked eyes with Cormac across the room. He winked at her and she quickly turned back towards Katie. When she’d hoped for more Gryffindors, she hadn’t meant Cormac McLaggen. Yuck.

But as she continued scanning the room, she was pleased to spot Oliver Wood deep in conversation with Blaise Zabini. She couldn’t remember ever speaking to Blaise, but her roommates had certainly loved talking about Blaise... and Oliver. The gossip had gotten worse during 8th year. Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil would practically salivate over the wizards in their classes and in issues of Seeker Weekly, but they were no match for Theo, who managed to be both the worst gossip and endlessly cycled through his own wizards. Oliver caught her eye and gave her a little smile and wave, like a perfectly normal person. She hoped Cormac was talking notes on how to behave himself.

“I wonder where Malfoy is,” said Hermione, “he’s the worst of the whole lot.”

“Oh I’m not so sure, Hermione,” said Katie. “You know Malfoy wrote me a letter from Azkaban a few months ago. Took me ages to finally open it and read it. But ultimately he just sent a truly heartfelt apology and we wrote back and forth a bit. I imagine I was probably hurt the most by him of anyone, but I’ve truly forgiven him. I wouldn’t be here otherwise.”

Katie Bell had been inadvertently hospitalized by Malfoy for months after being caught in the crossfire of his schemes. It was clear Malfoy had never meant Katie direct harm, but she was either the world’s most forgiving person or that must have been some apology letter.

Hermione had received one of his letters as well, as had Ron, and Harry. Ron had wanted to discuss the “poncey terrorist” for a week afterward, going so far as to complain about his elegant penmanship, but Hermione didn’t join in. Malfoy’s letter was so deeply thoughtful and apologetic, she hadn’t known what to say. Instead of responding, she had stuffed it in a drawer so she wouldn’t have to think about it anymore. But, after last night, Hermione had a difficult time reconciling the Malfoy who wrote her that beautiful letter and the same little shit she had encountered on the pitch.

As Oliver and Blaise made their way toward the podium at the front of the room, everyone began settling into seats. To Hermione’s surprise, Pansy Parkinson sat on her other side. Pansy was better than Flint or Cormac, but still incredibly unexpected. Pansy had bullied her throughout their first 6 years at Hogwarts, but after the war, in 8th year, she only ever saw Pansy on the edges of things. She was withdrawn, quiet, and mostly seemed to haunt the greenhouses. Perhaps she liked the quiet down there, although Hermione was sure that Heiress Pansy Parkinson’s perfectly manicured nails would never touch dirt, much less dig in

it. If Hermione were feeling gracious, she could understand that it must have been difficult for her, the girl who tried to give up Potter in a post-war society where Potter won. Perhaps they had all changed from the war.

“Hermione, it’s so good to see you again,” said Pansy graciously and to Hermione’s surprise Pansy went in for another embrace with a cheek to cheek air kiss.

Hermione had never seen such kindness or manners or really any decency at all from Pansy. “Um...”

“It’s been ages, but Theo tells us you’ve been busy with your Healer training program. Memory Care was your last rotation, wasn’t it?” Pansy didn’t apologize or comment on their troubled past, but instead acted like they are friends that hadn’t seen each other in a while.

“Um... yes, it was.”

“Memory is such a funny thing. I have so many great memories of Hogwarts and also memories that I deeply regret and wish I could change, but I think it’s important to try to move on. Hermione, if we wanted, I think we could be great friends.”

“Okay, sure. Thanks Pansy,” Hermione said, confused by the whole encounter. She got the sense that was as close to an apology as she was going to get and decided to let it go. In this snake pit, she would have to take any friends she could get. Besides, Theo was the son of a Death Eater and a Slytherin, and they were friends. Maybe she could collect another Slytherin and be real friends with Pansy too. “Why are there so many Slytherins here from our class year?”

“Didn’t Theo tell you?” she said with her cold laugh. “Who else did you expect would turn out? They couldn’t even manage to entice anyone for a training squad. I’m actually quite pleased we managed a full roster in time for the season to start. Plus I think I’ve finally found an expert that can remove the venomous plants near the ‘away team’ locker rooms.”

Why couldn’t they find enough people? Despite the scandal there should be plenty of barmy Quidditch types looking for employment. What had she walked into? Why did she let Theo talk her into this? At least she was just on her rotation with St. Mungo’s. She didn’t technically work for these people.

Before she could dwell any longer, Blaise called the room to attention. He welcomed them to the stadium, affectionately calling it “The Nest”. Hermione nearly scoffed at the pleasant name for the home of this scandal-ridden bigoted team. More like a nest of vipers. Blaise continued and thanked them all for being here, then began a quick summary of the Falcons’ history pre-scandal and the scandal itself. Most of it she already knew, obviously she did her research before arriving, and she let her eyes wander around the room.

She scanned the crowd for Malfoy’s trademark hair, remembering how amazing he had looked last night: sweaty, exhilarated, flipping that gleaming blonde hair out of his silver eyes. It was a striking contrast to the haunted man that had stared out of the pages of the Daily Prophet after his release from Azkaban. Despite feeling sympathy for him and testifying on his behalf, she knew from their interaction last night that he was still a massive

arsehole. Likely his blood-purist attitude probably meant he was angry she was even in his beloved “Nest” stadium.

Merlin’s pants, why was she thinking about him? She felt like Harry, obsessing over Malfoy’s every move. But why was he flying here last night? Like a rich ultra-privileged git, he probably did whatever he wanted. Malfoy Manor in Wiltshire wasn’t too far from Falmouth, maybe this was his favourite team growing up. Perhaps he went yachting with the owners or whatever ultra rich wizards did. She wasn’t actually sure if yachting was an exclusively Muggle thing or if ultra rich wizards also had yachts. Maybe she could ask Theo or her “new friend” Pansy.

Blaise continued explaining the Falcons’ scandal, the excitement the new management team had for this season, and wrapped up by introducing the new team owner. Hermione’s eyes were drawn to a flash of platinum blond hair and silver eyes as he entered the room. Oh no. Suddenly it hit her. Hermione felt a pit in her stomach. Malfoy didn’t own a yacht; Malfoy owned a Quidditch team.

Draco

Draco waited outside the Team Room and took another deep breath. The meeting had already begun and he was waiting for Blaise to introduce him. He felt like he was going to be sick. He hadn’t seen most of them since the war. They would hate him. They would never accept him. He felt his hands tremble as he fiddled with his rings. This was a mistake. A colossal waste of money and his remaining social capital.

Salazar, he was in trouble, but there was nothing for it now. Taking another deep breath he put his Occlumency walls in place to block out his negative thoughts, stood tall, and hid his feelings behind a self-assured smirk. Blaise announced him as the new owner and he strolled in like he owned the place... which he did.

As he entered through the front door near the podium, his eyes immediately caught on Granger seated in her lime green robes. She quickly looked away with an expression of surprised horror on her face. Why was he such a prick to her last night? He had the worst instincts sometimes. He was always ruining everything.

Upon reaching the podium, he tried for a casual yet professional tone. Undeniably in charge, but a bit cavalier about it. His internal monologue was a bit more pessimistic, but brutally honest.

“Thanks Blaise. I’m so pleased to be here with you all today. Although given the company I’ve been keeping the past couple of years, that might not be high praise.” That got a sad little chuckle out of the Slytherins, but not much else from the rest of the room.

Alas.

“I’d like to thank you for all being here, for agreeing to take a chance on me and this new team. I’ve been a Falmouth Falcons fan all my life and I think we’re going to have a great season this year.”

Unlikely, given the hotchpotch roster Blaise was able to pull together.

“We have so many phenomenal players this year,”

Actually they were mostly terribly inexperienced, even for Hogwarts Quidditch alumni since the season kept getting cancelled or players quit because of the war.

“our management team is top notch,”

Nope, mostly just his idiot friends and Granger, who is arguably the most qualified person for their job in the room and she was still technically a trainee.

“and obviously, the best owner in the league.”

That was meant as a joke, but again, it didn't land. Probably too much history there.

“This season, Marcus Flint, Katie Bell, and Adrian Pucey are our Chasers,”

Bell was a real surprise, Blaise must have been one hell of a sweet talker to convince her to leave the Kenmare Kestrels. Pucey wasn't actually that strong of a player, but easy to recruit. Low hanging fruit that one. Maybe with Bell and Flint together he would be a good support player. Flint would be the real wildcard this season. He was a strong player, from an extremely well connected Sacred Twenty-Eight family, but even so was unemployed when Blaise found him. Sacked again for fighting on the pitch. Man, he could play, but he had a real mean streak. They had better keep an eye on him.

“returning home from America, we have Greg Goyle and Millie Bulstrode as Beaters,”

Goyle was pretty much just here as a favour, they hadn't spoken really since Vince's death in the Room of Hidden Things, and Millie, of course, came with the package. Goyle and Millie had been best friends since they were kids and had been the best players on the Springfield Sparrows, a rubbish American team, when Blaise recruited them. They might be a bit boorish, but were a strong duo.

“Cormac McLaggen will be our Seeker this season,”

Draco didn't think McLaggen had ever played Seeker before. Where had Blaise found this guy? McLaggen's uncle, of course, was on the Wizengamot and got him anything he wanted. Draco knew that was rich coming from him. He might be a prick and an ex-convict, but at least he was also a gentleman. McLaggen had an oily predator vibe, and his prey was probably not a Snitch. Was it really so hard to get people to agree to work for them? Merlin.

“And finally, our Keeper and captain, Oliver Wood.”

Wood was an excellent player and would undoubtedly be their star. It was nothing short of a miracle that they had convinced him to join. Wood had been trapped behind other great players, most recently verbally committing to Puddlemere United, but awaiting their current Keeper's retirement. By coming to the Falcons, he got to play immediately, and the captain role meant he could coach the team how he saw fit. Draco had credited Blaise's negotiation skills with convincing him to join the ignominious Falcons, but apparently it was Theo that

actually persuaded Wood to join. Theo had a way with people. That and Wood loved a good underdog story, didn't he train Potter and in doing so ended the Gryffindor losing streak? Good to have him on their side now.

Everyone politely applauded their, frankly, rotten team. And he silently thanked Prof. Snape again for teaching him Occlumency.

“You already know our Head of Quidditch, Blaise Zabini, coming to us after acting as Assistant Head of Quidditch to the Benevento Boars last season. He'll be the one truly managing this operation. And of course, the lovely Pansy Parkinson, of Parkinson Designs, will be focusing on media relations.”

“What role does Theo Nott have with the Falcons?” asked Wood.

“Theo is a general nuisance and I'm sure he'll be under foot in no time, but he is not officially affiliated with the Falcons.”

Wood looked confused by that answer. What had Theo done now?

“We won't be needing Theo, we already have Hermione Granger as our team healer on loan from St. Mungo's.” He had not acknowledged Granger's presence up until that point and although he owed her an apology and a hundred more, this was not the place. Instead he caught her eye and said, “We were incredibly lucky to catch the Golden Girl - now let's just hope we are as lucky catching the Golden Snitch this season.”

He yielded the floor back to Blaise and Wood, and chanced another glance at Granger. She looked totally nonplussed by his polite introduction. Perhaps, she'd rather he skipped the hundred apologies and kept his mouth shut around her instead.

“Thank you, Draco,” Blaise said to a small smattering of lukewarm applause. “Right, let's get to it. Pre-season matches start in a month and we have a lot to catch-up on if we're going to have a chance this season. Draco, Wood, and I have decided for the next month you'll be training everyday, seven days a week.”

A chorus of groans filled the room and Draco slipped out of the room before hearing the details of the grueling training regimen they had devised. At least, they had one thing going for them this season - the team was united in its disdain for the Falcons' leadership.

Chapter End Notes

Image credit: Harrison Wood Hsiang (@hsiang.arts)

Join us on healthyishobsession.com for extras, images, fan creations, and more!

Thank you to everyone that has been so supportive of this story so far. This whole project has been an absolute blast! A few people have asked me how fans can support

our team:

-you could join the discussion in the comments below (including brainstorming ideas for the TGSAASL playlist),

-you could submit fanart at HealthyishObsession.com (including tiny chapter topping sketches), or

-you could help spread the word about the fic to your friends!

Thank you all so much!

Go Falcons!

Chapter 5: Ambrosius Ballroom. December 2000.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

Hermione threw back her champagne with slightly more enthusiasm than she had planned, sputtering a bit. She quickly covered her mouth, hoping no one in the opulent Ambrosius ballroom had noticed. The hall was awash in soft whites and golds with a gleaming dance floor surrounded by Corinthian columns and potted Flutterby Bushes. She watched as guests slowly filed down the grand staircase dispersing onto the dancefloor, lavish bar, or clusters of witches and wizards chatting on the periphery. Charmed trays floated among them offering hors d'oeuvres or champagne.

She hadn't seen Ron since their break-up, but that was fine. They were still friends. She barely saw plenty of people that she considered good friends. But watching Ron escort Lavender Brown down the stairs toward the dance floor made her realize that Ron had moved on, while she had been standing still. Lavender was in pink robes covered in voluminous tulle. Dreadful, simply dreadful. She looked like a giant candy floss that clashed horribly with Ron's hair. Technically, they were supposed to be friends, so she felt like she should go over and say hello. Except, Ron clearly had a date to the League Cup Commencement Gala and she most definitely did not. Last year when she had come to this event, she was the one on Ron's arm. Sidling up to them now and explaining her role with the Falcons felt like a great way to get into a public fight. It was just too complicated to chat to Ron right now. Merlin, she was stunned to see him so chummy with Lavender. Was that fast? It felt fast. She bit her lip and pressed her palm into her chest. Instead of engaging with Ron, she turned away in search of another glass of champagne.

The ballroom was a veritable minefield of uncomfortable social interactions tonight. She had known Quidditch was steeped in old pureblood money, but the number of Slytherins present was uncanny. A tray floated by filled with miniature treacle tarts. Hermione reached for one as Flint simultaneously reached for another. Upon seeing her, he stopped, grabbed a serviette, wiped his hand, gave her a meaningful sneer, and declined to take one from the tray she had handled. Prick. Maybe he really did have some secret troll heritage.

Hermione continued in her search for a glass of champagne and found Ginny instead. She was easy enough to find, in her floor-length dark purple gown and long red hair. Thank

Merlin she had finally arrived.

“Ginny, you’re late,” said Hermione.

“The international portkey office was an absolute mess tonight,” said Ginny. “I’m so tired of living all the way in Wales.”

“Have you considered putting your name on the transfer list? Maybe you could try to get traded somewhere within Floo distance to London?”

“Harry and I were just talking about it,” said Ginny. “Now that we’re engaged it feels like it might be time. I love the Harpies, but I love Harry more, and after what happened with Seamus... I’d, well... I’d just prefer to be closer to home...”

Ginny’s voice trailed off, her gaze searching for Harry in the crowd. They didn’t need to say anything more, Hermione understood. Six months ago Seamus Finnigan and Harry had been hunting down rogue Death Eaters when they were attacked by a werewolf. After that, the mission had gone from bad to worse in every way possible. The injured Boy-Who-Lived-Again-And-Again had somehow limped back to St. Mungo’s, but Seamus was not so lucky. She could picture how he would have charmed the room tonight, dancing with all the witches until finding someone to take home. There had never been a dull Sunday brunch with Seamus around recounting his Saturday night exploits. She smiled sadly at the thought. Being an Auror was inherently dangerous; Seamus’ death had been a devastating reality check.

Harry and Neville joined them each carrying two flutes of champagne. Harry gave a glass to Ginny and hugged Hermione in greeting. Even in formal dress robes his glasses were askew and his hair remained as unruly as ever. Hermione gratefully accepted a glass from Neville. It appeared to her that he had come alone to the gala, and she couldn’t help but feel a pang of protectiveness towards her old friend. She couldn’t fathom what these witches were waiting for. After all, Neville had become incredibly fit, not to mention his war hero status and innate kindness. Through his robes she could see his broad shoulders and strong arms, grown not in the gym or pitch, but from hours tending his plants. Come to think of it, she couldn’t remember the last time she had seen him inside, all cleaned-up, and playing the part of a Sacred Twenty-Eight pureblood heir. It was a bit surprising to see him chatting with them at all and not distractedly examining the nearest Flutterby Bush.

“Neville, thank you,” she said. “I’m so glad to see you, but what are you doing here?”

“Hermione, good to see you too. I heard you were rotating with the Falcons this season. How’s it been going?”

Hermione wasn’t sure how Neville knew about her current rotation, but was happy to fill him in. After the kick-off meeting a month ago, it had become common knowledge that Malfoy had bought the Falmouth Falcons. So far training sessions had looked a bit grim, even to her untrained eye, and she didn’t have high hopes for their three upcoming pre-season matches. Wood was a great Keeper, but he was still an inexperienced captain. Greg and Millie were a strong duo of Beaters when they focused on the match and not hurling petty insults. The real trouble was with the Chasers and Seeker. Flint and Pucey wouldn’t pass to Katie unless absolutely forced to, even in drill training. That left Flint passing back and forth with Pucey,

but Pucey was a mediocre support player, at best. Leaving Katie wide open until she could scoop up the Quaffle after it fell from Pucey's grasp. And even Hermione could tell McLaggen was a rubbish Seeker. He never intensely scanned the sky like Harry used to and he didn't maneuver nearly as well as Malfoy did in the evenings - and neither of them were playing professionally.

"Yes, Hermione, how are the Falcons? Is the Ferret terrible?" asked Ginny.

Hermione stopped to consider the question. From her large office windows overlooking the pitch, she had seen Malfoy several times a week, long after everyone else had gone home. She liked to look up from her work and watch him swooping effortlessly. He always looked so graceful, free, in a way he wasn't when everyone else was around. The two versions of Malfoy didn't seem to fit, and she found herself trying to reconcile them. Each night, he landed not far from her window. He would shoulder his broom and nod in her direction as he passed. Was it a greeting? A silent acknowledgement of her presence? Or was it some game she didn't understand? She found herself tensing each time and wondering if he landed by her window on purpose. It was probably the quickest way off the pitch, but part of her wondered if he was doing it to say goodnight.

"Hermione? Did we lose you?" asked Ginny. "Is it terrible being around Malfoy?"

"I'm not totally sure," she admitted, her mind snapped back to the ballroom from her stadium recollections. "Blaise and Oliver run practices, I think he mostly stays in his office during the day." She didn't feel it was her place to mention the late nights he spent flying.

"Oi," called Oliver Wood passing by. "Has anyone seen Theodore Nott? I have something strictly professional and not remotely personal to discuss with him."

No one had, but they all turned to look around politely as though they might happen to find Theo nearby.

"Speak of the devil," said Ginny in awe. "No one told me he'd gotten so fit."

Theo was many things, but shockingly "fit" had never been one of them. She turned to look where Ginny was staring and watched as Malfoy, not Theo, descended the steps into the ballroom in impeccable dress robes, escorting Pansy in a long black sheath dress.

"They're gorgeous," said Ginny. "Are they together?"

"Not since early 6th year," said Neville. "Just old friends."

Hermione thought it was a bit odd that Neville knew private details about Malfoy's life. But she didn't follow up as she couldn't resist watching the pair slowly descend into the room. She hated that he was so striking. His expertly tailored dress robes perfectly highlighted his lithe seeker physique. Then, he flipped his blond hair out of his silver eyes and she felt a frisson of desire. She realized that she was ignoring her friends and instead hoping to catch his eye. What was she doing? No, she thought, NOT Malfoy, it was just the champagne (although it must have been quite strong for only a glass to have had such an impact...).

Draco

Draco Malfoy had been paraded around ballrooms since before he could walk, but this was his first society event since the war, since Azkaban, and for the first time he felt like he didn't belong. His entire life before the war, wherever he was, had been a space he commanded, bent to his will. Now, he wasn't so sure. Thank Salazar for Occlumency.

Pansy steered them around the room forcing him to make connections. She said it was good for their brand that he came tonight. He needed to be the cool confident Lord Malfoy who definitely had not made a huge mistake when he bought the Falcons and was ever so delighted by the superb showing in pre-season training and yes, he thought their chances for the cup were unparalleled.

All he wanted was to get a bottle of Ogden's Old Firewhiskey and stare darkly into the smoldering remains of a fire in the manor. Or maybe get back out on the pitch. He'd bought several new brooms recently and they were all excellent; much better than his old Nimbus 2001 or Firebolt. But he couldn't go flying if Granger wasn't there...for safety obviously, he still wasn't up to his normal strength. It was prudent to fly where a healer could keep a professional eye on him. He hadn't trusted himself to actually say anything to her since the disastrous meeting on the pitch. He wondered if he'd ever manage more than nodding at her like a numpty.

Lost in thought, he considered whether she might be here tonight. Granger had probably been pried from her work, much as he had been from his manor, by well-meaning friends. She was most likely here with the Weasel. Which brought him right back to his original plan of brooding in his manor.

Instead Pansy had him strolling around this ballroom pretending that he was unaware of everyone else's derision. Surely they knew he could hear their whispers of "only free Death Eater" or "tried to kill Dumbledore". Perhaps that was their intention. His name used to open doors and now it closed them. He used his thumb to spin his Malfoy signet ring until Pansy smacked his hand.

"Quit it," she said in an undertone, still smiling outwardly, "We're doing this for you. I'm not leaving you to sulk on your drawing room floor."

"I very seldom lay on the actual floor, Parks," drawled Draco.

"Please try. I do have other things I could be doing, you know." Pansy sighed and looked across the room toward the bar. "I'm so tired of your dramatics. I'll find you in a bit. That group there is all team owners; I want you to go chat with them. Win them over."

"Fine," he said, feigning a confident smirk. "But I want you to know: I hate this."

"I want you to know: I hate when you act like this," said Pansy as she dropped his arm and gave him a little push. "You'll thank me someday, Malfoy."

Draco gratefully selected a glass of champagne from a passing tray and with practiced ease made his way into the circle of other team owners.

“Lord Malfoy, it’s been too long,” the first owner said, shaking Draco’s hand. “A couple years at least.” Draco smiled blandly at the purposefully insensitive remark determined not to raise to the bait.

“Always a pleasure, Wellington. How do you rate the Arrows’ chances this year?” Draco said with forced politeness.

“I’d wager they’ll finish higher than the Falcons.”

“Watch yourself Wellington, best not to wager with young Malfoy... he’s just come into his inheritance,” said Radbourne, the owner of the Bats.

“And it seems his silver spoon has turned into a golden shovel - for digging himself out of trouble,” Wellington said, guffawing at his own remark.

“Yes, tell us Lord Malfoy, were any other Death Eaters released from Azkaban or just the wealthy ones?”

Draco tried to chuckle good-naturedly like this was just idle banter, but their taunts gave him the same sick feeling as when Granger had accused him of buying his way onto the Slytherin Quidditch team with new Nimbus 2001’s brooms. Perhaps he didn’t belong here, but he wasn’t going to take their barbs either.

“You may be right about one thing. The Malfoys do have a way of coming out on top. I’d be happy to advise you sometime.” Draco made a mock toast to the group, sipped his champagne as a punctuation to his statement. The other owners clearly underestimated Draco’s capacity for polite snark.

“Lord Malfoy, I heard in your desperation to put together a team, you have let Falcons’ high standards slip and ... well... I know times are changing, but do be careful of the company you’re keeping.”

“If the company I keep is in question, then I best take my leave of this gathering. Gentleman, I’ll see you on the pitch.”

Draco inclined his head and swept away from them in search of anyone less hostile. So much for Pansy’s instructions for him to “win them over”. He felt his one hand begin to tremble and causally flexed it a few times in a futile attempt to still it before slipping his hand in his pocket.

Sipping his champagne he scanned the ballroom and his eyes found Granger’s. She wore a backless periwinkle gown with her hair tied up in a complicated knot and long evening gloves. He had always loved her in periwinkle. Wait, what was he thinking? He’d never loved anything about Granger. Though he could admit that she had looked nice enough at the Yule Ball. That was just one time.

Although once she had pulled her jumper off in the warm potions lab 5th year and her white Oxford had ridden up exposing her stomach.

Or that one time, every class, really in 6th year Defense Against the Dark Arts when she sat on that angle just in front of him each day and he would stare at the little line of her exposed skin between her stockings and skirt.

Now as he looked at her, he imagined pulling her into his arms, undoing her hair and letting her curls tumble down her back, wild and loose and... well...

In his experience, she was normally surrounded by Gryffindor friends, but that was most assuredly not the case now. McLaggen was towering over her as she slowly backed up, nearly pressed up against a column on the edge of the dance floor. It was clear she wanted nothing to do with the reprobate who wouldn't take the hint. Why she wanted to waste good manners on McLaggen was unclear. Perhaps she was trying to not make a scene. He suddenly found himself walking toward the pair.

"Granger, I've been looking all over for you," Draco said with a subtle wink. "You still owe me that dance."

Granger looked surprisingly happy to see him, a new experience for him; whereas McLaggen just scowled, a much more familiar experience.

"Yes, I did make that very real promise to Malf... to him, earlier. Before." she said. Merlin, she couldn't be this terrible of a liar. "If you'll excuse me... us, Cormac." She said edging toward Draco.

"McLaggen, I was just talking to your uncle and I think he's been looking for you; it seemed like he wanted to introduce you to some people."

"Uncle Tiberious asked for me? Specifically?" asked McLaggen. Then turned to Hermione, "Duty calls I'm afraid," and he was off like a shot.

At least Draco had outgrown his familial obsession in his teens, it was even more off-putting in your twenties.

"My apologies, Granger. I'm afraid I couldn't think of another way to be rid of him. You're not obligated to dance with me." He might have had an ugly history with Granger, but he was at heart a gentleman and didn't want her to feel he'd forced himself on her in McLaggen's place.

"I might, but only if I wouldn't get the precious Malfoy Heir *muddy*."

"Don't be crass, Granger," he said, holding out his hand to her. "I've already inherited; I make my own decisions now."

She astounded him by accepting his outstretched hand. He wandlessly vanished their champagne glasses (he'd always been a show-off) and pulled her closer to place his hand on her back. He'd forgotten that her dress was backless. The moment his palm felt her warm skin an unexpected jolt shot through him. He couldn't recall the last time they had touched. Perhaps as assigned partners in some class or passing on the Hogwarts Express, maybe it was

that time she belted him across the face, but either way, they had never been this close before. They had certainly never waltzed before.

“I’ve been wondering,” Draco mused conversationally. “Why did you choose this training rotation? You’ve never liked Quidditch.”

“You remember that?”

“Granger, give me some credit, you brought books to half our matches. Your dislike of Quidditch is legendary.”

“Well, Quidditch, and flying, have never been my thing.”

“Are you saying The Brightest Witch of Her Age can't fly on a broom?” Draco said with a smile. Was he flirting with her? No, he was absolutely not intrigued by her. Unless he was.

He tried to look past Granger to hide his grin and noticed Pansy with Theo at the bar. They were laughing with Wood and Longbottom. He hadn't seen Longbottom in a few years now and was surprised that he seemed to have grown into his looks. He hoped Theo would keep his hands to himself. He didn't fancy bringing Longbottom into their social group on one of Theo's whims. Draco caught Pansy's eye and her attention completely snapped to the dance floor. He could see Pansy cunningly weighing her media relations options as she watched them. His gaze returned to Granger.

“I can fly, I just choose not to. Unlike you. You can't seem to get enough.”

“Flying is the best part of magic.”

“Is that why I see you flying most nights?”

“I think flying was the thing I missed the most in Azkaban,” he said, surprising himself with his honesty as he spun her out and pulled her back close. “I suppose, it feels like freedom. It's liberating, exhilarating, and it's one of the only things the Dark Lord never ruined. If you wanted, I could teach you to fly, really fly, some night.” Did he just ask her out? Merlin's beard. Wasn't she with Weasley? Draco could hex himself, he was such an idiot.

“Oh, I don't think that would be such a good idea.”

“Is it the flying you object to, or is it me?” As he said the words aloud he immediately regretted them. Why couldn't he just be normal around her?

The song ended and saved Granger from answering his unfair question. She thanked him for the dance and nearly knocked into Pansy in her haste to disappear into the crowd.

“I can't decide if you and Granger are PR gold or a PR disaster,” said Pansy. “For now we're mitigating. You're dancing with me now, then we'll pair you with Millie or Katie too, and then you still need to meet the director of the Department of Magical Games and Sports.”

Draco knew better than to fight Pansy's machinations. He held out his hand to her and they began to smoothly dance across the floor. He wasn't really listening to Pansy though. He was

replaying his dance with Granger and trying to memorize the feel of his hand on her bare back.

He wondered why the blazes Weasley had left her alone to get cornered by McLaggen. Even the Weasel couldn't be that big of a tosser, could he? No, there was something else at play here. Maybe Granger hadn't been here tonight with the Weasel?

Would she take him up on his flying lesson offer? Draco could get her out on a real broom, not those ancient Silver Arrows or Shooting Stars that Hooch used in class. Something sleek and fast, but still responsive. It was rumored that she'd ridden a dragon already. But he'd love to get her flying with him. He smiled at the thought.

"Draco? Malfoy," said Pansy trying to get his attention, her lips pursed like she was trying to solve a complex arithmancy problem. "What are you thinking about?" Draco shrugged as if to say nothing important, but he couldn't help grinning. "You and Granger seemed to be getting along rather well just now. I haven't seen you smile like that in years."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! -HealthyishObsession

Image credit: Harrison Wood Hsiang (@hsiang.arts)

Join us on <https://HealthyishObsession.com> for extras, images, fan creations, and more!

Chapter 6: Falcons' Stadium. January 2001.

Chapter Notes

Posting images in a fic can be tricky, because you never know how it looks on every device. All the important items are embedded and transcribed in this fic, but we have created extra “in universe” Falcons promos and press coverage about the 2001 Quidditch season. Please visit: healthyishobsession.com to see everything.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)



Daily Prophet “FALMOUTH FALCONS' FRANTIC FOLLIES: French 'Friendly' Fails Fabulously!”

By: Rita Skeeter

Although the Falmouth Falcons foolishly fostered high hopes for a strong start this season, it is now abundantly clear that this disgraced team has a remarkably long, hard road ahead. Their pre-season matches have ended not merely in losses, but in truly embarrassing defeats, and sources (I cannot reveal for fear of life and limb!) whisper that trainings have gone from bad to utterly disastrous.

Their latest pre-season loss unfolded in spectacular fashion during the exhibition 'friendly' match in Falmouth this weekend – though, dear readers, there was absolutely nothing friendly about this particular fracas! The Quiberon Quafflepunchers, a rather popular French team, had visited Falmouth, England's own Nest Stadium, ostensibly as goodwill ambassadors, but the match quickly devolved into a massive brawl (now affectionately (or perhaps not so affectionately) dubbed 'the French Fiasco!'). Most notably, the usually stoic French Keeper was, in a truly bizarre turn of events, transfigured into a full-sized grandfather clock! Now, one might ponder the sheer luck that the renowned trainee Healer Hermione Granger, just happened to be on the pitch, ready to perform the rather impressive counter-curse and transform him back with remarkable speed. He's back to playing Quidditch now in France, by all accounts, though reliable sources report he still chimes on the hour!

Indeed, the Falmouth Falcons' season is off to an absolutely abysmal, utterly unwatchable start. Readers, I'm afraid the Falcons' notorious owner, the newly-rehabilitated (and Former Death Eater!) Draco Malfoy - a wizard famously (or infamously) guilty of the attempted murder of no less a figure than Albus Dumbledore himself - might finally succeed in killing someone (and, more importantly, the Falcons' fading prospects!) if he can't rein in his young, hot-headed, and, it must be said, seemingly talentless team. One shudders to think what fresh horrors next weekend will bring at the season opener!



2001 BRITISH AND IRISH LEAGUE

FALMOUTH FALCONS

SCHEDULE

January

6, 10, 13

Preseason



Birmingham Badgers (Amateur)
Oxford Mammoths (Amateur)
Quiberon Quafflepunchers (France)

20

Falmouth Falcons



Wimbourne Wasps

26

Falmouth Falcons



Appleby Arrows

February

3

Falmouth Falcons



Puddlemere United

10

Falmouth Falcons



Pride of Portree

17

Falmouth Falcons



Chudley Cannons

24

**Friendly Match TBD by Magical
International Cooperation Committee**

March

3

Falmouth Falcons



Montrose Magpies

9

Falmouth Falcons



Tutshill Tornados

17

Falmouth Falcons



Kenmare Kestrels

30

Falmouth Falcons



Caerphilly Catapults

April

7

Falmouth Falcons



Wigtown Wanderers

14

Falmouth Falcons



Holyhead Harpies

21

Falmouth Falcons



Ballycastle Bats

May

Semifinals TBD

Finals TBD

**“Let us win, but if we cannot win, let us
break a few heads”**

2001 British and Irish League Falmouth Falcons Schedule

(transcript of previous image)

January

- Preseason: 6th vs Birmingham Badgers (Amateur)
- Preseason: 10th vs Oxford Mammoths (Amateur)
- Preseason: 13th vs Quiberon Quafflepunchers (France)
- 20 January - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Wimbourne Wasps
- 26 January - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Appleby Arrows

February

- 3 February - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Puddlemere United
- 10 February - Falmouth Falcons at **Pride of Portree**
- 17 February - Falmouth Falcons at **Chudley Cannons**
- 24 February - Friendly Match TBD by the Magical International Cooperation Committee

March

- 3 March - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Montrose Magpies
- 9 March - Falmouth Falcons at **Tutshill Tornados**
- 17 March - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Kenmare Kestrels
- 30 March - Falmouth Falcons at **Caerphilly Catapults**

April

- 7 April - Falmouth Falcons at **Wigtown Wanderers**
- 14 April - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Holyhead Harpies
- 21 April - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Ballycastle Bats

May

- Semifinals TBA
- Finals TBA

“Let us win, but if we cannot win, let us break a few heads”

Falmouth Falcons 0-0

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Marcus Flint: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cormac McLaggen: Seeker

Draco

Draco stood overlooking the pitch from the huge glass wall of his overly large office situated at the top of The Nest at the midline. It was the morning of the first official match of the season against the Wimbourne Wasps and Draco was attempting to cover his nerves with an artificial Occlumency-fuelled calm demeanor. What a disaster this was becoming.

He heard Blaise and Pansy come in, but couldn't be bothered to look at them as he stood watching the pregame preparations. Blaise joined him by the windows.

"The Nest is filling up nicely," said Blaise.

"But are they here to support the team or watch another brawl?" said Draco.

"Does it matter? Ticket sales are higher than we projected," said Blaise.

"No press is bad press," said Pansy as she cast an Aguamenti to water the plants that had been placed near the wall of windows.

Draco scoffed and inwardly thought that some press (i.e. everything by Rita Skeeter) was definitely bad press.

"What's with this new plant obsession, Pansy?" asked Blaise. "If you keep filling this office we'll be hard pressed to see the match through this foliage."

"I like it," said Draco, defensive of his plants.

"Of course you do," said Pansy impatiently. "You were in Azkaban for two years and look how alive this place feels in comparison."

Draco wanted to explain that he didn't need her to manage everything for him. Except he thought begrudgingly that he might need his friends more than he wanted to admit. Even if they had convinced him to buy the Falcons, which had to be among Draco's worst decisions - and he had plenty of terrible decisions to choose from.

"The pitch itself looks so much better," said Blaise looking back out the windows. "Pansy, that landscaper you hired really turned this place around."

Just because it looked like a professional Quidditch stadium didn't mean any of the players were meant to be playing in a professional match. The team was still a nightmare. Draco

absently pulled his training Snitch out of his pocket and casually played with it as he watched out the window. He let it fly a few inches away and then caught it again. What a mess.

“I can’t believe you convinced me to do this,” he said scornfully. His team was a disaster, and he wasn’t much better.

After the “friendly” French Fiasco match, they had tried to make a plan and do better going forward, but he wasn’t sure what would come of it. They had all been in the team room. All seven players were silent and exhausted. Most were waiting for Granger to heal them after the brawl. She was busy tending to Millie who was still smoldering after being struck by lightning as a result of a Tempest Jinx. The room was tense, a tinderbox. The smell of sweat, blood, and Millie’s softly burning jersey hung in the air. Wood stood up with a resigned sigh.

“Well,” said Wood and tried to look dignified. “What do you have to say for yourselves?” It was clear he wanted to sound like a true captain leading his team in their hour of need. The effect was somewhat diminished however, by his general inexperience as a professional captain, well, that and because one of his arms had been transfigured into a dolphin flipper.

“Flint started it,” shouted Goyle. Chaos descended as everyone began shouting and angrily gesturing again.

Draco stepped forward and didn’t need to use a Sonorous Charm to get their attention. “Enough,” commanded Draco. “We’re supposed to be a fucking team, so we’re going to figure out how to act like one. We need to start over and build from the ground up. Anyone have any bloody ideas?” Everyone stared at him in a bit of shock. He hadn’t meant to, but he realized that he had slipped into his Death Eater persona, not a young Draco “my father will hear about this” Malfoy, but a young Draco Lucius “Lord of the Manor” Malfoy, commanding respect and threatening against inattention.

Since prison, he had been an arsehole, a prat, a bastard, but not this. He hadn’t been this, not since the war. He stood at his full height, his face a mask of haughty contempt, and exuded power and force of will daring anyone to cross him. Threatening. The room was silent. Draco could hear his own breathing and felt anger and shame battling within him, until Granger broke the tension.

“I have a few ideas,” she said meekly at first, but eventually with confidence. “Well, that is, there’s a lot of Muggle science that goes into training athletes and there’s so many different types of Muggle sports. Have you ever heard of the Olympics? Or football? Nevermind, forget it. The point is, no one wants the team to get relegated or whatever you call it in Quidditch. I’m sure I could do some research about the intersection of Muggle sports and Quidditch to outline a training program... if you wanted?”

Draco vaguely recognized the terms “football” and “olympics” from Muggle Studies as some Muggle sport. However, he had no idea what getting “relegated” meant, but it sounded bad. Perhaps it was something medical? He’d need to ask Theo.

Draco couldn’t believe he was grateful for Granger’s research babbling, of all things, which seemed to break the tension in the room. What an adorable swot. Apparently, even Quidditch

could be solved through books. He felt the tension start to leave him, something about her rambling sparked hope, something he had gone too long without.

“Thank you,” said Draco. “If there’s anyone who can research our way out of this, it’ll be Hermione Granger, Order of Merlin, first class”.

She smiled at him and he found himself genuinely smiling back. Then she focused on extinguishing Millie’s still sparking hair and the moment passed.

“Thanks, Hermione,” said Wood, attempting to get the room to applaud by clapping his hand to his flipper. “I’d love to work with you on this.”

Across the room, Flint not only refused to clap, but stood up with a murderous glint in his eye.

“Something you’d like to say Flint?” said Wood challengingly. Flint stood up and stormed out of the Team Room slamming the door behind him. Granger jumped at the sound and lost her battle with Millie’s Tempest Jinx. The room shook with thunder and they were all pelted with rain.

What a terrible way to start off their season. Draco didn’t know where they all stood now on opening day, but it wasn’t good. They would never beat the Wimbourne Wasps today. This past week everyone at The Nest had been frustrated and angry, except Granger who simply looked excited to master yet another field of study as fast as possible. Her eyes had been alight with the challenge. He didn’t know why he’d never noticed her eyes before. They were quite striking, large caramel brown with flecks of gold.

Draco let his Golden Snitch flutter farther and farther away as he watched The Nest continue to fill. Blaise and Pansy were still blathering on about the stadium and the match. He was surprised they were both so optimistic. It was impossible to know, but Draco wondered if they were putting up a front for him or if they really thought it was going well. Either way they were delusional. He barely paid attention as they kept going on about ticket sales, landscaping, facilities, their schedule this season, and their excellent healer from St. Mungo’s.

Draco caught his training Snitch and listened more to their conversation, without engaging. Were they hassling him about Granger? But why would they? Now he was the delusional one. They didn’t know anything about him and Granger. There was no him and Granger. There wasn’t anything to know anyway. Except he did offer to help her improve flying, but she would never agree to ride with him.

Someone knocked on the door and Draco turned toward the sound as George Weasley (and his boorishly red hair) entered Draco’s office. Obviously Blaise was expecting him and immediately shook his hand.

“Excellent. Great to see you mate,” said Blaise. “Draco, did I tell you? I’ve hired George as our commentator for home matches.”

Draco always thought George and Fred Weasley were funny at school and he respected the pranks the twins pulled, especially when they targeted Umbridge. And despite their embarrassingly low-quality brooms, they had been intimidating Beaters for Gryffindor. Draco heard that Fred had died at the Battle of Hogwarts. He wondered how George was getting on now. Losing his identical twin brother and best friend; Draco couldn't imagine what that must be like. George seemed fine enough today at least. He had a glint in his eye and seemed about to laugh at only Salazar knew what. It could be fun to have him as the commentator, the crowd would probably like him.

Draco crossed the room to shake George's hand. Before Draco could reach him, George began to cough and sputter. His eyes terrified. He put his hands on his throat and fell to one knee gasping.

"Get Granger," Draco barked as George fell to the floor. Blaise and Pansy made no move to help and looked more amused than concerned. Some fucking help they were. Draco knelt down next to him on the floor not sure what to do. Was there a spell he should cast? George went still and at that moment a translucent shimmering soul emerged from his body. The ghost laughed and spoke.

"Oh Ferret, that was classic. George, I wish you could have seen his face."

George cracked open his eyes and began to laugh as well from the floor, along with Blaise and Pansy. Draco heaved a sign of relief, damn pranksters. His hands began to tremor slightly from the tumult of emotions and put his hands in his pockets before anyone noticed.

"Draco, you look like you've seen a ghost," said Blaise, clapping him on the shoulder with a laugh, "because you have. They do that bit all the time. Fred's been haunting George ever since he died at the Battle of Hogwarts, he'll be helping with the commentary for the League Cup season."

Draco whipped his head between the twins, standing side-by-side still giggling and sharing conspiratorial glances. He didn't quite know how to recover from the ordeal of the past two minutes. On closer examination, he could see that there were subtle differences between the twins now that George had lost an ear and continued to age, unlike the apparition of his brother who was forever frozen in time.

"I'm not 'helping' commentate," said Fred. "There are two of us equally contributing. I'd better make the same salary as George."

"Absolutely not," said Draco to Blaise. "I'm only paying the live one."

"Didn't I hear that Hermione Granger is working here?" said George slyly.

"You'd better be careful or she'll have all of us undead workers unionizing as the Allied Nonliving Unionized Staff or ANUS for short," said Fred, cocking his translucent eyebrow meaningfully.

Salazar help him, but Granger just might. The last thing he needed were ANUS buttons being spread around. That witch was terrifying.

“Fine, I’ll pay both of you.” He briefly longed for the peace of his cell in Azkaban, at least it lacked this rubbish.

Hermione

“Where’s our Golden Girl?” called Theo into the Falcons’ medical center.

“I’m just finishing up,” Hermione called back as she washed her hands. She would never understand why healers wore such voluminous robes, the cuffs were constantly slipping down her wrists into the water. It was preposterous.

Theo rounded the corner and propped his hip on the counter. “I thought the team would be here,” he pouted.

“Sorry, so you’re not looking for me then? Who are you really looking for?”

“No one.”

Sure. Theo was as subtle as a baby mandrake.

“They are already warming up on the pitch,” she said, indicating the large windows and Theo instantly looked out over the field. They stood there a moment watching the teams get ready.

“I told you there’d be fit wizards on this rotation,” said Theo elbowing her in the ribs. “Has anyone at The Nest caught your fancy yet?”

Hermione just rolled her eyes. “The match will start soon, you should go to your seat.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Why, Theo, has someone on the team caught your fancy?”

Theo made an exaggerated face and looked at his watch, “We really should go. Where’s your seat?”

Surprised, Hermione gestured to the medical center. “Here? I’m the team’s healer. I watched all the pre-season matches from here at my desk.” Where else would she watch from? This is where all her equipment was located, where she would work on the players if they were injured.

But Theo had his own plans. He was aghast. “I absolutely forbid you to sit alone here. Come on, love, we’re going to Draco’s box.” He took her arm, linked it through his. She was barely able to snatch her medical bag before he was attempting to whisk her off.

Hermione tried to pull away, but he was surprisingly strong. At the mention of Malfoy’s name, she felt a nervous shudder. She was not really sure if she was invited to be in his coaching box. They had danced at the gala, but then he had danced with several witches - not that she noticed. And he had only danced with her to rescue her from McLaggen’s advances. He hadn’t actually sought her out. And although he flew in the evenings and landed near her

window, they still only ever sort of waved or smiled politely. And she absolutely never watched him flying in the distance or waited until he landed to leave or wondered if she should take him up on the flying lesson he'd offered....

“Trainee Healer Granger, don't make me petrify and levitate you. I've been practicing my Incarcerous,” he said, twirling his wand with a suggestive wink. She was sure she didn't want to know, and hurried to catch up.

Theo led her through the stadium and into Malfoy's coaching box. It was on the sideline at the halfway line on ground level with a much better view. Being at the center line, she would be closer to the action here than at her medical center at the far end behind the goal posts. It actually was more sensible for her to sit here. The coaching box was absurdly opulent and suggested another questionable place that the previous Falcons' owners had invested their galleons. It had cleverly charmed walls to view the game from all angles and the front of the box stepped right out onto the side of the pitch.

Although Theo was making a statement that she was a guest by bringing her with, she still felt a bit uncomfortable. Malfoy, Pansy, and Blaise were already there with a bunch of people Hermione didn't recognize. Part of the Quidditch entourage she supposed: sponsors, bureaucrats from the Department of Magical Games and Sports, and who knew who else - probably a bunch more Slytherins. Hermione wasn't sure Malfoy would want her there, but his silver eyes met hers across the room and he gave her a nod of approval, like she was supposed to be there and was welcome to join.

Theo led her over to a small row of stadium seats near the front, her voluminous lime green robes were puffy and restrictive around her when she sat. Honestly, Muggle sports and athletic-wear made so much more sense than this. Everyone else began to choose their seats and Malfoy, Blaise, and Pansy sat directly behind them. Blaise and Pansy immediately leaned forward to talk to Theo and Hermione looked out at the pitch trying to pretend she didn't feel rolls of tension at the thought of Malfoy silently sitting behind her all match watching her. The first match of the season against the Wasps was starting quite soon. Even though they were sure to lose, there was a great energy in the crowd. But all her nervous energy was focused on the wizard behind her. Just as she thought she might turn around to say something casual, perhaps remark on the weather, he stood up and dropped into the aisle seat next to her.

“Sorry Granger,” he said, a small smirk on his lips. “There is no way I'm sitting behind you this season. Between your obnoxious lime green robes and your gigantic hair, I can barely see the pitch.”

For all the evenings they had spent in each others' periphery, they still barely acknowledged each other. Not since they danced. His grin suggested he was only goodnaturedly teasing about her hair. Did he actually just want an excuse to sit near her? At least that's what she thought was going on, although why her? In what universe would Draco Malfoy want to sit near Hermione Granger? She scooted away from him a bit, as though she was politely making room, which was absurd because the stadium seats were fixed in place, and settled for sort of leaning a bit towards Theo so their shoulders wouldn't accidentally touch.

“Welcome Quidditch fans to opening day of the 2001 season of the British and Irish Quidditch League,” said Fred, his voice booming with the force of a well-cast Sonorous.

“And welcome to beautiful Falmouth, Cornwall ‘the spirit of the sea’,” added George.

“I actually am a beautiful Falmouth spirit...”

“Righto Fred”

“... but all I’m seeing is a perfect day to play Quidditch! Let’s meet the teams.”

Hermione had heard a rumor that the twins would be commentating. It would be good to see them more often. Now that she and Ron had broken up, she didn’t see the Weasleys as much as she would have liked and she never had time to drop by their joke shop. The Weasley twins began to introduce the teams: the Falmouth Falcons vs the Wimbourne Wasps. The players were still warming up around the edges of the pitch. Flint and Pucey passed a Quaffle around, Katie was trying to score on Oliver, Goyle and Millie were whacking a Bludger around (rather vigorously), and McLaggen was casually hovering over the stands, chatting up some fans. As their names were called, each of the players gamely waved to the cheers of the fans. Then the twins introduced a special guest to open the season. This was obviously news to Malfoy, who threw a questioning glance over his shoulder at Blaise and Pansy.

“I forgot we hired this bloke,” said Blaise. “Don’t worry, it’ll be a really nice way to start our season. Majestic. Inspiring. Classic. A bit of pomp seemed appropriate.”

A falconer made his way toward the middle of the pitch and, after a quick Sonorous charm, he explained interesting facts about Peregrine falcons. They mate for life, reach incredible speeds, are vicious, co-parent nests, etc. As he narrated he released the falcon’s hood and threw the falcon off his forearm and into the air. The majestic falcon began to swoop around the field, dazzling the audience. A feeling of ferocious hope filled Hermione. Perhaps the Falcons were a bit of a mess, but they could find their way this season. Transform themselves, transcend even.

If Hermione hadn’t seen the Bludger coming from one of the enchanted walls of the coaching box, she wouldn’t have known what happened. Goyle lost control of the Bludger he and Millie practised with and it was over in an instant. The Bludger made perfect contact with the falcon and there was an explosion of feathers as it seemed to vaporize. The only evidence it had ever been there was the shock on their faces and the cloud of feathers that softly floated back down to the pitch - that and the limp form of the partially denuded raptor lying limp in the grass. The serene aftermath was a disturbing tribute to the shocking violence they had all just witnessed and a dark omen for the Falcons’ season.

Theo leaned over to Hermione and muttered, “Well, that’s dinner sorted.” She swatted at his arm - he was incorrigible. “What? Free range, organic poultry. When are we going to get another chance to try an endangered animal?”

“You’re the worst.”

Out over the stadium, the twins tried, and failed, to salvage the moment.

“Bludger must’ve been travelling at quite a clip to do that. Oi, proper technique there Goyle,” said Fred.

“Cheers. Seeing that,” said George. “I really like the Falcons’ chances this year.”

“Well, perhaps not that particular falcon’s chances though, eh?” said Fred. “Still, I’ve been meaning to get a familiar. Maybe this is my chance.”

In the coaching box, the twins banter only made the tension worse. The falconer started numbly vanishing feathers. Next to Hermione, Malfoy’s clenched fist suggested he was barely hanging on.

Jumping to his feet, Malfoy rounded on Blaise. “‘It’ll be a really nice way to start our season’, he said ‘Majestic. Inspiring. Classic,’ he said,” Malfoy took a deep breath. “What the fuck, Blaise?”

“It seemed like a good idea.”

Pansy came to the rescue, “I think this is an opportunity. No matter what happens today, this ‘unfortunate and tragic accident’ will dominate the news cycle, not anything we did.”

Hermione heard the whistle blow “Brooms up”, and the balls were released to begin the match. While they were distracted, someone had vanished the remains of the ill-fated spectacle and the players were off.

“Flint has the Quaffle and passes to Pucey. Oof. Not a great start there Adrian. The Wasps take control of the Quaffle and, oh that was fast, get an early lead against the Falcons. Ten points to the Wasps.”

“Next time Pucey should try picking up some Weasleys’ Sticking Gloop from Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes in Diagon Alley, a little of that will help the Quaffle stick in your hands.”

“That’s right, although I imagine then he’d have the opposite problem.”

The Weasleys bantered back and forth as they continued their running commentary, sprinkling in just enough native advertising to become more of a running joke than an annoyance. But even their quips couldn’t distract from the terrible match.

Flint and Pucey wouldn’t pass to Katie. Wood was shouting himself hoarse at everyone to try for team unity, but was mocked for his efforts by Flint. Goyle would barely hit the Bludger for fear of extinguishing another innocent life, so Millie was basically on her own. Malfoy had given up his seat ages ago and was pacing nervously along the sideline. Every time something spectacularly appalling happened, Malfoy would throw a disparaging look over at them.

“Theo, why does Malfoy keep glaring at us?” Hermione whispered back to Theo.

“Not you. Us. Pansy, Blaise and I sort of came up with this plan and convinced him to buy the team. They’re his favorite team. It seemed like a good idea at the time. You know, like a double redemption thing.”

“Come off it Theo, it’s still a good plan,” said Blaise wholly unaffected by Malfoy’s glowering or the Falcons’ poor showing. “He’s left his drawing room, hasn’t he? He’s eating.

He's flying. Draco has always been dramatic. Let him pace around and scowl, what's it matter? At least he's getting exercise outside."

Hermione hadn't known Malfoy's friends convinced him to buy the team. She had assumed it was his idea, somehow knowing his friends put him up to it made Hermione feel better about the whole thing. Perhaps he wasn't as much of a self-absorbed prick as she had assumed, simply throwing galleons around on a whim.

She watched Malfoy running his hands through his hair in frustration and agreed with Blaise, he looked improved even from when she first saw him back in November on the pitch. Buying yourself a professional Quidditch team as a form of self care was the ponciest thing Hermione had ever heard and yet she found it sort of endearing. It couldn't be easy trying to salvage his own reputation, much less simultaneously salvage the Falcons'. His silver eyes caught hers and she realized she'd been staring. She quickly looked back toward the pitch.

Hermione could see that what had begun as a bad match was quickly becoming another fiasco. They were down 120 points and tensions were running high. McLaggen was hassling Goyle about killing that bird. Millie hit a Bludger at McLaggen to defend Goyle, but while both Beaters were distracted, Flint was exposed to the Wasps Beater who took the moment to slam a Bludger into Flint's arm. Flint tucked in his elbow and tried to land gracefully, but fell hard the last five meters onto the pitch.

Hermione grabbed her medical bag and sprinted toward Flint's crumpled form, her robes slowing her down as she avoided tripping. She noticed that half the coaching box was following her, but didn't focus any attention on them. She had a job to do. It looked like a direct hit, maybe a shattered humerus or dislocated shoulder. If it was just a broken bone she'd have him back in the air in no time. If it had impacted his torso or anything complex with his joints it could be a bit longer.

Hermione knelt down next to Flint and tried to cast her spell, but he flinched away.

"Just a diagnostic," she explained. "Then I can start healing." She tried to hold his arm to examine it, but he stood and tried to walk away, his arm held protectively to his chest.

"Flint, I'm trying to help you," she said as she approached him, "it'll just take a moment." She reached for his arm again.

Flint whipped around to look her full in the eyes with a ferocious sneer. Hermione was instantly on her guard as she realized how unhinged he was, filled with adrenaline and hatred, and then felt a flash of fear as he stepped closer to snarl in her face.

"Don't touch me, Mudblood," said Flint and pushed her away hard with his good arm. Hermione tripped backward, tangled in her robes, and fell hard on her back on the ground. She felt a bit stunned as the wind was knocked out of her. Perhaps it was still ingrained in her from the war, but she felt herself begin to panic at her vulnerable state as he towered over her.

In an instant, Malfoy was there, his silver eyes filled with a cold, feral rage. He grabbed the front of Flint's grey Falcons' robes and with his other hand punched Flint full in the face. One

of Malfoy's signet rings caught and split his lip. A spray of sweat and blood arched off Flint as he stumbled backward.

"Blaise, sack him or trade him, I don't care which," growled Malfoy, his voice low, dangerous.

"Malfoy," said Flint. "You can't be serious."

"I've never been more serious," Malfoy barked. "Get him out of here."

Blaise grabbed Flint by his robes and roughly pulled him away from Malfoy and they turned to walk off the field. Malfoy ran a hand through his white blond hair. Taking a deep breath he held out his hand to Hermione, who was still tangled in her robes.

"I'm so sorry for how you've been treated and hope you'll accept my sincerest apologies on behalf of the Falcons," he said, helping to pull her up.

"I'm used to it," she said a bit shakily. "I've had worse..." *...from you*, she thought.

"Riiight," he said uncertainly, as if unsure how to word his thoughts.

They stood there overly close with locked eyes not sure how to proceed. Hermione was acutely aware of how quickly they both were breathing and wasn't sure if she should thank him or not. But the moment was shattered as a player flew directly over their heads. They both looked up and saw the moment the Wasps' Seeker caught the Snitch for the win.

Malfoy's jaw clenched and he muttered a single guttural curse.

"Fuck."

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks to our artists:

Broom image: @PartyElephants

2001 Falcons schedule design: Gossamer26

I hope you're having as much fun with this as I am! I'm absolutely loving chatting with everyone in the comments! Go Falcons! -HealthyishObsession

Join us on healthyishobsession.com for playlist, fan creations, images, and more!

Chapter 7: Falcons' Stadium. January 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Draco

The evening edition of the Daily Prophet was worse than Draco had imagined. They had certainly made headlines, again. The cover featured a looping photo of a sneering Flint pushing Hermione down and Draco roughly grabbing and hitting his own Chaser in retaliation. Next to it was another smaller photo of that sodding falcon exploding over and over as the image looped.

Bugger. This was all so fucked. He never should have bought this team.

Pansy was already on damage control pacing around Draco's office and throwing ideas around and jotting them in her tiny designer dragonhide notebook, which matched her purse and shoes. Blaise and Theo seemed at ease lounging on the green sofa, while Draco sat at his desk, his head buried in his hands, watching the evening Prophet's front page loop endlessly.

"You did hope for a bigger story to quash the dead falcon story, it's just a shame it had to be another story about us," said Theo.

"Theo, that's not helping," said Pansy, shooting a glare at Theo. "Draco, you need to make a sizable donation on behalf of the team to an endangered species fund that protects falcons or perhaps Golden Snidgets, if they aren't extinct yet. I'll write you some text to go with your donation."

"Fine."

"And we need a Witch Weekly spread to showcase all the great talent and general attractiveness of our team."

That sounded like complete bollocks and he wanted nothing to do with it, but he trusted Pansy's judgment. "Fine. Do it. Blaise, what's the status on Flint?"

"I've already got an owl about it," said Blaise. "Flint will go to the Wasps. They said he was their most valuable player today anyway, might as well make it official. They'll trade Lizzy Smith, the Wasp's Chaser (did you see her speed today?), well anyway, she'll go to the Holyhead Harpies, and Ginny Weasley will join us at the Falcons."

"Another Weasley?" said Malfoy.

“I have only seen her play once since Hogwarts,” said Blaise, “but she’s a damn good Chaser and from what I recall, she’s the polar opposite of Flint. It’s our good luck that Ginny was on the transfer list. Apparently she’s requesting any team on the English Floo Network.”

She must be desperate to get on the Floo network if she was willing to join their trainwreck for it.

“If Wood agrees, then make the trade.”

“Draco, this trade is going to be really good for us,” said Pansy. “We’ll get Ginny in the Witch Weekly spread. Just imagine: we’ll put her in our Falcons’ robes with that beautiful red hair on display, plus she’s Potter’s fiancée. Papers about them fly off the shelves, the public loves them.”

“Potter is engaged to Weasley?” asked Draco, something else he’d missed while confined in Azkaban. “I called that one a long time ago, always knew we’d see a Potter-Weasley wedding.”

“Different Weasley mate,” corrected Theo.

“No matter,” he chuckled with a smirk. He wondered if Granger and her Weasel were married yet. He hadn’t seen a ring on her finger, not that he’d looked, but he wondered. Maybe he couldn’t afford a ring. He hadn’t seen Weasley around The Nest to visit Granger. With that red hair and those garish Chudley Cannons robes, he’d be impossible to miss. And there was the gala, that night she had been left alone with McLaggen. What of that? If Draco wasn’t so afraid of the answer he would just ask if they were still together. But he was. And he’d never been one to stick out his neck, so he stuck to the well-trodden path of conversation.

“Does this mean we have to play nice with Potter now?” he asked Pansy instead.

“Yes, Draco. He’s a PR goldmine. If Harry Potter wants, he is going to sit in your box at games and you’re going to be all ‘stuff and nonsense, water under the bridge old boy’.”

“No.”

“You’re going to be chummy.”

“I don’t do chummy.”

“You’re bloody well going to start.”

Draco looked over at Blaise and Theo for help, but there was none to be found in that quarter.

Bloody traitors.

“This is too good of an opportunity,” Pansy continued. “I’ll get Parvati over at Witch Weekly on this story. We’ll get a good shot of Ginny as Chaser and then we play the sibling rivalry side too since her brother is rival Keeper Ron Weasley, her fiancée’s best friend - perfection. They’ll have to get a photo of Ginny scoring on Ron once we play the Cannons in a few

weeks. It doesn't matter who wins as long as we get that shot. Plus we'll need a photo of Hermione -"

"Why Granger?" Draco interrupted Pansy's Slytherin machinations. Obviously because Granger and Weasley were together, not that he would care. She could do whatever she liked. They probably thought of themselves as childhood soulmates, reliving their glory days at Hogwarts all cozied up in their tower together. The thought made him a bit sick.

"Hermione is a famous war hero and on loan to us from St. Mungo's. It would be foolish not to capitalize. Besides, she's a media gold mine. Even today, it wasn't a flattering story, but she's nabbed us the cover of the Prophet."

"Oh do remind me," Draco drawled. "Is that the front page story where an ex-con is seen assaulting his employee?" He was the worst for even considering using Granger's good name, and Potter's, to make his terrible Quidditch team look better. And likely tainting Granger's reputation by getting her photographed being brawled over.

"Come off it Draco, you've completely lost the plot. Watch it again, look how frightened she is before you're there. Then you arrive in the frame like a freakin' knight-in-shining-armor preserving the honour of an insulted war hero. Did you even read the article? People will love it. Enemies-to-lovers is very 'in'."

"Keep dreaming Pansy," scoffed Blaise.

"Yeah, more like enemies to barely civil colleagues," said Theo.

He agreed. What a ridiculous notion. Enemies to lovers. That would never happen. But his own thoughts betrayed him as he recalled the feel of her bare back on his hand as they danced, her hand in his. All those evenings out on the pitch, where he would keep a keen eye out for the lit lamp in her office window, the yellow light spilling out onto the dark pitch - a landmark his eyes repeatedly tracked towards. Each night when he would land near her and he'd silently acknowledge her as he passed. It only seemed polite to land near her and bid her goodnight, or was it more? Was he secretly hoping someday she'd wave for him to join her or she'd come out and watch him again like on that first night... before she knew who he was and realized that she hated him.

But of course that fantasy would never come true. It was ridiculous, as though she would ever even consider him. And today, Merlin, his adolescent "joke" about the size of her hair as an excuse to sit next to her. Classic. He'd attempted a funny insult as some type of sick pick-up line to the girl he literally insulted and bullied for 6 years. Brilliant choice. She'd barely even looked at him. What an opener. He was such an idiot.

He suddenly felt full of nervous energy. Totally unrelated to Granger, probably. Draco got up to watch the pitch from his wall sized window and pulled his Snitch out of the pocket of his robes. The Nest was empty and the sun was setting. He liked to watch as the sun set and the shadows grew longer across the pitch. He let his Snitch fly an arms length away and caught it easily.

“Oh, another thing, you know how our team motto is ‘Let us win, but if we cannot win, let us break a few heads’?” said Pansy moving on to her next order of business. “Well, Hermione is absolutely appalled by it, apparently it’s a fairly inappropriate joke about some Muggle sport or something.”

“Then change it, Parks,” he said, releasing his Snitch again. “I don’t care about our motto. If it makes Granger and other Muggle-borns upset, then obviously we should swap it out.”

“Like how we swapped out Flint for making Hermione and other Muggle-borns upset?” said Theo.

“Shut up Theo,” said Pansy, sending a stinging hex. “What about ‘United We Soar’?”

“...Into A Bludger,” added Theo cringing away as she sent another hex at him.

“Do you have any better ideas?” said Pansy snapping shut her notebook.

Draco caught his Snitch again and decided he was done. He could see the light from Granger’s window in the medical center at the far end of the pitch. He couldn’t take any more of them or this bickering any longer. He should go out and fly. Plus, it might be a small excuse to see Granger. Maybe he would actually talk to her tonight for once, they could discuss what happened earlier.

They kept nattering on while he watched the sky slowly darken. Blaise and Theo were going out for drinks, Pansy wouldn’t because she was getting up early to run laps around the pitch with Katie. He refused their invitation. He had to get out on his broom. He’d join them another time. Right now, he had to go clear his head after another long messed-up day.

Hermione

Hermione was pouring over books in her office. She’d already enlarged her desk several times to fit all her books and notes. She doubted it could structurally withstand another engorgement charm.

Why had she chosen this Quidditch rotation again? She sighed, rubbing her temples. It was a stupid, violent game, full of adrenaline junkies and unhinged blood purists, like Flint, bleeding all over her pitch and medical center. There should be more regulations. There should be player accountability. There should at least be some basic safety measures.

As she had promised, Hermione was working on trying to make a training program, but there was so much to learn and she didn’t really know much about sports, not to mention wizarding sports. She had been trying to catch-up on the entire field of magical and Muggle sport training and medicine. Plus she was reading anything she could find on nutrition, strength and conditioning, sports psychology, injury prevention and rehabilitation, motor learning and control, and on and on. Books were everywhere, sliding off her enlarged desk, in piles, stuffed into and on top of her overflowing bookshelf.

Oliver had been in earlier, after the match, and they had worked through a few parts of their training plan. It was starting to take some shape, but she wasn’t ready to implement yet.

Working with Oliver was nice...enough. He had an exhausting knowledge of Quidditch, nearly too exhausting. His near memorization of "Quidditch Through The Ages" rivaled her knowledge of "Hogwarts, A History". He'd read everything she gave him and had prepared seemingly endless questions and comments. Hermione knew that she was often swept up in her own academic pursuits and could go on at length about subjects she found fascinating... but how much Quidditch could she take? That boy needed a hobby. Except Quidditch was his hobby turned job. Perhaps he needed another hobby from his job-hobby?

She felt a bit bad, but was secretly delighted when Theo's puppy Patronus came barreling into her office to invite them out to drinks. She sent her otter Patronus bounding away with her regrets, on account of her work, but Oliver seemed only too happy to take Theo up on the offer. Thank Merlin. Perhaps drinks with friends could be Oliver's new hobby.

Finally a moment without Quidditch, she thought, as she grimaced at all the Quidditch books stacked on her desk that overlooked the Quidditch pitch in the Quidditch stadium where she was doing a Quidditch rotation. She slumped into her chair and pushed the books aside to stare out her window. Malfoy was out there again, looping in lazy circles. He didn't seem to be scanning for the Snitch tonight, instead he looked more like he was just enjoying flying without a care in the world. Some joke. That wizard was the most burdened Hermione had ever known.

Malfoy. What an infuriating man. Clearly he meant well, but he didn't know the first thing about any of this. His terrible team was full of bigots and creeps. People were getting hurt. She was nearly hurt. And that falcon died today, although in hindsight it was sort of funny - in a macabre way.

Hermione tried to focus back on her research, she ran through some of her ideas for better padding, shorter matches, player substitutions, lightning delays, slower Bludgers, lighter Bludgers, no Bludgers. Her eyes kept wandering up from her books and she kept watching Malfoy instead. She gave it up as a bad job and decided to just go outside and get some air. Grabbing her robe off her chair back, she got up and went back out on the pitch. She hadn't gone out to watch him since her first night. Well... she wasn't there to watch Malfoy, just to get a bit of fresh air, clear her head. If she ran into him, she really should thank him for today. She had to admit a part of her liked the picture from the evening edition of the Prophet. She'd secretly saved it in her desk drawer.

Malfoy was beautiful in the air. So much more free than the politely stiff Occluding Malfoy or the furious Malfoy she regularly saw around the stadium. And she could concede that he was making strides with the Falcons. The team was terrible, but they were getting better. She hoped he really would sack Flint. That would be good for everyone, especially her. What a prick.

The stadium looked amazing - the grey flags adorned with the Falcons' logo snapped in the sea breeze and the grass on the pitch looked much better now, not nearly as weedy as it had been. As she watched, Malfoy came closer to her end of the stadium and she felt a bit nervous. Should she leave before he could land? Was he cross that she was out here? He had been a massive git last time he caught her watching him on the pitch. But she couldn't run

away, back to the medical center now. He had clearly seen her standing here. She called on her Gryffindor courage and she stood her ground, wrapping her robe around herself.

As Malfoy landed a few paces away. He flipped his wind-blown blond hair out of his eyes and quickly shouldered his broom as he approached her.

“Malfoy-”

"Granger," Malfoy began, his voice tight. "Can I just say... I need to apologize. Deeply. What Flint did today, that language... the Falcons don't condone it. *I* don't condone it. All that blood purity bollocks - it's complete shite. How could I ever believe it when you ran circles around us from first year? I was horrible to you, Granger and I'm so sorry."

Hermione was utterly blindsided. This was not the Draco Malfoy she had known in school. Her mind flickered to his letter, safely tucked away. Accepting this felt... weird.

"I... I don't know what to say," she managed, her voice shaky. She looked down at the ground before meeting his eyes again. "It's not your fault, not really," she finally managed.

"I always had a choice," he countered immediately, his silver eyes intense. "I was a coward. You, though... you fought and won a war for a world you'd only just learned about. And then you spoke for me at my trial, even after you were tortured in my home. I didn't deserve your compassion then, and I still don't. I'd be there right now if it wasn't for you and Potter. I wish... I wish I could take it all back."

Hermione was a bit surprised, but then she already knew all of this. He'd already apologized in his letter from Azkaban, but she hadn't replied. For all he knew she never got it or she'd burned it or something.

"I'm sorry I never replied to your letter," Hermione said.

"You don't ever need to apologize to me."

"No, I do, I... I didn't know how to reply, but I really appreciated it." She thought back to the letter, hidden away. She'd re-read it so many times she had parts memorized. It had resonated deeply with her, but she'd always secretly wondered if he really meant it. Looking at him now, his intense silver eyes staring into hers, she knew he was genuinely sincere. "Thank you, it meant a great deal to me."

"Granger, most days, I just wish I could use a time-turner and take it all back."

"Well, none of it was fair or easy for any of us. We were children asked to take sides and do impossible things. "

"Yes, but I was such a prat," said Malfoy. "I still am, just in new ways." She chuckled a bit to break the tension at his attempted joke.

Hermione tucked one of her loose curls behind her ear as a soft sea breeze moved across the pitch. She thought about everything Malfoy was trying to do here. What Theo had told her,

about how he had only bought the team because his friends made him - how hard he was trying. It must be incredibly difficult for him.

“What a terrible day,” said Malfoy with a tone indicating he was trying to change the subject. “Let’s salvage it. Are you ready for that lesson I promised you?”

“Oh, Malfoy, I don’t know.” Hermione hadn’t flown in some time and wasn’t keen on jumping onto any broom, much less Draco Malfoy’s very fast looking broom.

“Scared to fail? You’re a bloody war hero.”

“I’m terrible at plenty of things.”

“Such as?”

“I can’t think of anything at the moment, but I’m sure I could come up with something.”

“Alright Granger,” he scoffed and swung his broom off his shoulder. “The Falcons can’t have a healer that’s rubbish on a broom; what if the other teams found out? It would be a scandal.”

“I thought scandals were your job,” she said with a smirk.

“Oh ho, so I see you got a copy of the evening Prophet too.”

“It really was a great photo. I’m sure Pansy was pleased.”

“Yes... well... quit stalling.” Malfoy smirked and grabbed his broom and showed her how to mount it. Merlin. She knew how to mount a broom. She’s flown plenty of times. She grabbed the broom out of his hands roughly and started to mount.

“Careful,” said Malfoy, as he placed a hand on her arm to slow her movement. The warmth of his touch felt like an electric shock coursing through her arm. Suddenly she felt as though every particle of her being was focused on the spot where he’d rested his hand. “This isn’t like those sluggish Silver Arrows that Hooch used in class. This is a custom Supercell EF5, so you need to be careful - it’s pretty reactive.”

“Like a Firebolt?” she said, cringing internally at how breathy her voice was. She looked up at him and couldn’t believe how close they were.

“Like that, but moreso. You’ll see. Come on. Up you get.”

“I know how to ride a broom, Malfoy.”

“Then prove it, Golden Girl.”

Annoyed, she grabbed hold of the shaft and confidently threw a leg around the broom, like she had on the Weasley’s old Cleansweeps. She felt the pulse of Malfoy’s broom under her hands; ready to shoot off at a moment’s notice. It seemed to almost vibrate with the pleasure of having a rider. Instantly, she knew this would be nothing like riding a broom at the Burrow. Her previous experience with brooms, always with Ron, had felt uneasy, like a

friendly comfort was just out of grasp and she felt jarred. But now with her hands on the shaft of Malfoy's broom she felt the raw power hidden beneath the sleek veneer and it took her breath away. She immediately felt the broom shudder and thought it might shoot forward before she'd properly balanced, but Malfoy was already there securing her.

"Easy. Easy," he said laughing as he grabbed the broom by the front and back, effectively reaching around her in a sort of half hug to steady her. Hermione's senses were assaulted by his presence. Draco was still warm from his flying earlier and smelled of citrusy broom oil, the sharp tang cutting through the scent of worn Quidditch leathers and something faintly scorched. The warmth that radiated off of him shouldn't have surprised her, but did so all the same. He was so close, but carefully not quite touching her.

She felt a frisson of desire as his laughing eyes caught hers: silver catching gold. Had she ever seen him really smile? Draco had a beautiful smile, she realized. This was new. It wasn't the sneer he wore at Hogwarts or the cruel derisive smile like when he'd cast that Densaugeo to enlarge her teeth in 4th year.

And just like that the spell broke. This was Draco Malfoy: hater of mudbloods, infamous school bully, and convicted terrorist. What was she doing? She was faffing about and flirting on a broom ... with Draco sodding Malfoy.

She tore her eyes away and nearly jumped off the broom in her haste to move away from him.

"I... I can't...", she stammered, her voice betraying her jumbled half-formed thoughts. She wanted to believe him. She wanted to trust his apology and the beautiful smile she'd just witnessed, to get to know him. But how could she? Their past felt like a weight she couldn't simply brush aside. It was all too fast. "Maybe another time."

As she ran towards her office fear coiled in her stomach, heavy and tight, and a wave of disappointment washed over her. Except, she wasn't sure if she was disappointed in herself for being attracted to Malfoy or for not giving Draco a chance.

Chapter End Notes

Hermione's wand image credit: @PartyElephants

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Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 8: Hermione's Falmouth Flat/The Sipping Selkie. January 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

The next weekend found Hermione in her natural habitat in her Falmouth flat amidst piles of books, a cup of tea steaming quietly while her half-Kneazle/half cat, Crookshanks, stalked a spider dangling from her bookcase. The only piece of the tableau that felt out of place was the subject of her research: Quidditch and Muggle sports training. She imagined that if a friend saw her, without knowing her current rotation, she would be greeted with pointed personal questions in case she was a polyjuiced imposter.

Despite the ostensibly, un-Hermione-like topic, she was beginning to enjoy this rotation. It was certainly exciting and gave her endless new topics to research. Just like Theo had suggested, Quidditch was a “happy” rotation, even if the Falcons’ themselves were having a difficult season.

Yesterday the Falcons had been in a foul mood after yet another loss to the Appleby Arrows. With Flint gone, training last week had been a shambles and then Ginny had arrived in Falmouth only moments before the match started. Pansy barely had time to transfigure Ginny’s robes to the approximately correct colour of grey before she was off chasing the Quaffle. And what a terrible match it turned out to be. It started off as a slog and then the tide turned from bad to worse. Pucey took a Bludger to the back of the head, fell two stories off his broom, and was still in St. Mungo’s. Hermione earned the dubious honour of her first “Accio teeth!” and knew, with a sinking certainty, it wouldn’t be her last. Then since substitutions weren’t part of this bloody sport, they were forced to play a Chaser down. And of course their Seeker was no help in finishing the match to end their suffering. McLaggen, aka the world’s worst Seeker, was more focused on scanning the pitch for witches instead of Snitches. And so the ill-fated match against the Appleby Arrows ended predictably. The Falcons were now 0-2 in the League Cup season.

So all in all, it was a “happier” rotation than Memory care, but much more infuriating. Especially because so many of the issues with Quidditch were brought on by itself. Hermione was sure Quidditch would still be fun if it wasn’t quite as violent. Perhaps matches could be limited to 4 hours. Or the players wore better pads. Or the Bludgers weren’t as heavy. There were plenty of ways to modify the game that would still keep its essential Quidditch-ness, without resulting in quite so many injuries. There simply had to be. She felt fired up in a way she hadn’t in other rotations. There was so much to do in this field, so much to research, so much to explore. For all the discussions and practicing of the sport at Hogwarts, the surface

had barely been scratched - even at the professional level. Theo was right (but she'd never tell him). This was a great rotation for her. The more she researched, both Quidditch and Muggle sports, the more fascinating and frankly, horrifying, the sport was becoming. Perhaps there was an opportunity here for her to do some good - to improve the Wizarding World in an unexpected way.

Plus, this rotation gave her a great excuse to avoid Ron. He had no reason to hang around Falmouth. True it was a Quidditch rotation and he was a professional Quidditch player. But the Falcons and Cannons would only play each other once or possibly twice this season. Besides, she wasn't technically avoiding Ron. She saw him at the gala and although they didn't speak, surely they were still friends. It wouldn't be a big deal to see him. It might be a bit awkward at first, but this was just a blip.

Now that she was thinking about awkward encounters, she internally cringed again at how she had aborted that "broom lesson" with Malfoy. Honestly, a grown woman running away from an uncomfortable situation, he must have thought she had completely lost the plot. When she thought about it afterward (and Hermione had constantly, especially when trying to fall asleep), it was mostly that she just couldn't handle the intimacy she had felt with his arms around her and she had jolted in panic.

Draco Malfoy was the enemy. His very name meant "dragon bad faith". All those years he made her life a misery, and then he'd gone and joined a gang, or more to the point, he had become a domestic terrorist. Even so, she found a way to forgive him. The reason was complex, she saw that unlike Harry, who overcame a difficult childhood, Malfoy never had a choice. He had been coddled and praised by parents that cherished him. He had been manipulated, groomed really, all his life into a world of bigotry and hatred. He was already so far down the path, he hadn't even known anything was amiss until it was too late. Should that rule out the option of redemption? Malfoy had literally served his time, paid his debt to society, and then chose to apologize and was clearly trying to do the right thing now. What were the limits on redemption? Could someone be so bad as a child that they were unredeemable as an adult?

Hermione's thoughts were interrupted by the fire blazing to life as Ginny and Katie stepped through her Floo with a bottle of wine and charcuterie board. Hermione had all but forgotten the girls' night she'd agreed to after the match yesterday. She was really looking forward to seeing Ginny more often now that she was on the Falcons instead of off training in Wales with the Holyhead Harpies. Hermione welcomed her guests and moved to open the wine.

"What's all this then?" said a put out Ginny indicating the heaps of books. "None of that tonight, you work far too hard as is."

"Yes, yes, alright," said Hermione, pulling out her wand and non-verbally tidying up all her notes and books and sending them to her bedroom. She'd already sent all her reports to Chief Healer Laece anyway.

"This is a lovely flat, Hermione," said Katie, taking in the simple, but surprisingly nice housing St. Mungo's had provided for her. A flat that was all her own. Decorated with plants and books and art and colourful rugs and cushions and everything she liked. It was her first flat (without Ron) and although it was only temporary lodging, she was quite fond of it.

“Yes, it’s working out well and if you lean your head against the window, just there, you can glimpse the sea.”

Hermione finished pouring the wine then gave a quick tour. The term tour was a bit grand though. There wasn’t much to see besides the spacious main room which included the sitting room, desk, Floo, and eat-in kitchen. Besides the rarely used front door, there were just two doors off the main room leading to her bedroom and toilet. The girls settled on the sofas with their wine and snacks to get to the girls’ night business at hand, talking about everything and nothing for the next several hours.

Ginny was delighted by the switch to the Falcons because she could more easily visit Harry and her family at the Burrow. Then Hermione was treated to a fiery rant by Ginny and Katie about the terrible match against the Arrows yesterday and their optimistic plans to work more closely with Pucey as a chasing team, once he had regrown all his bones.

“You’re just lucky you didn’t have to play with Flint,” said Katie.

“Yeah, I saw the photos of him pushing you and then the Ferret decking him,” said Ginny. “And Fred and George had some choice words about Flint too. Real wanker that one.”

“I’m just hopeful that this can start a new era for the Falcons,” said Katie thoughtfully. “This switch could really help us turn the tone of the team. With only seven of us, a single person can make a world of difference.”

“I don’t even care how you play,” said Hermione, receiving a glare from Ginny. “I mean I know you’re going to play, have played, really well, but I think your personality will have the biggest impact on improving our team.”

“You’re a good person and a pureblood,” said Katie, “and pureblood politics are so strong in Quidditch. Did you know that I’m a half-blood?”

Hermione and Ginny shook their heads. Although they were all Gryffindors, they were younger than Katie and her normal set of friends.

“Well, my mum died just after the war. My dad, he’s a Muggle. He loves football and so he gets the game. He’d love to watch me play Quidditch, but he can’t. Ever since the Muggle-born Registration Commission raided our house, he’s understood the stakes. He knows he wouldn’t be able to navigate the anti-Muggle barriers alone plus I’m not sure he’d be safe. I’d be playing and he’d be a lone Muggle surrounded by all those pureblood spectators. The thought of it, added to the rumblings about the new Magical Citizen Census... I just couldn’t risk it. Sometimes when I visit him, I barely mention Quidditch. It’s easier than watching his disappointment.”

Hermione knew exactly what it was like to downplay her role in the Wizarding World so she wouldn’t upset her parents. Before the war she had regularly lied outright or by omission to her parents. They never knew about Voldemort or horcruxes or pureblood bullies. They had been so proud of her: the top of her class, the perfect daughter. A girl long gone now. They had never met her as an adult in the healer program, a war hero; they didn’t even know there had been a war.

A pang of envy hit her as she watched Ginny. The Weasleys had been in the middle of the fray and suffered their own losses, but they understood. They shared the weight of it all. She had seen herself as a member of that family once, but after her break-up with Ron, Hermione wasn't sure where she stood now with the Weasley clan. She was worried that Ron wasn't the only person she'd lost in the break-up.

"Hermione, you've been a bit quiet," said Ginny. "You alright?"

"Am I alright?" she says, rolling the question around a bit. She appreciated that her friends hadn't pressed her about the break-up immediately, the last few months had given her the space to think it through. "I think so. I'm a bit sad about Ron, but it was a natural break-up all things considered. We were best friends together and with Harry for so long. We just weren't great romantically." She paused, offering a small smile. "If I need to talk more about it, I'll let you know. But honestly, I think I'm okay. We never really connected quite right. Does that make sense? I think it was a long time coming."

"Absolutely," said Ginny as Katie nodded along. "I dated a bunch of wizards at Hogwarts, but I never felt a connection like the one I have now with Harry."

"Please don't tell me about your connection with Harry," Hermione mock begged Ginny. "He's like my brother."

"Oh no, I've had to hear about you dating my actual brother for ages," said Ginny with a laugh. "I'm just saying when you feel it's right, you'll know."

"Besides," said Katie, "there's plenty of fit wizards in the League: training, sweating, wearing Quidditch leathers with those broom thighs... Anyone caught your fancy yet?"

Hermione shook her head no, but her thoughts betrayed her. She immediately thought of Malfoy shouldering his broom and grinning at her as he flipped his white-blond hair out of his eyes. She would never be able to hide her blush and so abruptly stood to refill her glass.

"It's not just the Quidditch players either," continued Katie. "Just the other day, Pansy and I were running laps early before training and we saw this amazingly fit bloke working on the landscaping with rolled up sleeves. Imagine my surprise when I took a second look and he turned out to be—"

The Floo roared to life as Harry arrived in Hermione's flat and cut off Katie's lusty landscaper story.

"Ginny," exclaimed Harry, snatching her up in his arms and kissing her. She laughed and half-heartedly batted him away.

"What are you doing here?"

"You told me you'd be here and the stakeout ended early," said Harry. "Turned out the magician really was just a Muggle. He put on a great show though, I still don't know where that dove went. Do you think it died?"

“What? No, Harry,” exclaimed Hermione. “I’m sure it was just a slight of hand or a false bottom or mirrors or something. No one is killing actual doves, it’s all just a bit of fun.”

Ginny grinned up at him as though she couldn’t quite believe he was real. “I’m so glad you’re close enough to Floo over now.”

“Me too.”

“Harry,” said Hermione. “Can I get you a drink?”

“A half glass of white wine?” said Harry with a laugh coming over to hug Hermione in greeting. “No thanks, I’m going to need a real drink. Saving the Wizarding World is hard work.”

“You were on a stakeout watching a magic show,” deadpanned Hermione. She knew Harry faced real danger, horrors even, in the line of duty. However, ever since his partner Seamus’ death he had been assigned to mostly lighter assignments often focusing on upholding the Statute of Secrecy until he, and his Mind Healer, felt he was ready to get back out there again.

“It was a stakeout at a child’s birthday party,” said Harry with feigned horror. “Have you ever been around children? I think I’ve more than earned a real drink. We are going out.”

Draco

Draco was nursing his firewhiskey with Theo and Blaise at The Sipping Selkie, the only wizarding pub in Falmouth. They sat at a low table in the middle of the room amidst a few other groups of patrons, tourists mostly. The dark wood interior with a slightly nautical theme hadn’t changed since he had started coming here after matches with his parents. Draco felt a bit of nostalgia for those simpler times and the place itself. However, he was a Malfoy and had a reputation to uphold, thus he sneered at the tacky fishing nets on the walls and the selkie figurehead behind the bar.

“Where is Pansy?” whined Theo. “She never comes out anymore. What’s she doing instead? Is she seeing someone?”

“Not that I know of,” said Blaise, off-handedly.

“And what about Goyle, why isn’t he here? Is he dating Millie?”

“No, he’s not her type. They are just good friends.”

“At least Wood came out the other night, that was brilliant, but we couldn’t get Drakey to join ust.”

Draco chose to ignore most things that Theo said. He knew full well that Theo’s inexcusable use of “Drakey” was only meant to draw him out. But he continued to let his friends’ banter wash over him unremarked as he sullenly contemplated.

Draco remembered being here as a kid. Merlin, how he used to love the Falcons. He would beg his parents to take him to matches. Then his life got so messed up, the Falcons messed up, and now here he was trying to redeem them all. Fat chance. They kept losing. His friends were fools for thinking this could work and he was the biggest fool for believing them. He was in no position to redeem anything. Granger was even so afraid of being alone with him she ran off after that aborted lesson. What did he expect? Even if she did accept his apology, how could she see him as anything but a villain who watched her tortured in his home and a marked Death Eater fresh out of prison? She might be a famous war heroine, but he'd felt her shudder of terror when they nearly touched. Plus, wasn't she dating the Weasel anyway? Draco felt like a prat. He threw back a punishing swallow of his firewhiskey causing his eyes to burn.

"Ho, easy there killer," said Theo. "I mean figuratively, I don't mean that you've ever actually..."

"Shut up, Theo."

"Look, I'm just trying to add some charm and excitement to your life, you sullen bastard," said Theo. "You just want to sit there all night staring into the middle distance?"

"Yes, yes. You're very helpful Theo. Now shut up."

"So the Appleby Arrows match yesterday didn't go that well -"

"Didn't go well?" said Draco. "It was another disaster in a long line of disastrous matches."

"I think we should try to be thankful for everything that is going right," said Blaise. "Like how lucky we are that we snagged Wood as our Keeper."

"He's been an amazing pull," echoed Theo, a glint in his eye as he took a slow sip of his drink.

Draco just grunted, dismissing Theo's usual theatrics. Of course they were lucky to pull Wood, he was the only truly exceptional player on this godforsaken team. And they were damn lucky to have lured him to the Falcons with the promise of captaincy. He worked twice as hard as anyone else and was one of the few bright spots on the team.

"And Granger has been a huge asset as well," said Blaise

"That was all my doing. And so was Wood, in a manner of speaking." said Theo.

Ignoring Theo, Blaise continued, "she's a brilliant healer, a great contributor to the team dynamic, and Pansy can't stop going on about her amazing public image."

Draco agreed, he just hoped the Golden Girl wouldn't tarnish from too close of an association with the lot of them.

"Now if we could just find a replacement for McLaggen like we replaced Flint," said Draco. "The only way that git will catch the Snitch is if it flies directly into his hand... or mouth like Potter!"

They all laughed at the memory of Potter nearly swallowing the Snitch in his first match. Their laughter died instantly as the door swung open and there was the Boy-Who-Wouldn't-Die himself, his arm slung around Ginny Weasley. It was as though the universe was conspiring against him by putting that bespectacled git in his path. Draco hoped Potter hadn't heard him taking the piss, but old habits die hard and Potter was such an easy target.

Potter was closely followed by Katie Bell and then Granger. Draco felt his stomach clench as a wave of emotion swept through him at her unexpected appearance. He took a steadying breath and reflexively fixed his hair. What was she doing here? Could this be another chance for him? He just had to act natural, attempt to be "chummy" even, as Pansy had suggested. He soured at the thought, but didn't have any better ideas.

"Hello Ferret," called Ginny.

Ah so that's how it's going to be, nevermind he paid her salary. "Hello Weaslette," he countered woodenly.

Theo enthusiastically waved the Gryffindor alums over to their table. All around him, chairs were rearranged, stolen from adjacent tables, and conjured. Blaise started elongating the table with his wand.

"Blaise, you're a master at elongation charms," said Theo. "Personally I've never needed to learn one." Blaise just scowled as the Gryffindors laughed.

Draco felt distanced from their group and their easy banter. He realized this was his first time seeing Potter, at least up close, since he came to fetch him from Azkaban. Potter had done him a solid that day. He had treated Draco with dignity, defended him even, and brought him his own wand. And before that Potter had defended him at his trial. Draco hated feeling indebted. What a truly unfortunate turn of events, really the cherry on top of his screwed up life. There was simply no help for it. Swallowing a bit of his pride (swallowing all of it might choke him), Draco decided to break the ice.

He stood holding out his hand and immediately recalled the time he had tried to shake Potter's hand all those years ago on the Hogwarts Express. Potter looked briefly confounded. Draco knew better than to call back to their first failed handshake, but Potter, lacking such social graces, immediately brought it up.

"This reminds me of that time on the Hogwarts Express."

Merlin, what wit. Instead of demanding Potter shake his damn hand, Salazar help him, he consciously tried to meet Potter halfway.

"Please don't tell me you've a rat hidden up your sleeve," Draco managed.

Potter laughed and firmly grasped Draco's outstretched hand ending the awkward exchange. Draco could swear he heard the group let out a collective breath of relief.

"Er, and thanks for giving me my wand back," said Draco pulling back his hand.

“No worries, I didn’t need it anymore.”

Sweet Salazar being this familiar with Gryffindors might do him in. Draco offered to get the next round, since going to the bar was an excellent excuse to escape. Plus, between the three of them, they owned a significant percent of the vaults in Gringotts - it would be unthinkable to have the Gryffindors pay for anything. Everyone at the table continued to get settled as he made his way back again, levitating a tray of Ogden’s Old Firewhiskey.

After passing out drinks, it was clear the chair count was off and Granger was currently occupying his seat. No matter. He never needed an excuse to show off, especially with her watching. He took off his heavy outer robe and transfigured it into a chair to squeeze next to her.

“I just ask that you keep your hair to yourself,” he said, sweeping her nearest curl over her shoulder with a smirk. It was surprisingly soft and he had to grip his drink to keep himself from spooling his fingers around more of her curls.

“Malfoy, haven’t you learned your lesson about unwanted contact with magical creatures?” she said with mock severity, but her smile took all the bite out of the words. Was she flirting with him?

“In this scenario, Granger, are you a proud and easily provoked creature?”

“Careful or next time you might pull back a stump.”

“Oh come off it, I was 13 years old with that Hippogriff,” he said defensively. “Didn’t you do anything stupid when you were 13?”

“Well,” she said conspiratorially, leaning close to whisper to him. Her hair smelled of vanilla, sweet and warm, and he could see the smattering of freckles across the bridge of her nose. “I set fire to Snape when I was 12.”

That was not what he expected her to say, he choked on his drink and coughed loudly. That little witch. “Remind me not to get on your bad side, Granger.”

“You have that backwards, Malfoy,” she said coyly. “You’re already on my bad side, but it seems like you’re trying to get on my good side.”

He smiled. Clever witch. “The best way I can think to get on the good side of the Brightest Witch of Our Age is to tempt her with a research puzzle. Any progress?”

“On the training regimen? Nearly there, but I want to be sure it’s perfect before we put it into action.”

“I’m sure any plan you made, even a half worked out one, would be brilliant.”

Salazar. He was laying it on pretty thick. Perhaps he was just out of practice talking to witches. He took a deep drink and caught Potter’s inquisitive gaze across the table. Draco offered a polite smile in return, carefully devoid of any smirk. See? He could play nice.

“Where’s your pet weasel?” he asked Potter with what he hoped came across as good-natured ribbing. It wouldn’t do to be set on fire; these were new robes. “Surprised your Golden Trio isn’t together tonight.”

Suddenly the conversation stopped and no one wanted to look him in the eye. Oh great. He’d messed up something, again.

“Ron is busy with Cannons at this time in the season,” sputtered Potter awkwardly. “Plus, um, Hermione and Ron broke-up a few months ago and they aren’t really... well, you know....” he finished, trailing off lamely.

He was immediately sorry for asking. Had he missed that in the Prophet? Why hadn’t Pansy mentioned it? He could feel Granger tense next to him, probably bracing for his cruel joke defense mechanism to kick-in. Instead he opted for self-deprecation. He was growing. Or trying to anyway.

“Yes, well, being imprisoned does make it difficult to follow current events.”

The mood went from awkward to pitying and Draco wished he could disappear on the spot. He recalled his Hogwarts apparition lesson mantra: destination, determination, and deliberation. Instead he threw back the last of his drink, made a gesture to suggest he was suddenly surprised his glass was empty, and made his way to the bar.

Idiot. Draco walked right into that mess of a conversation, but he was secretly, disturbingly, pleased to know that Granger was single. Trying to catch the bartender’s eye, he didn’t notice Granger until she stepped next to him.

“Shit, Granger, I’m sorry,” he said, agitatedly running a hand through his hair.

“It’s fine, you didn’t know. Ron and I are still friends, I think. It was a very amicable sort of fight, just also very awkward. It was a long time coming.”

There was a beat as they both faced toward the bar, not making eye contact, waiting for the bartender to appear.

“Um, I need to apologize to you, actually,” said Granger, half turning toward him.

“Whatever for?”

“I shouldn’t have left, the other night, I was... I don’t know... I just had to go. But I really appreciated how you stood up to Flint for me and your apology afterward.”

“I did look pretty heroic on the cover of the Prophet,” he said, flipping his hair rakishly.

“Oh, absolutely. I’m sure there’s a copy in the loo right now. Top notch reading material.”

“See that? And all you have is an Order of Merlin,” he said, knocking his shoulder into hers companionably.

“Do you think we could try flying again sometime?” she asked with a nervous smile looking up at him with those big golden eyes.

Draco realized he was grinning down at her too. Merlin, he was in trouble. This was dangerously close to real feelings. It was the only excuse for what he said next.

“It’s a date.”

Chapter End Notes

Draco's wand image credit: @PartyElephants

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Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 9: Falcons' Stadium. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



**WITCH
ON THE
PITCH**

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**Hermione Granger in
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Image is an “in universe” advertisement for Parkinson Designs’ new fashion line “Witch on the Pitch” available at Madam Malkins and Quality Quidditch Supplies on Diagon Alley. The ad features an illustration of an assertive Hermione Granger sporting her new Falmouth Falcons’ grey athletic joggers and training jacket emblazoned with the Falcons logo. To ensure she is recognized as the team’s Healer, her outfit has lime green accents.

Illustration credit: @PartyElephants

Falmouth Falcons 0-2

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Ginny Weasley: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cormac McLaggen: Seeker

Hermione

The next week, Hermione was once again sitting with the Slytherins in the coaching box watching the Falcons play. Unlike other matches though, today was the day of her and Pansy’s big reveal. Hermoine was kitted out in her newly fashioned (Muggle inspired) athletic wear instead of her billowing lime green healer robes. They had designed grey athletic joggers and a jacket with the Falcons’ logo on the front. Then to clarify her role, they added lime green highlights and the word HEALER across the back of her shoulders. She finished the look with her trainers and a messy bun that she shoved her wand into, even though Pansy had added clever wand pockets along the outside of her thigh and inside her sleeve.

It felt absolutely divine. She could finally move unhindered by her robes and could agilely run on the pitch. Bliss. What she hadn’t expected though were the stares she had received from her wizard colleagues. It was as though they had no idea that witches might have legs beneath their robes. The magical world was so arcane sometimes, it was a perfectly modest athletic outfit by Muggle standards. Hermione chose to ignore it. The look was prominently featured in Pansy’s “Witch on the Pitch” fashion line and there was no going back. She knew she would be so much more effective at her job dressed like this. Luckily, most of the men around her had lost interest in her joggers as the match got interesting.

The Falcons were playing Puddlemere United today and the score was close; as close as they had ever been this season. The play-by-play was provided once again by Fred and George

Weasley up in the press box. They continued their banter about death, plugging their absurd joke products, and focused the majority of their comments about the match on their little sister. Hermione thought it was quite cute actually. For all the tricks they had played on her, they were incredibly protective and proud of Ginny.

“Bell has the Quaffle. Tosses it to Ginny-” said George.

“Oi, watch that Bludger Gin,” interrupted Fred.

“-tough luck sis; Puddlemere back in possession, racing down the pitch!”

“I’ll bet they’re planning on a Porskoff Ploy. It takes extreme precision, but can be incredibly effective.”

“But wait, what’s this? Goyle with a Bludger, out of nowhere...”

Hermione didn’t have to know much about Quidditch to recognize the excited tension in the coach’s box. As the Quaffle soared toward the Falcons’ unprotected goal post, everyone leaned forward to watch as Goyle used his Beater’s bat to smash a Bludger right into the Quaffle, deflecting its trajectory away from the goal posts.

“Righto Goyle, an incredible play,” said Fred, “and the crowd here is going wild!”

“Now normally players are not allowed to interfere with any ball not associated with their position,” said George.

“As they say, in Quidditch, you need to play with your own balls.”

“Nice one Fred, but you see, Goyle here has used athleticism and strength to exploit a wicked loophole.”

“The Falcons are playing surprisingly strong today. The swap from Flint to Weasley has been a good look for this team.”

“Ooohh watch out Bell. That had to hurt.”

Hermione saw Katie’s broom take the brunt of a blow from a Bludger, but her own broom had smacked her hard in the face.

“And here comes Granger to check her out.”

As she ran out onto the pitch, she could already see blood dripping through Katie’s fingers as she landed hard in front of Hermione. A quick “Episkey”, a “Scourgify”, and Katie was good as new, racing back into the action.

“Fred, that Hermione Granger is a stroke of good luck for this team of misfits. It’s incredible they were able to convince the Wizarding World’s most famous and brilliant Muggle-born to join this crazy venture.”

“And that outfit. Muggle fashion really can be, um, something else.”

“Fred, I don’t think we are supposed to comment on the um... Healer’s assets.”

“I’m dead, not blind, George. Besides everyone knows ‘Mione has always been a looker.’”

“And a swot,” said George, clearly trying to wrestle the commentary on to more appropriate ground. “Ginny says they’ve got some new secret weapon strategy. It’s all very hush hush, but apparently includes a Muggle training program.”

“The Falcons' haven’t won a single match yet, but today they are looking great. Whatever Hermione brewed up is working.”

“Oi, Ginny with the Quaffle now, scores ten more for the Falcons!”

As Hermione rejoined the group in her seat she was blushing a bit from the twins' praise. She took her seat as the twins treated the crowd to their rendition of the song “Weasley is our Queen”.

“The twins are right, you know, they usually are,” said Pansy. “You really are an incredible asset to this team and you really do look fantastic in that Muggle-inspired athletic kit.”

“Thanks Pansy,” said Hermione, not used to praise, especially from the Slytherin Princess. “The design worked out perfectly.”

“That outfit alone might just make the cover of the next Prophet, if not, I’ll get you in Witch Weekly. I wonder if we can get the twins more press too, they’ve been an unexpected sensation. They are quite good at telling the unfiltered truth while announcing.”

The twins were certainly right about her new training regimen; it really could be a game changer. She was proud of the plan she worked out with Oliver. Their plan included preventative care, diet, strengthening exercises, team bonding, and of course, her favourite... more research. A true mix of magical and Muggle strategies. She had even woven yoga into the schedule. Hermione was also hoping to work with Pansy on some more protective gear which they could pitch to Magical Games & Sports at the Ministry to make them mandatory for all players in the UK. Traditionally Quidditch training was just practicing Quidditch plays, scrimmages, etc. Her planned approach of course used all that, but also all the mental and physical training that modern Muggle athletes employed.

When Oliver and Hermione pitched it to Malfoy, he had been skeptical at first, but he seemed to think it was worth a go. He reflected that after she kept Potter and Weasley alive for this long, she must really be a genius. Besides, other teams didn’t have the benefit of having a Muggle-born researcher like her who could use both magical and Muggle methods to devise a training plan. That paired with Oliver’s sheer enthusiasm and obsession with the sport made their plan uniquely situated to work. This could be the upper hand they needed. Plus Malfoy had joked that they had nothing left to lose.

She remembered, in their first few years at Hogwarts, before everything fell apart, Malfoy would do anything to get a laugh. Even though he tended to be cruel, Malfoy used to have a wicked sense of humour as a child. Then when everything happened, well... she didn’t

suppose he had much opportunity for joking around since he had taken the Dark Mark. Now that she thought about it, it was good to see him starting to smile and banter.

Hermione looked over at Malfoy in his (apparently) normal seat next to her in his grey Falcons' coaching robes. He was nearly vibrating with nerves, but he was so much more positive than last match. He threw a companionable look at her with a small slightly distracted smile and his gaze lingered for just a moment too long before flickering down over her outfit. Did he just give her the once over? No, of course not. And even if he did, he wouldn't be interested in her per se, he was just a repressed wizard curious about her Muggle-inspired athletic wear.

Anyhow, they were friends now, sort of, he wouldn't fancy her like that. But he had said "it's a date" about their next flying lesson. That was just something people said though, right? They weren't dating. They hadn't dated so they couldn't be dating anyway. Were they headed in that direction? Did he really mean he planned to date her? It was impossible for Hermione to focus on the match with him sitting so near. She just stared unseeing at the pitch wondering if she looked natural enough that Malfoy wouldn't know she was trying not to think about him. He was probably too interested in their first close match to pay her any heed.

"Did you see that?" said Malfoy. "That was brilliant."

"I'm sorry, what?"

"The move by Goyle," he said without taking his eyes off the pitch.

"He hit the bludger into someone?"

"Granger, can't you appreciate how brilliant our Beaters are today?"

"I don't really know much about watching Quidditch, actually. I mean I've read about it, and I've sat through it, but no one's ever really... well, my friends are almost always playing, so I don't, I don't really have a good eye for it," she said, stumbling over the words. She'd never gotten the hang of active observation during Quidditch. There was just too much going on, and the matches went forever, and the truth was she didn't grow up with it like everyone else.

He tore his eyes from the match to shoot her a quizzical look.

"Right," he said as if deciding something. "Well, watch how Goyle and Millie have to sync up as a team and work together more than anyone else out there. They have to communicate with each other to play both defensively and offensively simultaneously. Beaters get pigeonholed as just muscle, but the good ones are perfectly in tune with each other and know exactly when to switch between offense and defense."

"That makes sense, sure," she nodded thoughtfully, analysing the Beaters. She had watched Beaters play hundreds of times, she supposed they worked as a team, but had never really considered it before.

He flashed her a smile. “Okay, so let’s watch. Goyle and Millie are perfectly in step today. See how Millie has spotted an opening, their Chaser is pulling away from the others, to try for a long pass. Millie has a Bludger under control, hits it toward Goyle, and there, see? His favourite move, he’s knocked the Quaffle off track. The precision to hit a moving target like that in a coordinated effort with Millie, it’s, well, it’s astounding. Just wait, they’ll do something like that again, there, see how they just seamlessly switched to defense and saved McLaggen (not that he deserved it)?”

Hermione watched as the Beaters continued their uncanny communication across the pitch. When they completed their next play, she cheered along with everyone else. Malfoy shot her a smile, then went back to watching the pitch.

“Okay, now take Wood,” continued Malfoy, “he’s by far our best player; he could even make the National Team someday. He’s a master of the Double Figure Eight with a feint, watch for that when the opposing team...”

She didn’t think anyone had ever bothered to try to help her understand Quidditch this way before. People were always saying super simple things like there are 4 balls, 3 Chasers, 2 Beaters, 1 Keeper, 1 Seeker, etc. or screaming the name of a move that had just happened with no context. Malfoy’s patient explanation helped her enjoy the nuance that made the game interesting.

“What’s wrong with McLaggen?” asked Fred over the roar of the crowd.

“Looks like he’s cradling his head, must have taken a hit, but I never saw a Bludger near him,” answered George.

“Wait a minute, I think, no... he’s caught the Snitch!”

“You’re right, it must have flown straight into his big head.”

The stadium seemed to freeze as the news sunk in. McLaggen really was a terrible Seeker. Hermione was puzzled at the sarcastic exchange between Malfoy, Theo, and Blaise at this news. Theo seemed to be miming that Malfoy should come read his tea leaves.

The twins continued their commentary with jubilation.

“150 points to the Falcons - the Falcons win!”

“Their first win of the season!”

Their first win! The stadium erupted in cheers. Nearly everyone jumped to their feet and as the players landed their brooms, fans started pouring out onto the field storming the pitch. Most of the coaching box ran onto the pitch too. Theo, transfigured the low barrier into a staircase to help Pansy over in her preposterously impractical shoes. Hermione moved to join the throng, but noticed Malfoy was still sitting, he seemed too stunned by the win to move. He just sat there in shock. She smiled down at him and offered him her hand to pull him up.

“Come on,” she coaxed, tugging his hand.

“And the first win for the team’s new management,” continued Fred from up in the press box. Hermione smiled bigger and squeezed Malfoy’s hand in acknowledgment of the twin’s statement. Malfoy smiled up at her, still rendered speechless by the win.

“Just goes to show, even Death Eaters can do something right,” continued George.

Malfoy’s head snapped up as though he could see the words floating out over the pitch and Hermione felt her stomach drop. How could they say something like that in front of all these people?

“Maybe money really can buy happiness,” laughed Fred. Malfoy’s face dropped as the words registered.

“As long as we get a win, we can call it reparations! A win-win!”

“See you at the shop and the next home match.”

“This is Fred and George Weasley of Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes signing off.”

Hermione sank back down in her seat next to Malfoy, still holding his hand; the joy sucked out of the moment. She felt terrible for him. He was trying so hard and the twin’s off the cuff remarks had been completely uncalled for.

“Malfoy, they were out of line. You don’t... they didn’t really...” Hermione trailed off and squeezed his hand, but didn’t know what to say. The Weasley’s comments hung heavy over them as they both sat, watching the shared joy of the players and fans on the pitch. It was a joy that they were excluded from.

Everyone was so happy. Players were being lifted in the air. People were shooting sparks from their wands into the sky and the pitch was filling with more friends and family. As she watched the thrum, she saw Ron come up through the crowd to congratulate Ginny.

Ron.

She still hadn’t spoken to him after their break-up, but seeing him gave her a sort of nostalgic ache. She really should reach out and see him again. No one did anything wrong in their relationship, they were just not right for each other. Perhaps this was an opportunity and they would both find someone that was right, perfect even, for them both. She truly wished that for him... and herself. There was no sense forcing the round peg into the square hole of their relationship.

As Hermione watched, she saw Ron reach Ginny and pull her into a hug: a proud big brother. A small smile flitted across Hermione’s lips. But then the crowd parted a bit and Hermione could see Lavender Brown beside him. Hermione had seen Ron with Lavender at the gala (in her giant candy floss pink dress robes) and thought it was a bit quick for him to already be dating someone new, but she had dismissed it. He was a free agent. Ron and Lavender had a history, what he did after they broke-up was not really her concern.

Hermione watched as Ron drew Lavender forward to talk to Ginny and pulled her close by throwing an arm around her waist... her nearly nonexistent waist. Lavender Brown was heavily pregnant. The world seemed to tilt on its axis and all Hermione could see was Lavender and Ron.

What?? How?? Impossible.

She ran the math quickly in her head and there was no way. All that time. She thought they were mismatched best friends, but now the terrible truth hit her hard: he had been cheating. She was a fool. How long had this been going on?

She felt bile clawing at the back of her throat.

She couldn't breathe.

Her vision began to tunnel.

With a clinical sort of detachment she realized that she might faint.

Draco

Draco sat in the coaching box in stunned silence. Was that what everyone still thought? He was still just a Death Eater throwing around his family's money. It was the truth though. He hadn't done anything to change the narrative. He was barely out of Azkaban and all he'd done so far was dramatically mope about and then bought a Quidditch team that he didn't know how to manage. Then filled said team with his friends, who also didn't know what they were on about. This was an absolutely unhinged and desperate idea. So they had won a match; that didn't prove anything. Didn't change the facts. This was all a disaster, he was a disaster.

If his own team said such things, the public would think even worse of him. Although he was originally pleased with the win, he had completely moved on from it now. It felt hollow. The entire endeavour had turned to ashes. He had no desire to jump and squeal with delight like the throng of fans and players cavorting on the pitch.

He realized that Granger was still holding his hand the moment she pulled it back and gasped. What the fuck Granger? He really wasn't in the mood for someone else's drama. He had his own drama to deal with at the moment, thank you very much. But as his eyes were drawn away from the celebration on the pitch and toward her unblinking eyes, all he could think about was her.

Granger had been his focus most of the match. It was damn near impossible to focus on anything but her. He had been struggling to watch the match starring his favourite team... that he owned... during their first win. No, instead Draco had been completely distracted by pretending not to watch her in those unbelievable fitted Muggle clothes as she ran across the field or sat so close next to him. Pansy was going to make them a fortune selling Parkinson designed Falcons branded clothing. Merlin. Granger's joggers. They fit her perfectly and made his own trousers feel alarmingly tight.

Now that he tore his gaze away from the celebration on the pitch he noticed that something was desperately wrong with Granger. She looked like she'd seen a basilisk. Her face was white, her hands were visibly shaking, and she seemed to be holding her breath in horror. Her feelings were always written across her face, but this was extreme even for her. She'd obviously never been trained in Occlumency. He, on the other hand, owed his life to the brutal lessons his godfather had administered in the Hogwarts dungeons; a training that he begrudgingly recognized had ensured his survival countless times.

"Hey Granger," said Draco looking her over and trying to look back on the pitch to figure out what was going on. "What's wrong? You're okay. You're fine. Everything is okay," he babbled without having the least idea if everything was actually alright or not. It just seemed like the sort of thing people said in that situation. The type of shite he used to say when he saw people freeze up like this during the war.

He put her hands on her shoulders and lowered himself to sit on the back of the seat in front of her, bringing himself to her eye level. He continued babbling nonsensical calming words trying to snap her out of it.

"Do you want a drink?" he said, grasping for anything to get her out of her state of panicked shock. Right, a drink. He conjured a crystal chalice and filled it with a quick "Aguamenti", then placed it in her trembling hands. Granger lifted the water to her lips and after a swallow, she stopped and focused on what she was holding.

"Malfoy, did you just conjure a crystal chalice instead of a normal water glass?"

"Um, yes? That's how I always do it."

"You are such a ponce," she said with a small smirk and eye roll. "You should go, Malfoy. Go celebrate with your team."

At least his ostentatious chalice had snapped her out of her panic. Seeing that she had recovered enough and was breathing more normally again, he sank back onto his preferred seat.

"It's their win," he said. "I didn't do anything. Just used money I didn't earn to buy a team I can't manage, right? I don't deserve this win."

They sat side by side feeling their separate pain.

"Granger, do you want to talk about it? What's wrong?"

She vanished the chalice. She didn't answer, but he could follow her gaze right down to the pitch. It took him a moment with the shifting crowd to figure out what she was staring at.

"The Weasel?"

"We broke up."

"Yes, so you told me..." but he thought she had said it was a while ago and fairly mutual. This raw agony didn't look like something that was a long time coming between friends.

Something had changed since last week when they had spoken about it; likely something had changed in the past few moments. What?

He continued following her gaze at the crowd and he saw it. Rather saw her, an incredibly pregnant Lavender holding Ron's hand. His first thought was one of discomfort, he had no experience with pregnant women and babies. It all sounded like an awful lot. Months, the better part of a year even, of dealing with someone else's shite. Oh shite...

"When did you break-up?"

"Four or five months ago."

Oh shite.

Draco finally understood and wished he didn't. That bastard. The absolute cunt. The Weasel truly was beneath contempt.

"Oh - Granger, I'm so sorry."

All at once, Granger launched herself onto Draco, a strangled sob tearing from deep within her... She curled into him and began to weep bitter tears onto his chest. He instinctively cast a quick notice-me-not charm and put his arms around her to pull her close.

He was equal parts surprised and flattered that she would find him comforting. How far they'd come in such a short time.

Granger started trying to explain something to him in fragmented thoughts about her yellow birds and 6th year and Potter and Ron and Lavender... Draco realized that she was on the verge of hyperventilating and tried to soothe her with more nonsensical mutterings unsure of what else he could do for her.

During the war, Draco had seen his share of break-downs. Living with a deranged, all-powerful, undead, half-snake megalomaniac had quite the effect on a living community. After one memorable encounter when Draco had received one too many rounds of Crucio from his "master" and aunt, he had lost it and his mother had been the one to hold him and help him breathe.

"Shh... can you breathe with me?"

He focused on taking deliberately steady breaths, willing himself to calm down with the hopes of convincing her to relax. Eventually, her breath began to even out. By the time her sobs turned to soft tears, she was fully tuned to his slow steady breathing still clinging to him. He would have let her stay there with him all night if she'd wanted, but alas.

"I'm sorry," she mumbled, as she moved back into her seat and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

"It's fine," he whispered.

Hermione put her head on his shoulder.

They sat there for a long time watching as everyone else celebrated and slowly moved off the pitch.

Draco realized that he didn't mind at all when her soft curls tickled his cheek.

Chapter End Notes

Witch on the Pitch

Illustration credit: @PartyElephants

Design credit: Gossamer26

Thank you so much for reading!

Join us on healthyishobsession.com for FanArt, Dramione quizzes, playlist, and more!

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 10: The Cornish Comet/Isle of Skye. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Witch Weekly Feb 2001 Issue

Check out the Falmouth Falcons' Utterly Fabulous New Roster!

By Parvati Patil

The Falcons are in it to win it this year as they compete for the 2001 League Cup. Don't let their slow start stop you from drinking your fill of this year's absolutely hottest team!!!

Oliver Wood: He's a Keeper! (In more ways than one!) As team captain and the team's Keeper this season, Oliver is one of the most important players on the team. Puddlemere United refused to recognize his talents? Their loss is our gain, because he's known for his hard work and even harder abs! What a dish! "We're going to get out there and play our best." (And look good doing it, we're sure!)

Ginny Weasley: Weasley is our Queen! The Chosen One's chosen one! This talented Chaser is engaged to be married to Harry Potter himself! (He's sure to attend her matches - see if you can spot him in the crowd!) What will it be like living with the Boy-Who-Lived? Stay tuned, dearies, to find out more about this fiery redhead's glamorous wedding plans as the date draws closer! "Mum, I know you're reading this, could you make your treacle tart for dessert this Sunday?" (She's adorable!)

Cormac McLaggen: Hide-and-seek-me! He's the nephew of Tiberius Ogden, currently eyeing the top office, but it's only a matter of time before we see this fit young wizard on his own ballot! Playboy Cormac McLaggen always looks absolutely divine in his Quidditch leathers and when throwing back a glass of his family's favourite Ogden's Old Firewhiskey. We didn't know he could play Seeker, but we are totally here for it! Drop by one of his matches this season; he's always happy to meet his fans. "Parvati, what a pretty name. Are you doing anything after this, yeah?" (Oh, you charmer!)

Hermione Granger: The Golden (Snitch) Girl! Muggle-born war hero Hermione Granger needs no introduction and the Falcons were oh-so-lucky to snag this brainy beauty as the team's Healer this season. She's already made a splash rocking her Muggle-inspired athletic wear (so chic!), but don't let that fool you, dearies. The Brightest Witch of Her Age is the complete package with a brain to go with those looks. Inside sources tell us she is the genius behind the Falcons' new training method. "I'm currently working to improve Quidditch

safety protocols. I think given time we can find a middle ground that will maintain what the public loves about the game while improving player outcomes.” (We love a witch who prioritizes safety! And style!)

Pansy Parkinson: The Slytherin Princess! Parkinson’s designs are taking on a whole new look! This season Pansy is moving out of the ballroom and on to the pitch. And can you believe she’s still single?! (We certainly can’t!) “Falmouth Falcons’ official Parkinson Designs gear can be purchased at all Quality Quidditch Supplies locations and Madam Malkin’s on Diagon Alley.” (Get yours now!)

Draco Malfoy: Heir to evil... and our hearts! The Falmouth Falcons team owner is the Wizarding World’s very own bad boy who has become its most eligible bachelor! Lord Malfoy recently inherited the Malfoy family fortune and is the Head of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black. Lord Malfoy previously played as Seeker for Slytherin House at Hogwarts, but unfortunately has been hiding his glorious broom thighs behind-the-scenes! (Bring them out, Draco!) “You can’t seriously expect me to comment on this drivel.” (Oh, you! We knew you’d love it!)

We’ll be watching the Falmouth Falcons this season with great interest.

Draco

The Cornish Comet sounded perfect on parchment. Draco had approved the purchase and transferred the, frankly staggering amount of, galleons from his Gringotts vault personally.

Quidditch teams needed to travel across the United Kingdom repeatedly throughout the short League Cup season and occasionally abroad for friendlies. While normally magical transportation over long distances was as simple as going to the portkey office, that wasn’t an option for an operation of this size and carrying this much gear. Only an absolute plonker would attempt to portkey with a high caliber Quidditch broom. There was no telling the atrocities that might befall the charms on even the best brooms, well, especially the best brooms. Traveling with a broom was always tricky. He was fairly sure his old Nimbus 2001 would manage being apparated, but not traveling via portkey. Draco briefly wondered where Nimbus was and decided it was most likely collecting dust with his Firebolt in the manor broom shed.

Given the temperamental nature of broom enchantments, Quidditch teams simply had to travel overland and the Cornish Comet was Blaise’ solution. Draco had no idea how the previous incarnation of the Falmouth Falcons had travelled to matches, probably something illegal.

The Cornish Comet was a bus, not too dissimilar to the Knight Bus, mixed with enchantments similar to the Room of Requirement. The bus could travel anywhere without a driver, unlike the Hogwarts Express which only travelled between King’s Cross and Hogsmeade Station. The first floor featured separate rooms that could act as a dining or lounge space near the stairs and a gymnasium up in front. The second floor was divided up into separate compartments, not unlike sleeper compartments on a train. Thanks to the complex enchantments, the Cornish Comet was able to anticipate the needs of the occupants

and conjure whatever setting was needed and could become larger as necessary to accommodate extra passengers. Given the luxurious nature of the accommodations, the large sum Draco had paid seemed appropriate. Obviously he wasn't going to be caught dead on anything but the finest transportation.

Unfortunately, the Cornish Comet did not live up to expectations.

They were scheduled to play the Pride of Portree on the Isle of Skye and it was unclear if they would make it there in one piece. The team had already boarded while Draco stood in disbelief with Pansy, Blaise, and Granger staring warily up at the monstrosity.

“Did Theo put you up to this?” Draco asked Blaise looking dubiously at The Cornish Comet. “You can't be serious.”

For starters it was a faded avocado green, a colour Draco hadn't seen this side of the 1970's, except in the 70's it wouldn't have been so rusty. The open door was hanging at a bit of an angle and the bus appeared slightly bowed in the middle. From inside the bus they could hear the shouts and derisive laughter of the team as they ran around exploring:

“Where are the lights?”

“Why is it so sticky?”

“What is that smell?”

“I'm gonna need new shoes.”

Was this really the best Blaise could do or was it a prank? It was impossible to tell. Blaise simply beamed, looking like a cat who'd gotten the cream, and Draco immediately regretted agreeing to lead the road trip without him. Draco mentally cursed Blaise and his mother's latest wedding, now feeling as though it was less of an obligation and more like a flimsy excuse.

Draco sighed deeply. There was nothing for it.

“Parks, let's go,” called Draco hitching his bag higher on his shoulder in a determined sort of way.

“No. Shan't.” replied Pansy planting her feet.

“What?”

“I'm not getting on that thing.”

“It's your literal job.”

“The Dark Lord himself could not convince me to ride in that ancient, Zonko's joke shop fueled nightmare.”

“We need you.”

“No. Here, this is as close as I'm coming to that thing,” she said and waved her wand in a series of complex movements. Now the outside of the Comet was coated in a fresh silver

grey paint with the words “Falmouth Falcons Quidditch ‘United We Soar’” emblazoned across the side with their logo. The rusty spots still showed through, and although it could technically be considered an improvement, it was now painfully apparent exactly who owned this clunker. She picked up her bag and turned away, “Now be good and don’t get into any scrapes that require my media relations genius. I’m out.”

“Pansy, you can’t do that,” Draco called after her retreating form.

“I’ll buy my own portkey for the next trip,” she yelled over her shoulder without turning around. “Be good.”

Draco caught Granger’s eye and shrugged.

“Looks like it’ll just be us.”

“Well, lead on,” said Granger, fingering the strap of her small beaded bag. “Unless you need a courageous Gryffindor to go first.”

He rolled his eyes and mounted the steps.

It was some time before he made it to his own compartment upstairs and all the way in the front. It resembled a standard sleeper car, except one wall was covered by a mural of Newt Scamander who constantly tickled a niffler as coins dropped loudly on the ground. Perhaps he could silence it tonight. Once settled, he and Wood wrangled everyone into the Christmas themed lounge on the first floor. Festive lights twinkled around each window and a giant red bow adorned the back of each chair.

“Oi, Millie, can I bunk with you?” asked Goyle “My compartment is flooded.”

“Only if you can convince the Comet to conjure a second bed.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time I slept on your floor.”

“Suit yourself, but my floor is covered in playground gravel.”

Everyone laughed and excitedly explained their own room’s peculiarities. At least spirits were high and the team found the Cornish Comet amusing... for now.

As the Nutcracker Suite played softly in the background, Draco and Wood called the meeting to order.

“As you know this is our first away match -” began Draco only to be interrupted by Pucey.

“Wood, can you show us those abs that Witch Weekly was going on about?”

“Nah, Ferret,” called Ginny, “I want to hear about the ‘Heir to our Hearts’ broom thighs.”

“That’s rich coming from the ‘Chosen One’s chosen one’” said Katie.

“Right,” said Draco placatingly. “Yes, well, you can all blame Pansy for that bit of absurdity when we get home. Can we focus?”

“Yes m’lord.”

After a last giggle the joint hilarity of the Witch Weekly article and the Cornish Comet had momentarily abated enough for Draco to continue.

“Right, it's our first road trip so please try to behave. It's just Granger and me from the management team and I'm not interested in bailing anyone out from a Muggle jail. Yeah? Our match is tomorrow morning against the Pride of Portree. If the match ends early enough, you'll have time to explore town until we leave the following morning. Yes, McLaggen?”

“Are there any limits on how much fun we can have? Say, can I bring girls back here or are only the girls on the team fair game?”

“Right... I can't...,” said Draco immediately feeling the start of a headache. “I'm not going to answer that. Wood here is in charge, he'd like to discuss strategy, then you can hit the gym.” Draco nodded to Wood as he walked out of the yuletide lounge back toward the staircase. Granger excused herself as well and joined him as he walked back upstairs.

Her compartment was right at the top of the stairs. She smiled at him briefly then turned to open her door. He wasn't sure what her compartment looked like, but from what he could see it seemed overly white and had a sterile tile floor.

“Granger?”

“Yes?” she said, turning to look back at him.

He had imagined he'd have Pansy and Blaise with him on this trip, he never thought it would be just him and Granger. But there was no help for it.

“Do you want to go to dinner with me after the match tomorrow?” Draco watched her gold eyes fill with uncertainty. She wasn't sure. Shite, that sounded too forward, too much like a proper date. He immediately tried to revise and back-off.

“I mean, maybe we could pop out for a bite somewhere, something casual since we're the only ones here. I mean, the only ones not on the team on this trip together. Well, not together, but...,” he wished he could disappear and recalled: destination, determination, and deliberation.

“We could, er, talk more about the training strategy and go over the preliminary data? Not a date or anything unless...” Oh Salazar. He wished Buckbeak had just killed him. Perhaps Azkaban would take him back. He turned to walk toward his compartment to escape, but Granger stopped him with a hand on his arm.

“Honestly Malfoy,” she smirked, “for the ‘Wizards World’s Most Eligible Bachelor’, you completely botched that invitation. I’ll have to replay it for Pansy and Theo in a Pensieve.”

That little witch.

Hermione

The Falcons lost to Portree. They had been winning on points before losing the Snitch. Even Hermione could see that they needed a better Seeker. McLaggen was absolute rubbish, but at least the team was working more cohesively without Flint's disruptive influence. Maybe they just needed more time. The team had taken the loss in stride knowing that they (well six of them) had done their best and were excited to go out. Wood, now so accustomed to losing, only needed a quick cheering charm from Ginny before heading off with the rest of them. That left only Hermione and Malfoy on the Cornish Comet.

Hermione was a bit nervous to be alone with Malfoy this evening. They hadn't spoken about it during the match except to confirm that they would meet at seven and go somewhere Muggle to give the team some space.

She hadn't gone on a date in a long time. Was this a date? It must be a date at this point, right? Date-adjacent at minimum. Godric, she hoped it would go better than Ron's idea of dates. Not that they'd ever really dated, they just sort of existed together. Friends to live-in best friends-with-benefits, really, until... no, she wasn't going to think about him cheating. She hadn't even mentioned it to Ginny and Harry; she wanted to move forward, not pick at old wounds and certainly wasn't going to bring it up over a pint. The break-up itself had been civil enough; it was the betrayal beforehand that still stung when she let herself think about it. But she wouldn't think about it. She refused to give Ronald Weasley the power to ruin this for her, whatever this turned out to be. A few steadying breaths. There. Better.

This thing with Malfoy was different. She wasn't dating Draco Malfoy. That was ridiculous. Impossible. They were complete opposites with absolutely nothing in common and... and her heart was beating faster. Why? This was just a polite work dinner. They were simply the only ones around. Perfectly professional. Except it didn't feel professional, and she couldn't dismiss the thought that he was waiting for her and she was equal parts terrified and excited to see him. More steadying breaths were needed.

Hermione descended the stairs to meet him in the lounge. She had decided on a burgundy work dress that was possibly, but not overtly, date-ish for mid-February in the Isle of Skye - a long-sleeved sweater dress that flared at the hips into a knee-length circle skirt. She'd always had a soft spot for a dress that could twirl. She used to love walking quickly and dramatically twisting in the Hogwarts hallways feeling her skirt and robes swish around her. Hermione had pinned her hair up and was pleased by how just the right amount of curls had tumbled out framing her face. In her pockets (all good dresses had pockets) she stashed her wand and a roll of Muggle notes since there was no telling if Malfoy could handle paying in pounds.

When she reached the bottom of the steps, he was already there waiting for her in expensive looking slacks, an Oxford shirt, and blazer looking like he stepped out of a catalog. Was that a pocket square? Good Godric, what a ponce. He looked perfect.

"You look lovely," he said, moving to take her arm to help her down the last step of the steep winding staircase. Her heart immediately began to beat faster at his casual touch.

“Thank you, so do you,” she winced, not sure if that was the right thing to say. She wished she had more date/not date experience. “I read about a place in my guidebook that we could try, it’s a bit off the beaten path.”

“Whatever you want, Granger.”

She cast a quick warming charm on them both and tugged his arm tighter to indicate she was about to apparate them. She felt the familiar squeeze of apparition and they reappeared with a crack around the corner from the door to the little restaurant she had found. The cold damp February wind pummeled them immediately and Hermione was glad she’d thought to apply a warming charm. They made their way through the front door. The warm air was the perfect opposite to the blustery evening. Malfoy’s immediate instinct was to fix his hair and Hermione couldn’t help but laugh.

“And here I thought you’d use a bubble head charm.”

“They can be useful,” he smirked, clearly joking. “Not that you would know, I doubt one would fit around your nest of hair.”

The restaurant was even more perfect than she’d hoped. They were sat inside a sort of gorgeous greenhouse filled with plants and flowers that would make Neville jealous. Every surface was adorned with small potted plants and flowers hung from baskets fixed to the ceiling. The only light came from strings of soft white bulbs that crisscrossed the ceiling and small candles on the tables surrounded by potted flowers and small succulents. A musician was playing acoustic guitar across the room and it was clear a full band would be playing soon near the small dance floor.

“Granger, where did you find this place?”

“I told you, it was in one of my guidebooks. It’s a plant shop during the day and this restaurant at night. The book claimed it was ‘a perfect oasis during the cold Scottish winter’.”

“You’re sure it’s Muggle?” he said, looking around a bit in awe of the place.

“Muggles can do ‘magical’ pretty well for not having magic.”

The server greeted them and they were busy with the mechanics of ordering for a bit. Settled with their drinks, Hermione realized it was time for them to actually face the reality that they were here, sitting like this, in an enchanted verdant haven, together. What an unlikely pair they made. She didn’t really know him. They hardly knew each other in school and that was still years ago now with the war and the aftermath dividing them. They’d both arrived at Hogwarts in those same small boats and look how far their paths had diverged only to come back together.

“I’m sorry you never got to finish your NEWTs,” said Hermione.

“I’m sorry what?” he drawled with a small smirk, surprised but not displeased by her remark. “You know you might talk a big swotty game, but of the two of us, only one of us ever dropped out of school.”

“The Muggle-born Registration Commission never would have let me attend in 7th year.”

“Theo told me you decided to drop out months before that.”

Interesting. So he'd asked Theo about her. Or more likely, Theo just couldn't keep his mouth shut. “Well, I went back for an 8th, er, 7th, year.”

“I only missed the last month or so of my 7th year because our school became a battlefield.” He flashed a small smile at her over his drink and continued clearly warming up to the topic. “My 7th year was great without you. I was the top of the class, I got the best spot in the library, I was able to ask and answer questions in class - really a perfect year.”

She knew he was just taking the piss. Undoubtedly it was a terrible year, perhaps the worst of his life with the Carrows torturing students at school and Voldemort living in his home. The haunted look he'd had in 6th year would only have been worse in the 7th year she missed on the run with Harry and Ron. She just snorted and shook her head allowing him to go on.

“I finished my NEWTs from Azkaban. McGonagall kindly demanded it. Actually the first time she came to visit me, I thought she was a boggart.” He smiled at her when she laughed at his joke. Malfoy really had a beautiful smile. “Once I felt I was prepared for my NEWTs, she kept sending me other books and assignments for other courses I hadn't even enrolled in 7th year.”

“That sounds like McGonagall. Trying to keep you sane via increased homework.”

“Well it worked, and now I bet I have more NEWTs than you, or anyone else in our year, or maybe even ever.”

“Not a chance Malfoy, I'm the Brightest Witch of Our Age. Everyone knows I took the most NEWT levels in our year and got all O's in every subject.”

“Were we even in the same year at that point? A technicality. I wonder though, there wasn't a lot of Quidditch to watch or parties to go to in prison...” he continued and leaned back in his chair and casually sipped his drink, refusing to concede. “I bet I studied circles around you. All day and night locked in my cell with nothing to do but revise. You're getting nervous now aren't you? You know I'm right. How many NEWTs did you get in that '8th year' of yours when you were so busy splitting your time with the Healer program, dating Weasley, and, I don't know, knitting hats for the elves?”

“I didn't think you, of all people, ever noticed me knitting for the house elves.”

“I've always noticed you, even when I didn't want to,” he looked right into her eyes, the earlier laughter gone. Hermione took a sip of her drink to break the tension and was delighted when the arrival of their food interrupted their conversation.

Hermione was sure the food was excellent, although she barely noticed eating. She was suddenly so self-conscious about her every movement, unsure how much to look into his eyes without seeming odd and how to move her arms normally. The band had finished setting up and couples were beginning to drift toward the dance floor. When she had found this

lovely, yet casual, oasis in her guidebook, it had never mentioned dancing. It was becoming more difficult to deny that this was a date. Hermione found her eyes drifting toward the music and twirling couples.

“Did you want to dance?” he offered, as though he would be doing her a favour, smirking at how she kept watching the dancers.

She felt a thrill rush through her and her breath caught for a second. She hoped he hadn’t noticed. Yes, she thought, but it came out as “Oh, um, okay, sure, I guess.”

“I’m not too familiar with Muggle dancing,” he said (she assumed ‘not too familiar’ meant he had zero experience with Muggle dancing).

“Casual Muggle dancing will be easy for a finishing school fop like you,” she laughed. “You just stand like you’re about to do the box step and then don’t. Instead you just sort of sway in time with the music or step side-to-side a bit, maybe go in a circle, then from time to time you can spin me around.”

“Sounds easy enough,” and he boldly stood up to offer her his hand.

She slipped her hand into his and he led her to the dance floor. As they found a spot, his other hand came to her waist and held her tight as hers went to his shoulder.

“You’re right, easy,” he murmured into her hair as they stood there barely moving.

They had danced at the gala, but that had felt different. That was a performance for McLaggen and Pansy and the press in Wizarding London. This felt intimate. This was theirs. She felt a small tremble flutter across her body. The sensation caught her off guard, she struggled to remember the last time she’d felt this way. Strong, sure arms enveloped her small frame and she caught the scent of orange blossoms and cologne, clean and unmistakably masculine. Her hand traveled slowly off his shoulder and held the back of his neck. She threaded her fingers through the back of his short light hair. Desire flooded through her and she looked up to see his silver eyes lock onto hers. She let out a small ragged breath. Malfoy closed his eyes and swallowed. Setting his jaw, he opened his eyes again and they flashed with humour once more creating an intentional tone shift.

“Alright Golden Girl,” he said, teasingly as they danced. “Tell me, how many NEWTs did you get?”

It was clear he needed no instruction from her on Muggle dancing and they quickly surpassed every other couple around them. Since he’d never heard any of these songs before, the only thing he needed from Hermione was an occasional nudge if there was a bridge or if the song was coming to an unexpected close.

“Why does it matter?”

“It doesn’t matter, but I know it will enrage you when you hear how many I got and you’re adorable when you’re riled up,” he said, spinning her out and pulling her back in against his chest. He thought she was adorable? His eyes caught hers. “How many?”

She could melt into those eyes.

“Ugh, fine,” she said. “Seven.” The instant she said it, she knew she was beat. His eyes lit up and his full Malfoy smirk returned. “Seven is really high,” she defended her NEWTs, infuriated now. “Aurors and Healers need five. There isn’t even a field that requires six and I got seven.”

“I agree, seven is really quite good. You should be proud of yourself.”

“You bastard.”

“Do you want to know how many I got?”

“No. Fine. How many?”

“Ten.”

“Ten?! Ten NEWTs!”

“Ten,” he pulled her in close to whisper, “and I wasn’t given time to practise with a wand,” before effortlessly spinning her out again.

“That’s incredible. And now I hate you.”

“I even got an O in Muggle Studies.”

“Well that’s barely fair. I didn’t take Muggle Studies, but I could have taught it.”

“Fair enough, I’ll give you Muggle Studies, but that still only gets you to eight NEWTs.”

Hermione could feel her cheeks flush and looked away from him. She hoped he assumed it was from anger, and she was angry, but she was also more than a little turned on. Apparently she found competence incredibly attractive. Ten NEWTs, without a wand to practise? It suddenly felt much warmer.

“Come off it, Granger, it doesn’t matter,” he said, trying to placate her, having misunderstood her flushed cheeks and silence. “If you want we can count your Hogwarts Healer training curriculum as two NEWTs. I just faff about all day spending Galleons. Here you are saving lives, making a difference, improving the Wizarding World and all that.”

She looked up at him again, sure she was flushed red. Although at this point the dizzying amount of compliments, extreme vexation, and his proximity were all contributing factors. He just raised one eyebrow and smirked at her as the song ended.

“Stop. Stop,” she said. “Do you have any idea how brilliant that is? Ten NEWTs from Azkaban? Without a wand? That’s not just good, it’s, it’s... I don’t even have a word for it.”

He didn’t answer. His smirk had vanished entirely, replaced by a stunned sort of stillness. He just stared at her, silver eyes wide, still holding her.

The moment shattered as the band leader announced they were going on break. Everyone clapped politely and couples began to return to their seats. It turned out Malfoy had brought Muggle money with him, but tried to pay several thousand pounds for their dinner.

“Oh honestly,” she said and discreetly removed handfuls of notes from the table and tried to shove them back into his pocket. “Glad to see you’re putting that ‘O’ in Muggle Studies to good use.”

“If you’re interested in my trousers, there are easier ways to...”

“Don’t you dare finish that thought, Malfoy,” she said with a severity she didn’t mean.

They left the restaurant and once they rounded the corner, Malfoy offered his arm to side-along her this time. They arrived with a crack just outside the Cornish Comet and he followed her onto the bus and up the stairs. Hers was the first door in the passageway and they lingered there for a moment. The moment of truth. The next moment would answer her question. Had this been a date? Or perhaps had it become one?

“Thanks for finding that place,” he said, leaning down towards her with his hands in his pockets. “It was perfect.” He looked down at her intensely, his white blond hair falling just over the corner of one silver eye. His hand came up and she thought he might use it to cup her cheek and pull her closer, but instead he twirled a lock of her curls around one of his fingers. She noticed that his hand was trembling slightly and it made the surprisingly intimate gesture all the more vulnerable. Their foreheads were almost touching and Hermione rubbed her thighs together as she was overcome with a rush of feelings. She was sure he was about to kiss her and she realized that she wanted him to, badly. But, then suddenly he straightened, caught her hand, and kissed it like a proper gentleman.

“Good night, Granger,” he murmured and fled down the hall toward his room without a backward glance.

Chapter End Notes

Broom image credit: @PartyElephants

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Go Falcons!

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Chapter 11: The Cornish Comet/Isle of Skye. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Draco

Draco wasn't sure when Hermione had snuck into his room last night, but she was clearly here now. His senses were full of her. The scent of her hair, her body so warm against him in his bed. In his bed. It had been so long since a witch had been in his bed. Years even. And he'd never awoken with anyone like this sharing their warmth. The places her skin touched his felt electric and warm. Contentment and desire filled him. He never wanted to wake-up alone again.

He needed her, just once more, before he fully woke-up. Draco kissed her bare shoulder and she made a small mewling sound as she was roused and pressed herself against him pushing him back farther back into the mattress. That sound, the heat of her, the scent of her body; it was too much. He was painfully hard. Twisting, searching for her lips, he began to trail kisses along her neck. Like a man possessed, he began to devour. Her lips, her shoulders, her nipples as his hand slowly, tortuously, caressed her lower and lower and finally reached the apex of her thighs. He groaned. She was already so wet for him.

Desire began to bead at his tip. He hoped she would touch him. He needed her to touch him. It took all of Draco's self control not to toss his Quaffle as she began to grind against his hand chasing her own pleasure with vigor. He cursed the Comet for giving him a bed that refused to stop banging loudly against the wall. How he wished she would touch him, but he would never ask a witch to do something she wasn't comfortable with. Surely she wouldn't mind if he touched himself. He fought the impulse for a few moments before giving in. He trembled as he finally made contact with his dripping length. He was so close. Desperate for release. He had held out as long as he could, but felt himself dangerously close to the edge. With a shuddering gasp, he came. The banging continued as she writhed against him.

"Malfoy," she repeated; "Malfoy" shouting it really.

He wished she would call him Draco.

But what was that noise? What was she banging against? He didn't want her to hurt herself and slowly began to open his eyes, wincing in the bright light.

“Malfoy, wake up. I know you’re in there.”

In where? What? He felt this bed gently rocking like he was floating. He opened his eyes and was startled to see he was sleeping in a crummy little room on a boat. A houseboat? He was sleeping in a 1960’s houseboat having just come all over himself, completely alone in bed. He had no idea what was going on. Where was Hermione?

He should have kissed her last night. Had it even been a date? He wished it had been, but there was no way the renowned Golden Girl of the Wizarding World would be with someone like him. He was wrong for her. Wrong for anyone. He was unredeemable. That thing branded on his arm was a constant reminder. How he wished things could have been different; he would have taken her in his arms and kicked open his door to ravage her... in this... houseboat?

And what was that banging? What in the name of Merlin's saggy ballsack was going on? Someone was banging on his door. The door to his room. On the Cornish Comet. Riiight. The fucking bus.

Fuck. What was going on? He was in no state for visitors.

“Malfoy,” said an authoritative voice. “I swear to fucking God, if you don’t open this door in 30 seconds, I’ll bombard it.”

“Just a moment,” he yelled, motivated at last by the horror of anyone finding him in this state. “Scourgify,” he muttered and began searching desperately for something to wear. He didn’t care what was going on, the most important thing was covering his left arm before anyone saw it. He saw his black outer robes hanging on the side of the *gunwale*? and threw them on, hanging open over his black silk boxers. He was clearly not up to his usual standard, but at least all the most important bits were covered. He slipped his wand into his pocket and threw open the door, surprising Potter whose fist was raised mid-knock.

Fuck. Not just Potter, but an irate Potter standing there in his full Auror robes at dawn. There was no good way to receive a wake-up call from the Chosen Git, but this looked especially bad. Part of him wanted to smirk and lean up against the doorjamb like this was all just an amusing annoyance. However, he thought better of it, Potter’s body language suggested that playing poke-the-Gryffindor was not the right tactic at the moment.

“What the bloody hell happened last night, Malfoy?!”

“I have no idea what you’re on about. I’ve clearly been sleeping. You’re the Auror and fully awake, you tell me.”

And then he noticed the passageway. Oh Sweet Salazar.

The hallway was pure chaos. Cups, bottles, rubbish, clothes. Down the hall, Katie was sleeping on the floor, whereas Millie was sleeping on the ceiling directly above her. A sheep butted up against Draco’s leg, nibbled on the edge of his robe, and tried to get past his bare legs into his room.

“Didn’t you hear anything last night?”

“What? No. I cast a silencing charm around my bed, because the niffler kept dropping galleons before it became a houseboat.”

“Shite. You’ve been affected too,” said Potter to himself. He spoke to Draco louder and in a more punctuated tone like he was a child or hard of hearing, “Are. You. On. A. Potion? Or. Muggle. Drugs? Or. Maybe. An. Enchantment?”

“Piss off Potter. I’m fine.”

“You do seem more lucid than the team,” said Potter thoughtfully, not totally convinced.

“The team?”

“They’re in worse shape and outside except for these two,” he said, indicating Katie and Millie. “Hermione and I thought we’d let these two sleep it off. I just reinforced Millie’s sticking charm, it should hold.”

He couldn’t help but start at the mention of Granger. Thank Salazar whatever was going on hadn’t affected her.

“Right,” Draco was barely able to keep up.

“Malfoy, do you know how much trouble your team is in? We’ve got this place surrounded by Aurors and two memory modification teams are sweeping through town. I’ve got the Falcons on: several counts of breaking the statute of secrecy, public intoxication, endangerment, destruction of property (although maybe this bus was already like this?), disturbing the peace, and I’m not sure what the charge is yet exactly, but we found two Muggle women sleeping in McLaggen’s room.”

Shite. Shite. Shite.

Draco slammed his door shut to keep the sheep from getting in. Then stormed down the hall (careful not to disturb the girls), down the stairs, and outside with Potter at his heels.

He hated to admit it, but Potter was right. Fuck. It was worse outside.

Pansy was going to kill him.

Hermione

Hermione was the only medic on site. When Harry woke her, he still wasn’t positive what was going on. A Hex? A Curse? He’d gone back to look for Malfoy leaving Ginny in her care. Ginny was slumped against the Comet and laughed until she vomited an iridescent bubble, then would laugh again at the hilarity of vomiting bubbles. It was an endless cycle and the bubbles floated softly among the chaos. Pucey and Greg were dancing while singing “Do the Hippogriff” by the Weird Sisters and shooting sparks from their wand tips. Oliver was attempting to fly on a random tree branch all the while shouting, “Up. UP!!!”. The

ground in front of the bus was scattered with rubbish, brooms, and a pair of confused looking shaggy Highland cows.

Aurors had recently arrived and were trying to organize the memory modification teams. As a temporary measure, they had erected a shield and notice-me-not charm to contain the team's chaos until Hermione could ascertain what was wrong with everyone.

"Gin, I'm going to run a diagnostic on you," said Hermione kneeling down to examine her. The diagnostic glowed a faint purple. "Ginny, did you eat or drink anything unusual last night?"

"Yes."

"Right, can you tell me more?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me more?"

"About what?"

"Ginny, I need you to tell me about what unusual thing you ate or drank last night."

"Oh yes," said Ginny with great child-like enthusiasm. "It was McLaggen – he said he put something in our drinks. He said it would 'increase team unity'." She had to stop and laugh as another giant green bubble floated out of her. "I told him to stop, but it was too late, because he'd already done it earlier. He said it was not a big deal, but I think maybe it was a big deal. Do you think it was a big deal?"

Good Godric, she was so tired of McLaggen's nonsense. Whatever he'd put in their drinks was unclear, but they were all totally smashed and their magic was nearly uncontrollable. Hermione ran the same diagnostic on Oliver. He took no notice of Hermione, he was too busy levitating his branch to "teach it to fly". Oliver's glowed the same purple as Ginny's, so it was likely they all had the potion in their system.

She didn't even attempt to chase Goyle and Pucey whose wands had gone from shooting colourful sparks to taking on more firework-like properties. Hermione immediately thought of Seamus and his propensity for explosions. As Harry's partner, he should have been there. Seamus would have found this hilarious and defused things with a bit of humour. They had never been particularly close, but she missed him all the same. He had been a good friend to Harry right up until the end. Well in any case, she had to focus, she'd catch Goyle and Pucey later and run her diagnostic before giving them any counter-measures.

She had just returned to Ginny's side when a frantic Malfoy came barreling out of the bus nearly naked and the sight stole her breath. There he was in the middle of the fray in naught, but black boxers and his black outer robes hanging open. The faster he moved the more they floated around him and covered less. He was shouting, Godric only knew what he thought shouting would accomplish, and kept running his hands through his already sleep mussed hair.

Harry followed right behind and his attention immediately caught on Ginny, and Hermione by association. He came over to sit on Ginny's other side.

"Harry, are you cross with me?" said Ginny with big eyes.

"What? No."

"Oh good. I love you so much," she cuddled up to Harry and sighed a deep contented sigh, which caused several smaller bubbles to float out of her.

"Hermione, did you figure out what happened to them?" asked Harry tersely while trying to gently lay Ginny down on the ground.

"One moment," she said, running another diagnostic spell to look for trace potion ingredients in Ginny's system. "I think so. It sounds like McLaggen spiked their drinks last night with some type of potion I'm not familiar with. My diagnostic is showing hints of frog brains and beetle eyes which this far into digestion could be the remnants of Essence of Insanity mixed with shrivelfig and wormwood, so possibly some Elixir to Induce Euphoria."

"Fucking McLaggen. Can you reverse it or will it just have to run its course?"

"I think it's best if we try a Sober Up potion to get them all into their beds, followed by a Sleeping Draught. Once they wake-up in Falmouth tonight, I doubt there will be any lasting side effects."

"Alright Hermione. I'll spread the word. You take point on dealing with the Falcons and I'll work with Malfoy to survey the damage. I'll send some people over to help you."

Hermione opened her beaded bag and felt around inside for her medical potions kit. She had half her shoulder in there before giving up. She was really going to have to clean that bag out one of these days. Someday. "Accio Sober Up potion," she called and the entire kit flew into her hand from the depths of her bag. She found six vials of Sober Up potion and asked Ginny to drink one. Immediately Ginny seemed better, but was intent on sleeping on the ground. Ginny grabbed Hermione's hand and tried to pull her in for a cuddle.

Extricating herself, she stood, leaving Ginny as she was for now and tried to figure out who to approach next. As she scanned the chaos of swarming Aurors her eyes caught again on a fuming half-naked Malfoy demanding answers to who had cursed his team. He was insisting on an inquiry against the Pride of Portree Quidditch team, exclaiming that they were the most likely suspects.

Oh but, who could focus on anything else? Merlin, he was gorgeous. All that late night flying had paid off, Godric, those thighs. As she watched, he pulled a frustrated hand through his blond hair unintentionally hitching his robes and opening them further. She'd never seen Draco shirtless before, but assumed the faint scars running across his chest were the result of Harry's dark Sectumsempra Curse. Hermione would never fully forgive Harry for using that spell, but she had to admit the imperfection only added to Malfoy's overall aesthetic. His eyes caught hers for the briefest moment. The muscles of her stomach tightened as he caught

her staring. He smirked and turned away. A flashbulb temporarily blinded her and the spell was broken. Dennis Creevey from the Daily Prophet was enthusiastically snapping photos.

Pansy was going to kill him.

Quickly she set about her task and administered Sober Up potion to the rest of the team. Then she worked with Harry's Aurors to levitate and settle everyone in their beds on the Comet (each bed more bizarre than the last). They even managed to peel Millie off the ceiling without waking her up.

Having settled the team, Hermione and the Aurors left the Comet to re-join the temporary command center. A few young Aurors were cleaning up while everyone else debated around a conjured table and map. As Hermione approached the group, it sounded like they had finished with the memory modifications and were mounting a manhunt to find McLaggen. And then there he was - Cormac McLaggen simply waltzed into the yard perfectly dressed, showered with a takeaway cuppa and a scone.

"Good morning gentlemen," he called out in greeting as he strolled casually up to the group to see what the fuss was about.

Harry and Malfoy looked murderous.

Harry shot an Incarcerous at him, binding McLaggen in place and two Aurors grabbed him roughly by the arms. McLaggen was shocked and clearly didn't understand the trouble he was in.

"Oi, I just got that," he shouted as though his spilled tea was his biggest concern.

Malfoy looked apoplectic. She'd seen that look of protective rage before and ran up to stop him. She grabbed his trembling arm before he could throw a punch or hex.

"*Draco*, don't," she said, reflexively, frantically trying to make him listen to reason. "He's the nephew of Tiberious Ogden. Please, stop, I don't want you to get into any more trouble."

She pleaded, trying to lock eyes with him to pull his focus away from McLaggen. Draco looked at her in confusion for just a beat, something unreadable in his silver eyes, then pulled his arm out from her grasp.

"Figure it out, Potter," he snarled, stuffed his hands into his robe pockets, and stormed back to the Comet.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you're having as much fun as I am!

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Falcons logo designed by: Gossamer26

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 12: Falcons' Stadium. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Daily Prophet: The Skye's the Limit? Not for the Scandal-Ridden Falcons! Mayhem in Portree as Feathers Fly From Failed Flock!

By: Rita Skeeter

The Falcons' first major road trip of the 2001 League Cup season ended with not just a loss against the formidable Pride of Portree, but they all lost their heads shortly thereafter causing absolute mayhem and mischief in the streets of Portree as well. They say 'Pride goeth before the fall' and this team, dear readers, seems to have taken that literally indeed!

Although this open investigation is still being kept, rather ominously, 'highly confidential' (one always wonders what truly lies beneath such secrecy!), whispers from reliable sources suggest that no less than multiple memory modification teams and a squadron of grim-faced Aurors were dispatched to the Isle of Skye the very morning after the match.

The Falcons received truly eye-watering fines - though, let's be honest, merely a slap on the wrist for a team owner with such bottomless pockets as Lord Malfoy, wouldn't you agree? - and a bewildered Cormac McLaggen, the Falmouth Falcons' (now former) Seeker, was unceremoniously sacked! When our intrepid reporter managed to corner Mr. McLaggen, he offered this remarkably candid assessment: "Honestly, the Falcons were a sinking ship, and I, for one, jumped! As for Malfoy, he's clearly trying to rewrite his sordid history with a Quidditch team. It's pathetic, really. All that money, but he can't buy genuine respect or competence." Strong words, indeed, from a man who knows the inner workings of this chaotic coterie!

Now, we must wonder, who could possibly step up as their new Seeker? Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini have certainly hired plenty of questionable young 'talent' recently out of Hogwarts, but this late in the season, truly unattached (and genuinely talented!) Seekers are more rare than phoenix tears!

Stay tuned, dear readers, while the sordid story of this latest scandal and the Falcons' ever-worsening season continues to unfold. Honestly, what can you expect from a team owned by a (former) Death Eater and convicted war criminal - a wizard whose past, some might argue, directly taints his present ventures? For a full, hair-raising timeline of (former) terrorist Draco Malfoy's checkered and chilling past, be sure to turn immediately to page 15! You won't believe what your humble reporter has uncovered!

Draco

Draco wasn't sure what was worse: the fiasco itself or the press coverage. He sunk his head into his hands hovering above the front page where he could watch their photographs reenacting the chaos.

There was the Weaslette laying on the ground looking sick then rolling over as a giant purple bubble floated out of her mouth with the caption "One Too Many Chasers Last Night."

There was a confused McLaggen still wrapped in an Incarcerous and led away by Aurors with the caption "Bound for Trouble: McLaggen Arrested After Another Falcons' Fiasco."

And of course his favourite, the biggest image of them all: himself, shirtless, angrily running a hand through hair with a small smirk as he looked at someone off camera with the caption "Lord Malfoy 'Lords' Over Chaos."

Brilliant. Just Brilliant.

Perhaps he could buy the Prophet. Unless he already owned it? He couldn't keep track. He'd have to ask his mother. She was due back from France soon. He threw his glasses on his desk and turned to look out at the pitch. The view was increasingly fragmented, broken up by an ever-growing cluster of plants - a bizarre, domestic touch in the otherwise chic office that he could only attribute to Pansy and her strange, over-the-top new hobby.

A knock at his office door surprised him. He'd already had it out with Pansy and Blaise (not that he had done anything wrong), but they were pissed nonetheless and swore he was never allowed to be in charge on a road trip again. Well, good riddance. Wasn't he paying them to manage things anyway?

He went to open the door and was further surprised to see Cho Chang. He didn't recall seeing her since she graduated from Hogwarts a year ahead of him. They had played against each other, Slytherin vs Ravenclaw, but that was the extent of any formative memories with her. Hadn't Chang, Potter, and Diggory had some weird interhouse Seeker love triangle? What could she want? Then he saw the rolled up Prophet in her hands and the resolve in her eyes.

Oh, shite.

"Chang, lovely to see you," said Draco. "Please come in."

"Thanks, Malfoy."

Once they were both seated, he knew it would be polite to inquire as to why she was here, but he didn't need to be a seer to know the answer. He let out a deep sigh. Destination, determination, and deliberation.

“What brings you here? How are you feeling?”

“I saw the Prophet, Malfoy, I know you need a Seeker.”

“Yes. I mean, we do, but I thought you were taking some time off,” Draco did not want to have to turn her down, but he and Blaise had already considered and rejected her in the pre-season. There was no way he could hire her.

He and Blaise had gone all over her history in their desperate last-minute search for a Seeker. She was nonviable. She'd played well with Ravenclaw at school, then she had been recruited to the Arrows, then traded to the Tornados. The last he'd read, Cho still couldn't play. It wasn't her fault. Draco set his jaw at the thought. Cho had been held captive briefly during the war and repeatedly tortured by Death Eaters. Since then it was well known that she'd suffered from repeated Quidditch injuries, which exacerbated the tremors and hallucinations that were the aftereffects of overexposure to the Cruciatius Curse.

Draco could barely look her in the eye.

“The Falcons might not have a Seeker right now, but no, we can't hire you,” he said, finding it easier to focus just over her shoulder than to look her in the eye. “You nearly fell off your broom hallucinating with the Tornados last season. I'm not taking that chance. We've had enough scandals already this season.”

“I know I've been, well, I haven't been at my top form, but I need to play,” she said sitting on her hands. He knew from experience that was a great trick to stop people from seeing them tremble. “Hermione can monitor me. I haven't had an incident in months. I'm out of options, I can't let my career end like this.”

“Look, Chang...Cho,” he said. “I'm really sor-”

“We used to play Seeker against each other, we both know what we're capable of. And I know you've been out so long since the war and everything, but you must feel it too, the loss of Quidditch, the freedom, the air, the crowd, the thrill. I can't... I can't end it like this.”

He knew exactly what she meant. He had secretly wished he could have played Seeker for the Falcons. But that dream would never come true. Blaise and Theo must have known, but they never even humoured him with the conversation. Instead they avoided the topic as long as they could, then recruited McLaggen out of sheer desperation right before the season started. He only had the opportunity to play (nearly) 3 years at Hogwarts and had missed playing entirely in his late teens. No matter how much he improved by training each night now, he knew, with an aching certainty, that he could never compete at the professional level. It was another bitter disappointment he never voiced and tried his best to bury.

Cho leaned forward, tucking her straight black hair behind her ear. “I'm not done yet. Hermione can help me. Your team's healer is the best there is, right?”

True. Granger was absolutely brilliant. Perhaps, with Granger's help... Cho was always good at Quidditch. Bloody hell, looking back at his third year, he had to begrudgingly admit the Seeker talent had been great. He'd played against Cho Chang, Harry Potter, Cedric Diggory. Where would they all be if the damn war hadn't swept them all up? Fuck.

"Please Draco."

Merlin. He was sympathetic to her plight. He missed playing so much. He felt a burning shame that the Death Eaters, his friends and family (at the time), had taken Quidditch away from all four of them. Potter... well, the Chosen Git had never chosen anything, he was always destined to be an Auror. But he and Cho were both wrecks after the war, and Diggory, well, may he rest in peace. No wonder it was so difficult to find a qualified Seeker. He felt a shock of guilt. Bringing Cho on as their Seeker wouldn't fix what had happened to her or any of them. There was no taking it back, but perhaps, it could be a way towards making amends.

He also struggled with his hands trembling when upset, a souvenir of repeated bouts of the Cruciatus Curse from displeasing his "master" and crazy aunt. He could feel that tension now starting to build after reading the Prophet and having this frankly, excruciating, conversation with Cho. Draco flexed and fisted his hands a few times under the table. Maybe he could go out and fly later to burn off these feelings.

In the end, they were all damaged by the war. It didn't matter what side you fought for.

Draco stood and considered Cho one last time. He was out of options, so why not?

"Cho Chang, welcome to the Falcons."

She couldn't be worse than McLaggen.

Hermione

A bowtruckle could have knocked Hermione over.

What had started as a quiet evening alone in her office had turned into an emotional heart-to-heart with Cho Chang. Apparently, the Falcons' new Seeker was a huge fan of hers and desperately in need of her help.

How long had Hermione been researching Cho's condition since then? She sat up and stretched her stiff neck. It was so nice to do real research again. Her inner Gryffindor loved saving people in the moment, but the academic side was missing in this rotation. She'd finished drafting her training program with Wood and was going in circles in her project to improve Quidditch safety. This Crucio aftereffects research was absolutely fascinating. It was just the thing.

She was surprised to see it was long since dark outside and the team was gone, just Malfoy remained out there, as per usual, chasing his training Snitch. She sat back and watched him swoop around. He clearly favoured his left side. Godric, some of his maneuvering was wild. It really was a dangerous sport.

She wanted to improve safety, but wasn't sure where to start. Already her athletic wear felt so much safer for her to move around in. Maybe Pansy could work with her to make safer kits for everyone? Ginny and Katie would be game, but others might feel it was too non-traditional. Ultimately, though, it wasn't the clothing that injured people. It was the horrific collisions; it was the risk taking; it was the unnecessary injuries... well, here was a perfect example. She watched as Malfoy attempted another Wronski Feint, but waited to pull up until it was too late and was sent tumbling across the pitch. What an idiot.

Hermione checked her wand was in her pocket and ran out onto the pitch to go help him. When she got to him, he was sitting up in a daze, clutching his left arm to his chest.

"I think it's broken," said Malfoy through gritted teeth.

"Give it here," said Hermione as she knelt next to him.

"No, it's broken, shattered even. I can't move it. I've been horrifically injured."

She inspected the wrist and ran a diagnostic, but it was as she'd suspected right away. "Stop whinging, Malfoy. It's just a sprain. You've always been such a baby." She held fast to his injured arm with one hand stabilizing it and continued her examination by moving to loosen his leather bracer to slide up his cuff. He used his good hand to clamp down on his left forearm making it impossible for her to reveal his arm.

"Don't," he said softly, but in warning, not meeting her eyes.

After a moment of confusion, a dawning realization: left forearm, the Dark Mark. She realized that he didn't want her to see it. She feigned ignorance at his reticence and without removing his bracer or lifting his cuff any higher she healed him quickly like the moment never happened. He pulled out of her grasp and flexed his arm a few times to make sure there were no further injuries.

Hermione suddenly felt so sorry for him. Forced to wear a brand of a megalomaniac for life. She wished he had better adults in his life to help him. Ruefully she noticed that all she felt was a deep compassion for what he'd been through, not the revulsion or fear she used to associate with the Dark Mark. Part of her wished that he had let her see it. She wished he trusted her enough to be vulnerable with her.

She took a deep steadying breath and smelled the heady scent of freshly mown grass. The stadium's landscaping was so lovely now. She wondered who was doing it. They must have been arriving early in the morning. Pansy got in early to run too. Hermione should ask Pansy, she was probably friendly with the landscaper.

They were sitting quite close on the pitch, but neither made any move to leave.

"Thanks, Golden Girl," said Malfoy, rolling his wrist in circles. "But why are you still here? You work too hard."

She considered pawing him off with a trite answer, but she had just wished he would open up to her. Perhaps she could lead the way.

“Well, it’s never really been a choice. I need to be the best of the best to just get my foot in the door as a Muggle-born witch. Finding out I was a witch and 11 years behind my peers was... a lot. I read all the first year books before even getting on the Hogwarts Express to be sure I was prepared, and I still felt like I was behind - I still do and in some ways, I still am.”

“Are you saying that, as a pureblood wizard, I've never worked hard?” he smirked. “You’d be right.” She laughed and they sat in silence for a moment. Malfoy was clearly thinking and then continued, “I suppose I’m so far on the other side that my circumstances are oddly similar. The only real work I’ve ever had to do or was demanded of me was actually because of my pureblood Lordship: the damn vanishing cabinet, Dumbledore, the Death Eaters, there’s even the crushing weight of family expectations; like trying in vain at Hogwarts and still coming in second to some Muggle-born witch -

“Except for the number of NEWTs you got.”

“True, I did beat her rather soundly in the one, arguably, most important case,” she rolled her eyes and he laughed and continued, “but I’ve always been an outsider too because of vaults and bloodlines. I don’t feel as though I’ve been given many choices. Well, I suppose until I decided to buy this ridiculous team.”

“I liked your decision to hire Cho,” she said. “It proves you’re capable of making good decisions, entirely on your own.”

“I hope it was a good choice, but we’ll see... she might not be healthy enough to play well,” said Malfoy. “Now it’s your turn to help her. I’m sorry to burden you with her treatment, I should have consulted you first.”

“Not at all. I’m excited to help her. I’ve already started doing some research,” she said.

“Swot,” he interjected.

Ignoring him, she continued, “and for what it’s worth, I think it was really good of you to hire her.”

“It felt like the right thing to do. Hopefully Blaise won’t Avada me for taking a chance on her.” He smirked at her and stood up. “Speaking of second chances, I promised you another broom lesson. You’ve got about twenty-some years of broom training to catch-up on.” Malfoy stood up and held out his hand.

“You were flying as a baby?” she said, taking the hand he offered to pull her up.

He just rolled his eyes and frowned at his broom, “I still don’t trust you on this broom alone.”

“Don’t trust me? I’ve never hurt myself on a broom. You’re the one that was just ‘horribly injured’ on a broom.”

“I thought you said it was barely a sprain and technically, I hit the ground, the broom was innocent. Now get over here.”

Malfoy summoned his Supercell EF5 from where it had fallen, swung his leg over, and hovered in the air. Then he leaned over and lifted her by the waist to sit in front of him. He settled her between his legs and held her as she swung her leg astride. Like last time she could feel the power throbbing through his broom, but now she also felt his strong thighs tensing around her to keep them both balanced.

“Malfoy, um... maybe...” she said, having second thoughts.

His arms came around her to grip the broom, essentially holding her. His cheek was near hers and he whispered, “I’m not going to let you fall, I’ll keep you safe,” as he gently kicked off from the ground.

Oh Godric, she hated flying. She clenched her hands tighter on the broomshaft and leaned back into his chest as the ground melted away. She was still not convinced. “That’s sweet and all, but... but Malfoy, don’t go too high... or too fast ... or any loops or anything crazy.”

“I’m not going to let anything happen to you,” he said huskily as though he really meant it and not just about flying. The soothing sound of his voice, the overwhelming feel of him against her, she’d never felt so secure before and certainly never on a broom. Even as they rose to the height of the lowest goal post she felt safe. His cheek brushed hers and she forgot what they were doing until he gently corrected her grip and started softly giving her instructions so they could fly across the pitch.

After a time she realized that she trusted him. She trusted that she would survive this lesson and he wasn’t going to try to get a rise out of her by going too fast or suddenly dropping. Once the initial sensation of fear left her, she started noticing other things.

The scent of the grass and his expensive Quidditch leathers.

The throb of each place their bodies met.

The heat swelling within her.

The broom, Malfoy, it was all so thrilling, but she felt safe. Safe with Malfoy, who would have guessed? She never trusted Ron to give her a proper flying lesson. She was essentially self-taught except for a few lessons from Madam Hooch first year. Maybe there was a time when she would have liked Ron to teach her, but she knew he would have been condescending at best and down right rude at worst; frustrated by trying to explain something so basic to her. It wasn’t her fault she hadn’t grown up flying. And yet, here she was with Draco Malfoy, ironically, wrapped around her protectively, murmuring instructions in her ear. With only a few adjustments, she knew she was already flying better than she ever had before. No one had ever taken the time to truly teach her before.

On their last loop around the pitch, Malfoy let go of the broom shaft and moved his hands onto her hips. She immediately faltered, not from his lack of guidance, but from her complete lapse of concentration. He chuckled silently, but she could still feel it through his chest. Regaining her composure, she flawlessly flew them back where they had started, not too far from her big office window and shifted her posture like he had shown her to slowly lose altitude.

“Perfect,” said Malfoy. “You’re a natural.”

She scoffed at his absurdity and tried to dismount gracefully, but it was not to be. She nearly fell over and accidentally, or maybe slightly on purpose, fell towards him.

He was right there to catch her.

They stood there for a moment, her golden eyes meeting his silver ones.

An invitation.

He slowly lowered his head to hers. Hermione threw her arms around his neck and went on tiptoe to meet him. The kiss was hesitant at first and Hermione didn’t think she’d ever been kissed so tenderly, with such devotion. His hands moved to reverently cup her cheek and a soft whimper escaped from Draco’s lips as she leaned into the kiss. It felt like their magic, like spun gold and pure silver, was meeting in the space between them.

Once they established that they both wanted this, needed it, they became more desperate. He moved his arms around to her back and waist and pulled her body flush against him. He nudged his leg between her thighs and she thought she might burst from the sensation of it. They kissed with a fervor that took her breath away and she pulled back just a tad to breathe. One of Draco’s hands burrowed deep in her hair while the other held her fast against his body. His mouth moved to kiss along her jaw and ear, before returning to her lips. She could feel his need pressing up against her and ground down on his thigh to relieve some of her own desire. She groaned and clung to him, never wanting this moment to end. But of course it had to end and then what?

The moment shattered and she felt a bolt of panic.

She was full frontal snogging Draco Lucius Malfoy, of all people, in the middle of a brightly lit Quidditch pitch.

Hermione pulled back and saw his normally silver eyes darkened with desire. As soon as he sensed her shift, he let her go, waiting to follow her lead. They stood there breathing heavily together, their foreheads touching.

“I don’t know you,” she whispered. “Not really.”

“You’ve known me since we were eleven years old.”

Ron had been her friend all that time and he’d betrayed her. “You’re right,” she said, pulling completely away from him. “Maybe that’s the problem.”

She paused, forcing herself to meet his eyes for just a moment, "Thank you. For the flying lesson, I mean, not the... um... right. I should go." She didn’t wait for a response. Before he could see her mortification, she turned and walked as quickly as dignity allowed off the pitch, absolutely refusing to look back.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading and hello to all our new subscribers! I hope you have fun reading and chatting with us each week in the comments. Speaking of, how do you feel about the new Seeker? I know a lot of you wanted it to be Draco...

Supercell Brooms logo designed by: Gossamer26

Join us on healthyishobsession.com for playlist, fan creations, quizzes, and more! We've got some really fun in-universe promos there for this Chapter!

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 13: Chudley Cannons' Stadium. February 2001

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Falmouth Falcons 1-2

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Ginny Weasley: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cho Chang: Seeker

Draco

Draco was watching the Falcons vs the Chudley Cannons from the visitor's coaching box with Pansy, Blaise, and Theo. Hermione was unfortunately in the Cannons' medical center. He knew she was there, because she'd already fixed up a few players. He glanced at the empty seat beside him. Fuck. How could they possibly get past their history if she wouldn't sit with him? He gripped his hair and tried to calm down. He needed to give her the time she needed to get sorted. Was she legitimately busy with something non-Draco related? Was she embarrassed by their kiss? Was she just hiding from Weasley, the Cannon's Keeper? He had been looking forward to sitting with her today. He had dressed with extra care and fixed his hair just so, which he'd hopelessly mussed now. His thoughts today hadn't been on the team, but on being near her again. He was crazy about her. He'd thought of little else besides her

for days: the taste of her lips, the feel of her curls in his hands, the shocking and glorious press of her riding his thigh.

He needed to focus. It was a big match, Cho's first. Luckily, Blaise hadn't been too hard on him over hiring Cho, on some level any Seeker was better than no Seeker. On the heels of a scandal, anyone willing to join them was a win. She was already obviously better than McLaggen, she just needed to stay healthy. He hoped Granger could work a few miracles. He wished she were here. They could be talking strategy or just having a laugh, and there was no one better to challenge and push him. No one saw him the way she did.

"The team's looking pretty good these days," said Blaise. "Now that you've sacked all the pricks."

"And remind me who hired all the pricks again?" asked Draco facetiously.

"I hired Wood and he's obviously our best player," said Theo.

"Yes, well done," said Draco.

"See? You need me."

"What is it exactly that you do here?"

"At the Chudley pitch? Nothing. Can't say I've ever been here before. All this garish orange is giving me a headache."

"You're giving me a headache."

They stopped chatting to watch as Ginny, Katie, and Pucey flawlessly executed a Parkin's Pincer that won them 10 points. Shame they were on the road, Fred and George would have loved that one.

"Marketing is going really well," said Pansy, as though there hadn't been an interruption in their conversation. "You can't buy this type of publicity. Between all the salacious drama, the fit players, and Hermione's incredible Muggle joggers, we're golden. Oh and Draco, after that Prophet photo, Witch Weekly wants to do a full write-up on you. Interested?"

"You're having a laugh."

"Everyone likes a bad boy, and being nearly naked on the cover of the Prophet with that tousled hair has garnered a lot of positive interest in a demographic that isn't normally interested in Quidditch."

"Absolutely not."

"We could probably make a bid to get you the Most Charming Smile Award too."

Draco groaned. "If you mention that again, I'm going to have to hex you."

“If we don’t deal with this, they might run their own spread about you anyway with paparazzi photos and we’ll lose control of the story.”

“Parks, you asked for it,” he said, pulling out his wand and leveling it at her.

“Draco, I raised you better than that.” Shite. The precise tone of that voice made his blood run cold. Lowering his wand he turned to see none other than Lady Narcissa Black Malfoy, perfectly coiffed, in immaculate robes, and literally clutching her pearls.

“Hello Mother, we were only having a laugh,” he moved to greet her as did the other Slytherins. “I thought you were in France for a few weeks still.”

Narcissa looked disdainfully at the available seats in the visitors' coaching box, then sniffed and transfigured one to her liking before deigning to sit down.

“I was in France, just for a few months, mind you, and imagine my surprise when I discovered you had not just purchased a Quidditch team, but that it was out of control. You honestly couldn’t be fussed to mention it? I had to find out about it from the Greengrasses who owed me a copy of the Prophet.”

Fuuuuck.

“Narcissa,” started Theo, “It was all Blaise’s idea you see...”

“Theodore, I love you, but do shut up,” she said dismissively and turned back to Draco. “Darling, if you are ready to stop moping around the manor, there are much better uses for your time and inheritance. According to the papers, this entire venture is a nightmare and I’m positive you three are to blame.”

“Narcissa, I know you thought he needed space, but we were just trying to help,” said Pansy, in an uncharacteristically meek voice. “He obviously wasn’t doing well when he got home.”

Draco watched them discuss him as though he wasn’t there with growing pique. He tried to focus on the match, but it was difficult.

“Give us some credit, he’s doing much better now,” said Blaise. “He’s flying again. He’s eating. He’s terrorizing everyone with his terrible moods instead of staring morosely at dust motes. It’s working.”

“I didn’t risk all of our lives by lying to the Dark Lord to ensure Draco’s survival for whatever this is,” said Narcissa, waving her hand disdainfully. “The result of some Quidditch match is immaterial. I saved him for a life of purpose, not managing a failing circus. He should be focused on the Malfoy Family. His talents would be better used managing our accounts or directing our people in the Wizengamot.”

Draco tried to continue staring at the match like this conversation wasn’t happening. The Cannons had the Quaffle and were racing toward the Falcons hoops without a Bludger in sight. Wood blocked the hoop with a Starfish and Stick maneuver when he was hit by a Bludger in the stomach. It was a textbook example of a Bludger Backbeat, Draco just wished

it hadn't been done to his Keeper. As Wood fell, he knocked his head back into the edge of the hoop and it was already clear he was bleeding. He heard Theo gasp.

His stomach somersaulted as he watched Granger run on the pitch in her tight Falcons grey and lime green medic kit to check on Wood. She leaned down next to him to begin her work. All Draco could see was that arse, sweet Salazar. Form fitting Muggle clothing was unbelievable. He ran a hand through his hair and was struck by the vivid memory of her fingers cording through it as they danced.

"Draco... Draco."

"Hmm... sorry, what?"

"Sit down," said his mother and he wondered when he'd stood up. He caught a look pass between his mother and Pansy. Brilliant. He needed the two of them teaming up as much as he needed a blast-ended skrewt.

Draco regained his seat while Granger levitated Wood off the pitch toward the Cannon's medical center.

"I'd better go give Wood a once over... um...", said Theo anxiously. "I'm a healer too, and she might need a hand, er... lovely seeing you Narcissa." Theo shot out the door before anyone could react.

"I see Theodore still hasn't learned subtlety," said Narcissa, raising one eyebrow.

"I'd say it's a work in progress, but I've never seen him work on it," snorted Pansy. "He's a terrible Slytherin."

"I just hope Granger gets Wood fixed up soon," said Blaise. "Playing without a Keeper is the worst."

"Isn't that part of what makes it fun?" asked Pansy.

"More like brutal," mused Draco. "Granger is on to something, there is a surprising lack of safety measures: no time limits, minimal padding, no weather delays, I mean, there are 700 recognized fouls. When you compare us to Muggles, we're the barbaric ones."

"It sounds as though you've been spending a lot of time with Miss Granger. Is that correct, dear?"

Shite. Draco wondered how much he gave away when he was watching her on the pitch, or talking about her just now. Fucking Slytherin mother. He really didn't think he could handle hearing about propriety and pureblood traditions or another blood purity rant. Draco ran his thumb over both the Black and Malfoy signet rings. He hated the burden of being Lord Malfoy.

"Um, I dunno... the normal amount a team owner should spend with the team's healer, I suppose. Well trainee Healer, technically, she and Theo are still doing their rotations. She'll only be here 2-3 more months. In the incredibly unlikely event we place in the top four teams

and qualify for the League Cup playoffs and the European Phoenix Cup, she'll finish whenever our League Cup season ends.”

It would be a miracle if they placed high enough in the League to make the play-offs and compete for the European Phoenix Cup. That would mean Granger would stay with them through the finals, acting as their Healer on the pitch. Salazar, he'd be ecstatic to qualify for the less prestigious Manticore Cup or even the sad little Unicorn Cup—any European cup would be amazing for the Falcons this year—but only qualifying for the Phoenix Cup would automatically ensure they were also in the League Cup finals and buy him more time with her.

His mother nodded her head as if coming to some type of decision and stood up. “I must be off. I've seen everything I need to see here.”

“Mother...” he reflexively stood as well.

“Draco, the Ministry's Charitable Giving Gala is tonight, any chance I could tempt you to escort me?”

“I'm afraid I have other plans,” he said, gesturing to the pitch.

“Then, I'll just stop by and say goodbye to Theodore and Miss Granger on my way out.”

“Mother, please don't. *Miss Granger* is busy putting Wood's brain back into his head. Please don't bother her.”

“Oh, it's no bother, my darling,” she said with a quick air kiss and left the box.

Dread filled him. There was no telling what his mother was planning.

All he wanted was to distract himself with the match, but it was no use. Pansy and Blaise were agitatedly reading a piece of parchment as a scrappy little owl hopped about looking for a treat.

“Can the Comet even make it that far?” asked Pansy

“Maybe? If we're lucky? But it'll take more than a day each way,” said Blaise, his normal cool countenance abandoned as he gripped the letter. “I have no idea what they were thinking. And besides the obvious, a match and a gala on the same day? They're mad. This whole thing is completely unreasonable.”

“Perhaps it could be an opportunity...”

“What in Salazar's name is it now?” Draco said, turning his full attention to them.

“The Department of International Magical Co-operation just owled me about the friendly next week,” said Blaise. “You're not going to like it.”

“Why, where are they sending us?” He had no particular concerns with the international friendlies, any given international team seemed to be much the same as any team in their

league. And without Flint and McLaggen to bollocks it up it should be fine. Besides, international friendlies had no bearing on any of their Cup prospects.

“It’s not where. It’s who. We’re playing the Vratsa Vultures... against... against the Greatest Seeker in a sodding Generation.”

Draco dropped back into his seat.

He immediately imagined a 4th year Hermione gliding across a ballroom floor in periwinkle, Hermione clinging tightly to a soaking wet wizard in the Black Lake, Hermione giggling in the library instead of reading...

This was a disaster for the Falcons, a disaster for him.

They were headed to Bulgaria.

They were playing against Viktor fucking Krum.

Hermione

Hermione quickly patched up Oliver and let him zoom right out of the medical center back to guard his goal posts. She could hear a cheer rise up from the crowd as the Falcons’ Keeper resumed his position. She looked out the big windows and watched Ron, just there, playing Keeper for the Cannons. When he had played Gryffindor Keeper he had worn a helmet, but now flew without one. Ridiculous. They played even harder at the professional level. Helmets should be required, especially given the injury she had just healed. She realized that she had been watching Ron during the match with more intensity now than she ever did when they were together.

But, her eyes strayed over towards the visitor’s coaching box as well. She couldn’t see in, but she knew that was where Malfoy would be. Why didn’t she sit with him today like usual? What was she afraid of? Did she even know him? Were they dating now? Was she ready to date someone again? Had she meant to kiss him? When could they kiss again? Where did that leave them?

She growled in frustration and turned away from the match. Her clothes were still stained with Wood’s blood. Godric, head injuries bled so much, it made them look worse than they were. She needed to change, but as she looked up, she knew it was not to be.

Lavender Brown, of all people, had the audacity to waddle into the medical center, her face flushed, sweaty fly-away hairs clinging to her cheeks, clutching her middle.

“Hermione, I’m so glad you’re here,” Lavender gasped and babbled. “I started having contractions this morning, but they always say not to come in too early and so I thought I had time to watch Ron’s match since he was so excited to play Ginny, but this baby is coming right now.”

Fucking Lavender Brown and Ron Weasley.

Hermione wanted to start slinging hexes, but it wasn't the baby's fault its parents were arseholes. She'd try to focus on the baby and stay professional.

"How far apart are your contractions?" she ground out.

"Less than three minutes."

Hermione always thought Lavender was a bit daft, but to stay at a Quidditch match this far into labour was downright lunacy. The baby might be born any moment. It already was being born. Hermione transfigured a cot into a better delivery bed and helped Lavender get settled just before another contraction hit her.

"Hermione, is Oliver okay?" asked Theo breathlessly, rushing into the medical center. "Blimey, she's actually having it here?" he exclaimed, seeing Lavender breathing through her contraction.

"Oh Theo, thank Merlin, Wood is already back on the pitch, but..." said Hermione, dragging Theo out of earshot away from Lavender. "You've got to help me. I can't do this."

"No worries, Hermione, you know I just finished a rotation in the Labour Ward. I've done this plenty of times, it's not hard, well not hard for us in any case. I think the trainee Healer duo of GrangerNott can handle this just fine."

"No, Theo."

"Okay, our duo name can be NottGranger instead or Theomione if you prefer."

"Focus, Theo. I know we're fine for the delivery. But...but Lavender's baby..." she couldn't say it. Hermione took a deep breath to steady herself. "It's well... if you do the math... you see, she's with Ron now and.... and..."

"Fuck," said Theo, his eyes widening.

"Indeed."

Theo pulled her into a tight embrace, "Oh love, let's remember our Healer oath and try to do our best for the baby and we'll deal with all of this afterward over a pint, OK?"

Theo went to examine Lavender leaving Hermoine for a moment to collect her thoughts. The thought of being here to hold Lavender's back-stabbing hand while she gave birth to Ron's baby was unbelievably painful. It should have been her baby. Well, she didn't really want a baby, certainly not that cheating bastard's red-headed spawn. Not that she wouldn't want a baby someday, but not now. Oh honestly. It wouldn't do to get swept up in all this. These thoughts were not productive.

She needed to focus. She was a medical professional. She could do this. She could do anything. Hermione Granger was the Brightest Witch of Her Fucking Age. Another steadying breath. And another. She found the Cannons' healer, and asked her to cover both teams while she dealt with the current more demanding situation.

Taking another steadying breath Hermione returned to Lavender's side and gave Theo a significant look where he sat at the foot of the bed on a stool. Lavender slipped her hand into Hermione's.

"Thank you so much for being here," said Lavender affectionately with a genuine smile. "Remember when we were roommates? If we could see ourselves now."

Why did she have to be so sweet? Hermione wanted to hate her. Lavender grunted and clutched Hermione's hand with the force of her next contraction.

"Do you want me to perform an Epiduraious charm?" asked Theo. "I was certified during my Labour Ward rotation."

"No need. Ever since my werewolf attack at the Battle of Hogwarts, my pain tolerance went way up. I wish Ron could have been here. I know he wanted to be, he's so kind, but it wasn't destined to be that way," she prattled on.

How dare she go on about how charming and attentive she found Ron. Lavender wasn't even a little bit guilty. What an unbelievable home-wrecking two-timing...

"Deep breaths everyone" said Theo trying to calm down Hermione more than Lavender at this point. "Deep breaths."

"Mostly, I just wish Seamus could have been here," Lavender continued, "I know he would have wanted to be here if he could."

That little... "I'm sorry, what? Seamus? Seamus Finnigan?"

"Well, of course I wish Seamus was here. I thought everyone knew that Seamus is the baby's father."

This statement was dropped with all the subtlety of a erumpent horn. All Hermione could hear was the blood pounding in her ears and it seemed as though the air had been vanished from the room. Theo caught Hermione's eyes and reminded everyone to breathe again.

"I'm... I'm sorry, what?" Hermione said with difficulty.

"Don't you remember? He was an Auror, out on assignment with Harry, when he was attacked by a werewolf and wasn't as lucky as me when I was attacked. He died, quite quickly from the sound of it, so I'm thankful for that at least."

Lavender gritted her teeth through another contraction and gripped Hermione's hand.

"Yes, I remember," said Hermione softly. "I was at the funeral." It had been horrible, heartbreaking. Mostly she felt guilty all day because she couldn't stop thinking she was glad it wasn't Harry.

"I didn't even know I was expecting for several weeks after the funeral, we'd only shagged at the Leaky a couple weeks before, so I never had a chance to tell him."

Hermione realized that she was crying. Lavender thought it was because of Seamus's death, which made Hermione want to cry harder. She was a terrible person for assuming the worst of Ron. There was a painful lump in her chest and her breath stuttered.

“Oh Hermione, it's alright. I had been reading the signs, of course, and they told me ‘a new young man would enter my life and change everything’. At first, I thought the signs meant Seamus, but then he died quite suddenly. I was confused for a few weeks; but the signs are never wrong. You see, I had just read them incorrectly. They meant a new ‘baby boy’, not a ‘young man’ that would enter my life and change everything...”

Lavender stopped prattling only long enough to grab Hermione's hand again as another contraction hit her hard.

“You're doing great Lavender,” said Theo. “Everyone just keep breathing.”

“And it's been so good of Ron to be there for me lately,” she continued. “He's always been such a good bloke. I'm sorry, that was a bit insensitive. I am sorry it didn't work out between you and Ron. You were great friends, but you were never meant to last as a couple, because he's a Pisces. Now, I'm positive, you'll end up with a Gemini, the twins, not literal twins like Parvati and Padma, but a twin personality, someone with two different sides of their personality with a deep well of hidden emotion. As you know, we both love Ron, but between us girls, he has the emotional range of a teaspoon.”

Hermione couldn't handle listening to her Divination drivel anymore but was instead focused on her own breathing. This was all a lot to take in. Hermione pulled her hand from Lavender's to wipe her tears. Another contraction hit Lavender and Hermione gripped her hand once more. This one lasted longer and seemed a bit different.

“Lavender, I can see the head. Salazar, I can't believe you waited this long to find us,” said Theo.

Thankfully the process of giving birth was enough to stop her chattering about star signs. Now that Hermione realized she had been initially right about Ron and their relationship, she felt a weight lift from her shoulders. They really had been good friends, he had never broken her trust, it had just been a misunderstanding. She was embarrassed to have jumped to a conclusion that was so contrary to Ron's character. He was one of her oldest friends. They might not have worked out, but he was still her funny, loyal, and protective childhood friend.

Just as Theo predicted, the first time Hermione witnessed childbirth was like watching a miracle. Unfortunately, he was also correct that there was an unsettling amount of fluid.

Theo cleaned off the baby and placed a swaddled infant in Lavender's arms. Lavender cuddled little baby Seamus close and nuzzled him with her nose. Hermione used the tip of her finger to stroke his soft dark brown hair. Hermione touched her forehead to Lavender's and they both cried.

“He's beautiful.”

“I told you he'd be a boy. The signs never lie.”

Lavender grinned while Hermione choked back a laugh and withdrew. She was an absolute raw mess. She was still crying with a runny nose, her hair had fallen in her face at some point and sweaty curls clung to her, her Muggle athletic wear was still covered in Oliver's blood, and again she couldn't emphasize enough there was just so, so much fluid. She looked up at Theo who was finishing cleaning up, but her eyes landed on a person in the doorway, the great pureblood matriarch, Lady Narcissa Black Malfoy, stared back at her.

Chapter End Notes

See you next week in Bulgaria!

Chudley Cannons logo designed by: Gossamer26

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Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 14: The Cornish Comet/Vratsa Vultures' Stadium. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



The Quibbler: “Second Chances Abound with the Falcons: Exclusive interview with Seeker Cho Chang”

By Luna Lovegood

“I’m so thankful to Draco Malfoy for giving me this opportunity and for Hermione Granger’s brilliant treatments.”

LL: Cho Chang, it’s splendid to see a fellow Ravenclaw and, indeed, a fellow alumna of Dumbledore’s Army. You won your first match this week and now your aura is quite iridescent.

CC: Was that a question?

LL: Did you want it to be?

CC: Er, well, thank you for having me.

LL: Our readers are very concerned about the prevalence of Perspicacious Paddles right now. Do you find yourself often noticing them, or perhaps, their absence, during matches? They tend to hide in the Bludgers.

CC: Not really.

LL: Is there something else you’d prefer to discuss?

CC: Luna, I thought you invited me to discuss my return to Quidditch and the health challenges I’ve been facing?

LL: Would you like to talk about that?

CC: Yes.

LL: That would be lovely. What type of health challenges are you having, Cho Chang?

CC: Anyone that has been following my story knows that I have been open about my health issues. I was held captive during the war by a pair of Death Eaters and they used the Cruciatus Curse on me repeatedly over a period of three days.

LL: I was held captive during the war in Malfoy Manor, but I was never tortured. Just left there mostly. It was terribly dull. Draco Malfoy gave me a light blue blanket and a chocolate frog once. The card was of Morgana. I'm sorry you were hurt. The Nargles can be quite bothersome after such an ordeal.

CC: Thank you Luna. Since then I've suffered from tremors and occasional visual disturbances. Several injuries playing Quidditch have only exacerbated my condition and as everyone knows, I was very publicly sacked from the Tornados last season after I suffered from a rather severe episode during a match.

LL: I'll send you home with some of my Dittanylump Paste. It could help.

CC: Thank you, but I'm actually really excited to be working with trainee Healer Hermione Granger. She's on a training rotation with the Falcons this season and has been doing intensive research into the underlying causes of my condition. She's currently working on designing a potion that could mitigate the effects of over-exposure to certain curses. I'm not sure on the intricate details, but she is brilliant, if anyone can figure it out it'll absolutely be her.

LL: And how did you end up as the Seeker for the Falmouth Falcons?

CC: When the post opened at the Falcons, I met with the team owner, Draco Malfoy, and asked him to take a chance on me. Draco has been amazing. I can't thank him enough for giving me this opportunity. He knows what I've been through and he has been nothing but flexible with my need to modify my training schedule around my condition. It's a bit ironic. I know the public still largely sees him as a Death Eater, but he has been so genuinely kind to me. I truly think he's trying to atone now for everything, really, including what other Death Eaters did to me specifically.

LL: Thank you for that Cho Chang, and one final question, what is it you are seeking from the Falmouth Falcons?

CC: The Golden Snitch, Luna, obviously.

LL: You might think that.

Hermione

Hermione was in the lounge car of the Cornish Comet. They were on their way to play a friendly against a regional Bulgarian team, the country's best, the Vratsa Vultures. It was a 36 hour drive, and they wouldn't be arriving until before dawn tomorrow. Everyone hoped it would be better than the disastrous French friendly or the last major road trip they'd taken to the Isle of Skye. To ensure good behaviour, and rub elbows with the Bulgarians, they were playing host to more than just the team this trip. There were a few representatives from the Department of Magical Games and Sports, the Department of International Cooperation, a

few members of the ambassador's staff, Blaise, and even Pansy had come along. Several more of their friends and British representatives would arrive via international portkey for the match and Magical International Cooperation Ball tomorrow.

Everyone was excited to be part of the event and there was a sort of festive air to the team. Except, well to put it lightly, Pansy. Pansy was not pleased by the duration of the trip to Bulgaria or the room the bus had given her, a sort of roadside motel room with a mirror on the ceiling that smelled of cats. Malfoy had offered her a portkey, but she had declined since they "obviously couldn't be trusted" to go anywhere without her. Everyone had been trying to give her a wide berth. This afternoon the dining room was decorated like an opulent Orient Express dining car. Perhaps the Cornish Comet had felt Pansy's displeasure and was trying to live up to her high standards. She sat with Blaise, a few tables of dignitaries away, playing wizard's chess, but Hermione felt Pansy studying her as often as the board.

Hermione sat across from Malfoy at a table next to a big sunny window while the team did a light workout in the gym. She wondered what the gym looked like now. This morning she ran a yoga class and it had been modeled after the 1912 gym on the Titanic, complete with a camel riding apparatus. Everyone had avoided discussions about icebergs, lest the bus start getting ideas. The class was a success. Once they stopped giggling at Goyle in yoga pants and slowly focused on their breathing, the team made a lot of progress. It had been difficult for Hermione to focus though, her eyes kept darting to the door, wondering if Malfoy would drop by. She thought she looked quite fit in her athleisure outfit, but he had never come.

Thinking of him, she peeked at Malfoy over her book. He was reading through a stack of parchment that looked like team statistics, correspondence, and budgets - wearing reading glasses.

"Since when do you wear glasses?"

Not looking up, he deadpanned, "Since revising for my NEWTs in a poorly lit cell. Anything else insensitive you'd care to ask about or can I get back to this?" He flashed that little smirk without looking up from his work. She knew he was just taking the piss and fought back a smile as she looked down at her book. Who knew reading glasses could be so hot? She resumed her reading or tried to at any rate, her thoughts consumed by the wizard sitting across from her.

She wondered if Narcissa mentioned anything to Malfoy about seeing her in such a state the other day. Narcissa hadn't said anything to her and Theo. She'd just taken one look at the chaos and excused herself. Whatever Narcissa thought, she must have kept it to herself, because Malfoy seemed so relaxed. Well of course he was, this posh train car setting was basically his natural habitat.

Crookshanks was drowsing on the table in a patch of sunlight, waking occasionally to slowly stretch and push Malfoy's parchments and quills off the table. He reached down to retrieve his quill once again.

"Is it even a cat? Maybe just sentient fur?" he complained as he prodded the half-kneazle with his wand.

“Crooky, leave him alone,” said Hermione, sliding Crookshanks closer to her side of the table. She knew she'd taken a risk bringing him along, but the trip was longer than usual. She slid Crookshanks closer, sending an apologetic glance to Malfoy as she did. Crookshanks looked up at her with a flash of irritation and Malfoy gave him another puzzled look before resuming his reading.

She tried to focus back on her reading. It was absolutely lovely here sitting in the sun with Malfoy watching the countryside whizz by. He was pretending to be grumpy, but she was fairly sure he was quite enjoying her company. After all, he'd chosen to sit at her table instead of with Pansy and Blaise or alone.

It was getting a bit warm sitting here in the afternoon sun and she pulled off her cardigan, more fully exposing her thin long-sleeve shirt with a scooped neck from the yoga class. She went back to pretending to read and from the corner of her eye she watched as Malfoy looked over at her, studying her collarbones. He firmly set his jaw and went back to reading. Or was he pretending to read, just like her? A moment later Malfoy started distractedly pulling at the cuffs of his Oxford, but seemed to think better of it and cast a light cooling charm on himself. It was that damn Dark Mark again. He was afraid for her to see it. Well, she could understand that. She didn't go for short-sleeves either, not anymore.

She really ought to try and focus. Helping Cho had turned into a fascinating project. She was fairly certain that instead of trying to treat the symptoms as she had learned at St. Mungo's, there was the very real possibility that she might be able to find a way to root out the effects of long term spell damage by purging the patient's magical core. Her theory was that repeated overuse of a particular spell, such as the Cruciatius, would over time leave a magical signature, a residue of sorts that could accumulate on the victims' magical core. If she could create a potion to remove this residue it wouldn't just help Cho, but so many wizards and witches with a plethora of ailments. It was the most fascinating project she had ever attempted, it fulfilled her in ways she couldn't articulate. She felt alive at the prospect of having an academic challenge that could improve lives, so much more so than just going room to room in St. Mungo's to treat Black Cat Flu, regrow bones, and remove Devil's snare from, well... (kids these days).

Hermione opened her small beaded bag and enthusiastically pulled several large tomes out to continue her work. She caught Malfoy watching her with surprise as she pulled book after book out of her bag.

“What's all this about? You really are a swot.”

“I only have three major research projects going right now,” Hermione held three fingers up and pointed to each finger as she spoke. “One, create a season-long training program for the Falcons. Two, determine the best way to keep the essence of Quidditch the same while creating, and then helping pass, safety reforms. Three, create a major medical breakthrough that helps Cho and hundreds, maybe thousands of other witches and wizards.”

“Don't forget four, sleep,” said Malfoy with a smirk. “Why are you doing all of this to yourself?”

“Sports medi-healing is just so straight forward. It’s not nearly as challenging as my previous rotations. I won’t stay in Quidditch long term. But that’s what rotations are for - to learn about what you like and dislike before settling into a specialty,” said Hermione. She watched as a shadow of emotion passed over Malfoy’s face and she got the impression that he might have just occluded a thought.

“So, all this and you still don’t like Quidditch?”

“Not particularly, but it’s not about that. I want to affect change in the Wizarding World, do some good, all these research side projects keep me going. I love research and creating new knowledge. I’m honestly finding it difficult to find inspiration at the thought of a future spent plodding through the halls of St. Mungo’s and telling ten patients a day to get plenty of rest and fluids. Even now with the Falcons, I just use the same handful of healing spells and potions to patch everyone up - just to watch them get injured again! Keeping the team in one piece feels Sisyphean.”

“Well then I’m glad you’re happy about your ambitious workload. Only you, Golden Girl,” said Malfoy looking back toward his work. He was immediately interrupted by Crookshanks, stretching out again to swat at another stack of Malfoy’s parchment, knocking it off their table.

“Sorry,” said Hermione hurriedly, ducking under the table to retrieve all of Malfoy’s parchment. She wished Crooksie would behave for once. She quickly shuffled the parchment into a messy pile and sat upright. As she passed the stack over to Malfoy, she couldn’t help reading the top page and froze. It was a formal invitation to high tea with Kingsley Shacklebolt.

“Granger?” asked Malfoy, reaching across to pull the parchment from her hand.

“The Minister for Magic?” she couldn’t help but gasp as she read it, then remembered herself. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to read it.”

Malfoy just laughed, “No worries, I get stuff like this all the time.” He took the stack from her hand and picked the Minister’s invitation off the top. “I’m sure it’s just a formality. I can’t think of any reason he’d want to talk to me personally.” Malfoy balled up the parchment and laughed, “Only one thing to do with this,” and cast an Incendio on it. The invitation flared into a smokeless fire and was gone in an instant. He shot another smile at her and lapsed back into companionable silence as he set about his task.

Hermione wanted to laugh along with his cavalier attitude, but couldn’t help but feel a stab of envy. She had never been invited to high tea with the Minister for Magic and wished she was welcome in those circles. She dreamed of helping when important things were decided, but here she was patching up Quidditch players. She hadn’t seen Kingsley in a while, not since the war and the occasional commemoration event. They had saved each other’s lives on at least one, maybe two occasions. But of course, he was busy being Minister. He was likely fighting with old powerful families who were still pushing their disquietingly regressive agendas through their hereditary seats in the Wizengamot. Perhaps even against families like the Malfoys themselves.

She wondered again what Narcissa might have told Malfoy about her. Why had she popped in and out of the medical center? The last time she'd seen Narcissa Malfoy was probably when she had testified at Malfoy's trial. It seemed like an odd time and place to suddenly drop by. Whatever she had to say was likely nothing good. His father's opinion would be worse. Good thing his father was in Azkaban for life - Lucius wouldn't even like her sitting near his precious heir much less anything else.

The Malfoys, Blacks, Parkinsons, Longbottoms, Lestranges, Notts, etc. families were all members of the upper crust society, the so-called Sacred Twenty-Eight. Pureblood wizarding families that had kept to themselves for generations. She knew that Malfoy didn't believe in blood purity anymore, but he would probably still be expected to marry someone in the Sacred Twenty-Eight, just for tradition, if not "blood purity" per se. But... maybe not? He wasn't his parents. She wasn't sure who he really was now. Her mind flashed to Malfoy punching Flint for insulting her. She smiled at the memory, maybe she had a sense of who he was becoming. She pulled out another book and Malfoy frowned at her bag.

"What progress have you made on your Quidditch safety thing?" he said, taking off his glasses and rubbing his eyes before settling back to chat with her.

"There are so many ways to make Quidditch safer. I think I'm zeroing in on allowing player substitutions, so players won't feel they need to play through injuries."

"I can see the utility of that," said Malfoy thoughtfully

"Do you remember how Harry continued to play with a broken arm when he was only 12?!"

Malfoy looked like the cat that got the cream remembering that day, "I'd forgotten that, Granger. Thank you, I think I'll use that next time I need to cast a Patronus."

"You're the worst."

"You love it."

"Right well, I'm ignoring you now." She continued, "plus there's the mental strain of letting your team down if you succumb to injuries. Oliver would rather play until he bled out than be taken out of a match. A deeper roster would allow older or injured players, like Cho, to play as alternates."

He sat for a moment, looking out the window considering her idea. "I think that could work, if you submit it to the Department of Magical Games and Sports and then they could edit it and send it to the Wizengamot for approval."

"You really think it could pass?"

"Yes, I think it's a good idea for all the reasons you mentioned," he said seriously, then went right back to teasing her. "But one question, does your hair always get this puffy when you're worked up?"

"Does yours attract moths in the light of the moon?"

He smiled at her and bumped his leg against hers under the table, a casual contact felt electric. Then he put his reading glasses back on and pulled out a fresh sheet of parchment, returning to his work.

Hermione loved the smell of fresh parchment. She wondered if things had been different, could this have been them, reading together in the Hogwarts library. In a world without Voldemort, she imagined them working at their favourite table in the Hogwarts library 7th year together. Draco would take off his sexy reading glasses. He would look meaningfully at her, his silver eyes dark with lust. He would stand up and pull her to her feet, whispering for her to come with him as he led her deeper into the stacks. Then he would press her against the shelves in the Restricted Section, overcome with desire. His mouth, open and demanding, would start on her lips and slowly trail down her neck as he moved his hips against hers. Her school skirt would be no impediment to their desire, her fingers wound into his silver and green tie. This fantasy confirmed it: her panic from their kiss felt utterly foolish now. She was ready. Ready for this new Draco, especially after learning the truth about Ron.

He was asking her something and she stared blankly for a beat, the words failing to register. Godric. Focus. She blushed and wondered if he could tell she had been thinking about being with him. He was obviously an Occlumens, but was he a Legilimens too? Oh Merlin and Morgana, she hoped not.

“Are you still working on your safety stuff?” he asked casually, far too conversationally, not a Legilimens then. Thank Merlin.

“Hmm... no, this is all about researching a cure for Cho. I love this project; it has the potential to help more than just Cho. It could help lots of people. Like Neville’s parents. Did you know they fought Voldemort the first time and were tortured, horribly? They’ve been residents in St. Mungo’s ever since.”

“Hmmm... yes, of course I know about the Longbottoms, that’s why my insane aunt was put in Azkaban.”

That was a whole thing they did not need to get into today. “Yes... um... well anyway. They might be too far gone, but maybe it could alleviate some of their symptoms or help other people. It could help you too. I’ve noticed your tremors when you lose control.”

Malfoy instantly balled his hands self-consciously. “I didn’t think anyone had noticed,” he said softly.

“I’ve always noticed you, even when I didn’t want to,” she reached across the table to grip his hand reassuringly, silver and gold eyes meeting, the implication hanging heavy like a confession suspended between them.

The moment ended as she heard Pansy and Blaise chuckle over something a few tables away and the murmur of voices in the lounge from the other Ministry guests. She quickly withdrew her hand and knew even if she pretended all day, she wouldn’t get anything else done now. Luckily she had already submitted all of her progress reports to Chief Healer Laece. Hermione blushed and went to hide her face by rummaging around in her beaded bag, her head and arm up to her shoulder inside the bag.

“Granger, honestly, how many illegal extension charms have you placed on that damn bag?”

Grabbing her book, Hermione resurfaced and theatrically feigned confusion, looking at him with her impression of his smirk, “Malfoy, I don’t know what you’re on about.”

Draco

Krum was their Seeker. Obviously Draco knew the roster of the Vratsa Vultures, the Falcons had been intensely planning their anti-Krum strategy. It was different knowing something was theoretically true and seeing the proof. Draco watched, a familiar mix of rivalry and old memories churning through him. He didn’t realize it would be so unbearable standing there doing fuck-all while he had to watch living legend Viktor fucking Krum show-off during warm-ups. Didn’t anyone else play Seeker in all of Bulgaria?!

Draco, Blaise, and Wood had a plan. Krum was indisputably the best Seeker in the world, so they’d need to win with the Quaffle, not the Snitch. They based their strategy on Ireland’s when they beat Bulgaria (and Krum) in the 1994 World Cup. Wood knew the plan and had drilled the Chasers mercilessly. Often, Blaise had to intervene or else Wood would have kept them at it until dawn.

Cho was fairly intimidated by the prospect of facing world-renowned Seeker Viktor Krum in her second match of her comeback, but there was nothing for it. Malfoy had taken to scrimmaging with her, by seeking a training Snitch best out of five catches. He was still so soft; still not quite where he was when he last played in fifth year. Against Cho, in their best-of-five games, he was generally pleased when he could get one in five. Once he even got two in five, managing a steal with his right hand, making it a personal success. Mostly though he felt the benefit to Cho was psychological. Repeatedly trashing him clearly increased her confidence.

Draco and Krum had been quite friendly in his 4th year when Krum and his Durmstrang classmates attended Hogwarts for the Triwizard Tournament. Although Lucius had intended to send Draco to Durmstrang, his mother had insisted he go to Hogwarts. During 4th year, Draco had eaten most of his meals with the Durmstrang students at the Slytherin table. Krum had been a politically advantageous friend. It could be nice to see him again, he supposed.

Up here in the top box it was all just Ministry officials handshaking and smiling at this friendly exhibition match-up. Nothing here but loads of international magical cooperation. Draco was firmly in his Sacred Twenty-Eight handshaking mode and hating every second. Playing the Vultures felt a bit like pulling the short straw of friendly match-ups. Draco was sure the Department of Magical Games and Sports had given them this embarrassingly one-sided exhibition match to make the Falcons pay for the team’s previous transgressions - a team that no longer had a single remaining player or manager from the previous scandal. All the same, here they were paying someone else’s debt, acting the part of smiling diplomats, waiting to get annihilated by the Vultures. At least the Falcons were prepared to lose this match and it wouldn’t count in their standings for the League Cup.

All he wanted was to sit by Granger.

She had found a seat right in the front, near the apparition point (a handy feature of the Vultures' top box), so she could pop down to the field if the need arose. He finished moodily gladhanding dignitaries and escaped, sinking into the seat next to hers before anyone else could.

“Morning, Granger”

“Malfoy”

“Excited for the match?”

“Not particularly. Not after the last ‘friendly’ turned into the ‘French Fiasco’, but it’ll be nice to see Viktor again.”

Krum was inescapable. Draco vividly remembered Krum going to the Yule Ball with Granger in her periwinkle dress robes. Draco only had eyes for Granger that night and Pansy had been furious. Then Granger had been selected as Krum’s special person, or whatever, for the second task. Seeing her curls break the water had been a surprise. Well, nearly as surprising as seeing Krum’s disfigured shark head emerge from the water...but what else had happened 4th year? And more importantly, was anything still going on now? He realized his hands were beginning to tremble and he crossed his arms across his chest in a futile attempt to make them stop.

The warm-ups were finished and the teams took laps around the field and participated in some type of ceremonial rubbish to open the match, involving some official nonsense between their ambassadors and the playing of national Wizarding anthems.

On his final lap around the stadium, Krum came up to the top box, jumped off his broom and swept “Herm-own-ninny” into a big hug. He twirled her around as she laughed in his arms while he kissed her on both cheeks. Any teenage insecurity had clearly melted off him proportional to the amount of muscle he’d gained. Krum was lithe, but rock solid now, larger-than-life friendly, and absolutely over the moon to see her again.

Draco was wrong. He hated this man.

“And can it be? My old Syltherin friend, Drah-ko Mahl-foi?”

Krum tried to bear hug Draco at the same time Draco tried to shake hands. It resulted in an awkward handshake that ended pressed-up against their stomachs wrapped in a one armed hug. It was utterly undignified. Draco hated this. He smiled politely. Destination, determination, and deliberation.

“Ve all know the hungry bear doesn’t dance and yet we wait until after the match for the ball, no?” Krum laughed. Then he turned to focus on Granger, “I’ll seeing you there tonight,” he said, kissing her hand and flying back out onto the pitch. He turned a few feet away to wave, then did an annoyingly impressive barrel roll as he joined the Vultures for brooms up.

What a tosser.

The match began and the Falcons' Chasers were off and pushing hard, just like they had planned. Unfortunately, there was a fairly popular strategy against any team Krum was on and so it was already clear they wouldn't get as far as he and Wood had hoped. He noticed Granger, who didn't normally care to focus on the match, following closely. Was she watching him? Maybe, maybe not. Krum was the best Seeker in the world, everyone watched Krum... but not many people were watched back. Draco was sure Krum darted a small, proprietary, look over at her.

"You and Krum seemed rather chummy just now."

"Oh, Viktor is a dear friend, but we seldom get the chance to see each other."

A dear friend? What was that supposed to mean?

Well, she was free to do what she liked, it wasn't as though he fancied her. She had made it clear she wasn't... they were not... so maybe that kiss had been life altering and he dreamt about her sometimes (thank Merlin she was not a Legilimens). And he thought sitting together yesterday on the Comet had been one of the most pleasant afternoons he could remember.

He was attracted to her, obviously, he had eyes, didn't he? But this wasn't mere attraction. It was the selfless way she applied her brilliance, the fierce intelligence of her banter, her unexpected bravery on a broom. And he knew he'd been lying to himself.

He liked her.

A lot.

But he'd be terrible for her. He was the worst choice and he bet her 'dear friend' Viktor Krum would agree.

"Did you know the Bulgarian teams are all part of Quidditch clubs?" said Granger, in her swottiest tone, clearly ramping up for a lecture. "Like in Muggle football...?" she paused, but he shook his head not having the foggiest what a 'Muggle football club' was. "They start out with a foundation phase where kids play on toy brooms until they are old enough for more skill development. By the time they go to Durmstrang, or wherever, they might play for house teams during school. However, their club team is their homebase during breaks and where they get professional training. That's how Viktor got so good and was playing on the National Team as a teenager. He's been part of the Vulture's club, with most of his friends, since he was four."

Huh. He'd never heard of anything like that in the UK. He knew a few of the Quidditch teams had a training squad to train up young promising players, but they were all out of Hogwarts. Kids mostly just played with their parents and friends in community leagues as they got older. As they hit their teens and went to Hogwarts, many of the pureblood kids played in local summer leagues and had private lessons. But being part of a club like Granger described and getting professionally trained from an early age sounded incredible. What an amazing opportunity that would be. He wished he'd gotten to do that. Brilliant. Now he had just one more thing to envy about Krum.

“Viktor has been dying to get me to see his precious Vultures play since fourth year. I expect he’s overjoyed I’ve finally made it here. I’m sure that’s why he keeps looking over at me. I wish he’d focus on the match, he’s going to get hurt.”

Draco noticed Krum’s gaze over at them too. There was nothing for it. All’s fair in love and Quidditch. Casually Draco leaned back a bit and deliberately draped his arm along the back of Granger's chair. She glanced at him and smiled. She settled back into her chair, not enough to nestle against him, but enough that it felt like a possibility.

“Granger,” he said, twirling one of her curls around his finger, “What is the chance that a family of pygmy puffs is living in this nest?”

“Well, wild pygmy puffs have experienced terrible habitat loss recently,” she deadpanned with mock sincerity. “It’s only right to support them using any means necessary.”

“I have people in the Wizengamot. Salazar only knows what they do all day. I could help you set-up your own reserve.”

“What a generous offer, Lord Malfoy.”

He good-naturedly tugged on the curl and she turned away from the match to smile at him. That smile - and he was touching her hair, Merlin. He had to stop himself from running both of his hands through her curls and pulling her lips towards his.

“I’m learning all about generosity lately, I think I’m getting rather good at being generous.”

“And humble.”

“Obviously.”

She laughed again as he made a face, her full focus turned toward Draco now instead of the match. Draco could still see the match over her shoulder. He loved the sound of her laugh and wanted to hear it as much as possible. Distracting Krum was just a side benefit and it seemed to be working. Krum gazed repeatedly over at Granger giggling next to him. Draco went full smirk, to make Granger laugh again and to piss off Krum. This was much more enjoyable than being sullen and shaking hands with dignitaries.

She sure seemed happier while laughing with him than she had watching Quidditch a few minutes ago. But that might just indicate how much she disliked Quidditch. He knew that he could admit, privately, that he fancied Granger. Draco wondered just how interested Granger was. In the Isle of Skye, they had danced together, she probably would have done more that night. Except he had a terrible bout of consciousness and left her in the hallway. She certainly kissed him back after the flying lesson. Not just kissed, but she had truly snogged him... and then rubbed herself against him before she abruptly ended it. As she should have, he was the wrong choice for her. But if she fancied him (and he thought she might), then he didn’t think he was strong enough to dissuade her.

He hoped the match ended soon and they could dance together again at the Magical International Cooperation Ball tonight. He imagined holding her close again, but it was just a

dream. Everyone would be there, watching them. It was one thing if she wanted to be involved with him, but he worried public opinion would choose to view her association with him as her downfall. She was the North Star, pulling him forward, but the stargazers would never forgive her for wandering away to find him in the dark. He knew he should pull away, but he was becoming desperate to keep her near. He cocked his head and continued teasing her.

“Any plans for tonight?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” she said with mock sincerity. “No real plans... well, just this one small thing, I suppose. Do you have anything on?”

“Just this one thing for work,” he said, matching her flippant tone, but then she smiled, giving away the game. He bumped her shoulder with his, “What’s Pansy got you wearing?”

“Oh, wouldn’t you like to know?” she said impishly, leaning toward him.

“I might,” he said leaning closer to her.

“You’ll see soon enough.”

“Oh will I? Up close?”

“How close do you want to get?”

Their noses were nearly touching when they were interrupted by an explosive cheer from the crowd.

Cho was holding her arm aloft. She’d caught the Snitch. What? The Falcons had won? Impossible.

Draco’s head whipped up and he saw Viktor Krum hovering on the end of the pitch watching them - miles away from Cho and the Snitch. Catching eyes, Draco shot him a smirk and cocked eyebrow.

Noticing the defeated Krum’s gaze as well, Granger turned back to a smug Draco. “You distracted him on purpose!” she said, playfully swatting at Draco’s shoulder.

He theatrically feigned confusion, “Granger, I don’t know what you’re on about.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading and following this fic!

This is an amazing community and I hope you're supporting all your favourite writers for this year's annual awards! This fic is still a WIP (work in progress), but please

nominate and vote for the fics you've loved in the Dramione subreddit's annual [Top Dramione Fics Voting Megathread](#) before 8 January 2026.

Join us this week on healthyishobsession.com for a fun mock-up of Luna's Quibbler article and the match flyer as well as the playlist, quizzes, and more! The Vratsa Vultures' logo at the start of the chapter was designed by Gossamer26

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 15: The Samodiva Hotel. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

The Bulgarians had spared no expense on the Magical International Cooperation Ball. The ballroom at the Samodiva Hotel was magical, obviously, but truly Hermione had never seen a place like it. Colossal chandeliers were fashioned from hand-blown glass and wrought iron into the form of cascading wisteria, which cast a honeyed glow that made the golden threads in the wall tapestries shimmer. The ceiling was a celestial dome of the deepest cobalt and adorned with a mural of the cosmos, lit by shimmering constellations. Her well-trained eyes instantly flew to the silver stars creating the Draco constellation and she blushed, even though it would have been impossible for anyone to realize why.

The ballroom was already full when she arrived. Ministry officials, donors, the teams and friends all percolated through the room, glasses full, and were slowly beginning to find their seats for dinner. She spotted Harry and Ginny, Fleur and Bill, and of course Viktor; it seemed the Ministry had convinced all the Triwizard Tournament champions all to attend. There were several Order of Merlin awardees too, like her and Harry, but also Neville. She noticed that Neville was alone again, but shockingly dressed in what could only be designer dress robes without a wilting leaf or smudge of soil in sight. He'd come a long way from the boy with the lost toad or the teenager hiding in his greenhouse. She wondered whether his gran had hired him a stylist or if he was working with a designer.

Despite the elite crowd of Britain and Bulgaria's finest, the focus tonight was the Falcons. They were all so proud of their match today and even the Vultures took the loss in stride. They were such a dominant club, what was one friendly loss to some Brits? Regardless of the excitement over the win and the heavy drinking culture of Bulgarians, the Falcons had been warned, extensively, to be on their best behaviour. No illegal (or semi-legal) potions and please please no drinking contests against Bulgarians.

The entire team looked so sharp. Was it all Pansy's influence? Probably. She designed Hermione's outfit after all, why not everyone else's? She smoothed down her dress and picked a single hair from Crookshanks off her bodice. The gown was stunningly beautiful like liquid gold running full length from her ankles to wrists, just like she always requested, and fitted perfectly to her body. It was low cut in front and daringly low in the back. She wondered if she should have gotten ready in her hotel room instead of her hospital room themed bus compartment. Hopefully there weren't any more lingering cat hairs.

Upon entering the ballroom more fully, she consulted the welcome table. Placing her wand upon the table conjured a small Sparrowhawk made of mist, like a Patronus, which flew about her for a moment and then led the way to her assigned seat. As she followed her guide, she couldn't help but glance around the room for a certain platinum blonde. She knew he must have checked into his hotel room earlier because he was not part of her group that got ready on the Comet.

She finally found Malfoy's beacon-like hair at one of the stuffiest looking tables. It looked to be the one filled with team owners and ambassadors. She wouldn't be surprised if this group was expected to excuse themselves after dinner to adjourn for cigars and brandy in the salon so they could discuss world domination. Just the worst. Was Malfoy really one of them? Or would he be, once his Death Eater history scabbed over for a couple years?

Hermione continued following her guide toward her table and got her first clear look at him across the room. He was stunning. His formal black dress robes were embellished with a scrolling silver brocade that was obviously custom-made to match his eyes. Was that acromantula silk? Of course it must be, or something even more rare. He looked so fantastic that she gasped. The cold silver of his robes was the perfect counterpoint to the warm gold of her dress. Malfoy took that moment to look up at her. She caught his eye and she felt something deep within her flutter and clench. She watched as he took in her dress in a very ungentlemanly manner. He met her eyes with a remorseful and heated look that said he would rather be seated with her, or perhaps, somewhere else entirely. She felt a sudden rush of self-consciousness as he watched her: polished, powerful, unattainable, and she smoothed her hair and pulled at the cuffs of her sleeves as she continued toward her table.

Arriving at her seat she found it to be a group of fun, young, Wizarding celebrity types. Hermione's seat was between Viktor and Harry, who were seated beside Cho and Ginny, respectively. Pansy, Fleur and Bill rounded out their 8-top. Viktor stood to pull out her chair and Hermione shot Harry a playfully reproachful look, knowing he had never pulled out a chair for a witch in his life. Harry, Ginny, Bill, and Fleur continued their heated discussion, so she turned toward Viktor, Cho, and Pansy. Pansy's dark bob, red lips, and black dress were exactly on brand. A pansy, cleverly charmed to slowly shift color, was tucked into her hair: it was a surprisingly sweet touch to her otherwise unyielding perfection. Except, was that a smudge of dirt on her cheek? A fingerprint? While Viktor filled Cho's glass with Moondrop Rakiya, Hermione discreetly motioned to Pansy to wipe her cheek.

Cho was elated by the win today and Viktor was elated to have so many of his Hogwarts friends and fellow Triwizard Champions here to visit him. He passed the brandy all around and stood to welcome them all to Bulgaria.

Once seated Viktor turned to her, "Hermynnee, what is it I read in Quibbler about your new potion? What has your great mind concocting, eh?"

Hermione smiled at the honest interest he had for her and his absolute bollocking of the Queen's English. But since she couldn't speak any Bulgarian, she was deeply touched by his effort. He was a good friend.

"I've been wondering about it too," asked Pansy, all signs of dirt vanished. "I know you're creating it specifically for Cho, but the article mentioned it might help a larger swath of the

population?”

“It’s going to be amazing,” Cho gushed. “You’ll see, Hermione and I have already had so much success. I’m feeling so much better. I know she’s so close to something big.”

Hermione smiled politely, but was worried their trial potions might not live up to Cho’s high expectations. “The results have been promising but it’s all still preliminary. We have to wait and hope we can generalize the potion to other cases. This is getting into Department of Mysteries stuff and I’m just a trainee Healer.”

Pansy sniffed and said, “I don’t care how long it takes, but a breakthrough like this, for all the families out there.” Her voice cracked and she touched the flower in her hair as she continued, “It’s just. I can’t... excuse me. Um - allergies.” Pansy hastily stood up from her chair. As Hermione tracked Pansy’s unexpected flight across the room, her eyes caught on Malfoy again. He was shooting daggers at Viktor.

All through dinner she caught Malfoy sneaking glances at her and then scowling at Viktor. For a Slytherin, he wasn’t exactly being subtle. She tried to focus on the conversation, but kept running her hands over her collarbone and cheek or smiling secretly, knowing she was being watched. The conversation at their table flowed easily as they reminisced about potions and poltergeists and dangers and dragons, the Black lake, the hedge maze, and raised their glasses in memory of Cedric. All she could focus on was Draco. Although he might be trying to wandlessly Avada Viktor, they were just friends, pen pals really. Besides, Viktor seemed to be more interested in Cho tonight. Not many women had beaten him to a Golden Snitch.

When the dishes vanished and the dessert appeared, the music began. Immediately, Viktor rose to ask Hermione for a dance, “Hermny-one, they are playing our song. Ve must dancing.”

“Do we have a song?” she smiled, putting her hand in his.

“Perhaps not yet, yes?”

Viktor was such a sweetheart. She laughed and danced with him. Soon the floor was crowded with couples. Over Viktor’s shoulder she could see Malfoy, still stuck chatting with some official, but she could tell from his frown and stiff jaw that he was seething with jealousy under his cool diplomat demeanor. Well, well. This wouldn’t be the first time that situation had played out while she danced with Viktor. Laughing and flushed, Viktor led her off the dance floor.

“Hermnanny, you must save our friend Drah-ko from the ambassador ... and I need to take Cho on dance floor.” He bowed deeply and he was off.

She spotted Draco through the crowd and dropped into the seat next to him, causing the ambassador to take their leave. She felt a bit bold seeking him out in public, but found she couldn’t resist. He looked even better in his immaculate dress robes close up, the silver of his eyes perfectly matching the subtle silver embroidery. His hair was perfectly in place. She longed to kiss him right here and mess up his hair so the blond strands fell just over his silver eyes. She could smell a hint of bergamot and leather that clung to him and felt herself leaning closer, wishing he’d put his arm around her chair like earlier at the match. Her heart was

beating so fast and nothing mattered right now except him. She didn't think she'd ever wanted anyone like this before.

"How have you been?" said Hermione. "Do you fancy getting a drink?"

Malfoy didn't look at her, but was moodily watching Viktor. "I didn't know you were still so close to Krum," he said.

"You know I'm friends with him. What's up with you?" she asked, surprised.

"Friends? Granger, please, he doesn't want to be your friend," sneered Malfoy. "Besides, he's competing against us, against England. He's an enemy of the Falcons. You should stay away from him."

Hermione's mouth fell open. She had grown to expect petty jealousy from Ron if she so much as talked to any wizard besides Harry, but this was new coming from Malfoy.

"You're being ridiculous," she said in a low, but ferocious voice. "Honestly, 'the enemy'? Godric, you're so dramatic. He's just a friend, a pen pal really. Who did I spend all day with? And nearly every other day? Who do I want to be with? You. You infuriating, possessive, arrogant dragon! You haven't even asked me to dance."

Malfoy swallowed, the fight gone out of him. "You want to be with me?"

Hermione's cheeks went pink.

"You want to dance with me?" His tone was incredulous. Normally Draco would sport a haughty smirk in a situation where he had clearly just been charming ambassadors while strutting around in his ridiculously expensive and perfectly tailored dress robes. But not now, he seemed uncharacteristically taken aback and hesitant as though he expected her to reject him. He ran a trembling hand over the back of his neck. "Here? In front of all these people?"

"Of course I want to dance with you," she said. He could be such a prat sometimes, and yet, as she placed her hand in his, one thing was clear: she really hoped he'd already checked into his hotel room. She didn't fancy chancing it on the Comet tonight.

Draco

Draco led her onto the dance floor, moving to place a subtle hand at the small of her back. If he was going to go into shock, at least he had a healer with him. He could not believe she wanted to dance with him, right here, with everyone watching - especially this crowd of old money purebloods. He'd never realized professional Quidditch was so insular. All night he'd endured the same subtle shite, nothing overt, but the kind of smug, belittling comments that only "high society" could deliver with such practiced ease. The most cringeworthy examples from tonight included: "it's grand that Potter is here, and isn't it lovely how much he's accomplished for having a Muggle-born mother?" or "that Chaser, of yours Katie Bell, unusual last name that, is she foreign, an American perhaps?" He didn't know what the press would say about him dancing with Granger, but nothing good. He was already a branded

Death Eater (lest he ever forget), most of what he did ended up in the papers. He wished he could shield her from all of it. But she was impossible to resist.

Yet as he swept her into his arms, if someone cared that he was dancing with Granger, he didn't notice. He could only see her. Feel her in his arms. She was all around him. Everywhere. Everything.

All day he had worked himself up watching her, wanting her. They flirted and nearly touched so many times today, but watching her all evening with Krum *in that gold dress* had been absolute torture.

He had finally captured her in the circle of his arms but he still wanted more. As he spun her out and pulled her back to him, he could feel the heat of her skin though the thin fabric of her dress. He took a breath of her intoxicating perfume, warm vanilla, amber, and maybe something else, something that was just her. He imagined the sounds she would make. He couldn't do this here. It was bordering on too much, his senses overwhelmed by everything *her*. He was right, they should never have danced together. Not here at least.

Draco caught her gaze then pulled her even closer and leaned down allowing his lips to graze her ear, "How about we go somewhere else?"

"Yes, please," she breathed back and nuzzled her cheek against his. His stomach flipped at the gesture. How in Salazar's name was this happening? Fuck.

He pulled out his wand and cast a quick Notice-Me-Not charm, then led her out of the ballroom as casually as he could manage, even though it felt excruciatingly obvious despite the magical cover. Her warmth seeped into his hand from her back. Out in the lobby, they waited for the lift in shared silence. He was impressed by Granger's ability to keep her demeanor so relaxed. To on-lookers nothing would have seemed amiss apart from the fact they were both breathing far too quickly. Draco silently cursed his tailor who, it seemed, had gotten his measurements wrong at his last fitting.

As soon as the lift doors closed and they were alone, they were on one another. He caught her close with an arm holding her across her back and the other reached up to grip the back of her neck, his hand instantly sliding into her hair. The kiss was searing, overwhelming him with desire. He felt heat course through his body like a flash of Fiendfyre: powerful, devastating, and unquenchable.

He lifted her and she wrapped her legs around his waist as he pushed her up against the wall of the lift. The feeling of her body trapped against his was euphoric. There was no beginning or ending, there was only now - until they were interrupted by the lift doors opening on his floor.

Draco smiled down at her as he set her on her feet and pulled her along the corridor. He found it difficult to keep his longer legs from making bigger strides than hers. Hermione laughed and used her free hand to hold up her dress as she had to nearly jog to keep up. Draco didn't slow as he used an Alohomora to open the door to his suite pulling both of them inside. He grabbed her by the waist as his lips found hers once more and kissed her deeply

before throwing her down on the bed. His lips were frantic, devouring, and she matched him kiss for kiss.

For all of the time it took Draco to ready himself for the ball, it took only a fraction of the time to undo all of his hard work. Shoes hit the floor followed hastily by his robes. He felt the knot of his bow tie loosen, bracers, trousers, and cufflinks not far behind. Salazar, there were a lot of layers. At last Hermione unbuttoned his shirt and she ran her fingertips across his bare chest, tracing the faint silvery outlines of his Sectumsempra scars.

He'd never wanted anyone, anything, as much as he wanted her. The feel of her in his arms, the connection between them, seemed unreal. It was everything. He laved at her neck, sucking lightly, hoping she would understand what this meant to him. What she meant to him. He felt her hands as she explored his shoulders and began to push his shirt off.

Fuck.

"Wait," he tried to say, but she was kissing him again and it took all his control to pull back. She started to tug his shirt off again and he knew, knew it deep within him, that they had to stop. He'd been a fool. He couldn't. He pulled back, "I'm sorry, I'm so so sorry. But I can't -, we can't -."

Draco shrugged his shirt back up his shoulders and disentangled himself to sit on the edge of the bed. He could never escape his crimes, not with a couple of years in Azkaban, or changed perspective, or apologies, and even good deeds. He was a marked Death Eater. A proud bearer of Lord Voldemort's Dark Mark. Branded. There on his left forearm, forever. It would always be there. A stark reminder of who he was, would always be and why he couldn't be with her, especially her.

Granger founded Dumbledore's fucking Army. She was a war hero. She fought against him and his cult. She was the Golden Girl and maybe he could still do some good in the world by staying away from her.

"Malfoy, don't be ridiculous," she said, clearly still out of breath and a bit frustrated. "I know what's on your arm."

He hadn't been with anyone since Pansy early in 6th year. He had been as proud as one of his family's damn albino peacocks, letting her stroke his Mark. It had been an elite promise of power and acceptance, but now it made him nauseous to remember. Being a Death Eater meant he sat there and watched while a Hogwarts teacher was eaten by a snake on his dining room table. He was evil, corrupted, branded. Azkaban had not offered the clean slate he craved. He hadn't let anyone see the Mark since returning home.

"You shouldn't be here," he put his head in his hands and couldn't look at her. "You shouldn't be with me. I shouldn't have asked you to dance. The press will already be bad enough, you should go before anyone realizes you're missing."

The mattress dipped as she tried to sit next to him and kiss him again, but he politely pulled away.

“Granger, please.”

She sighed and got up. He assumed she was leaving, and felt a heavy ache settle beneath his ribs, but he knew it was for the best. He had to let her go. It had been a beautiful dream, but he was wrong for pursuing her.

He was surprised to see her bare feet enter his line of sight on the floor. He looked up and she was confidently standing in front of him. It was strange, seeing that look on her face, like he was a complex problem she'd just solved. Draco watched as she smirked before undoing the zipper on the back of her dress.

He had not seen this coming. He had no idea what she was on about. She should be halfway to the lobby by now, not undressing. Her gold dress began to melt down her body, uncovering a sheer, lacy bra. It had to be held on by a sticking charm, the way it perfectly displayed her breasts. He might be a sullen prick, but he wasn't immune to a fantastic pair of tits. Then she came closer still and knelt down right between his legs.

Silently, she extended her exposed left forearm to him.

Mudblood.

White lines crisscrossed her otherwise flawless forearm, scarring in a way that never fully healed. He remembered that day, when Bellatrix had held her down in his drawing room. He had no idea she possessed such a permanent reminder.

Draco caressed her arm. Before he could stop himself, he brought the raised letters up to his lips.

“I'm so sorry,” he finally whispered. Obviously she couldn't stay here; she could never be with him. His family had seen to that. Another thing they had stolen from him, from both of them.

“Draco, you're not the only one with scars from the war. We were children, we never had a choice.”

His mouth felt cottony, a lump forming in his throat making it hard to breathe, but he tried to explain. “That day at the manor, I wish - I *should* have saved you.”

“I meant what I said at your trial. You did save us.” Hermione stood to push his open shirt all the way off now, to reveal his Dark Mark. He tried to pull his arm to his chest, but she firmly held it in a gentle caress, while looking deep into his eyes.

“Draco, please, you can trust me,” she said, putting her arms around him and bending down to kiss him. Unlike the previous kisses they had shared, this one was gentle, a tender promise.

He felt exposed, more than he had ever been and they were still wearing half their clothes. It was as though she had exposed part of his soul. Raw. This wasn't a physical intimacy he recognized; it was a profound, almost frightening, emotional nakedness, as if she'd somehow bypassed all his carefully built walls and touched the very core of who he was.

Draco reached out, with slightly trembling hands to draw her in. She straddled his lap and he pulled her close against his chest. He burrowed his face into her curls to hide his tears, but wasn't sure when he started to weep. His breath came in long ragged breaths. He felt his magic reaching out toward hers, braiding together like the vines of her wand. As he held her, his breath slowly synchronized with hers. He didn't know how long they stayed like that holding each other united in their shared grief over lost innocence.

He took a few more steadying breaths, then gently swept her hair away so he could nuzzle his cheek against hers. She leaned into him and he gently kissed her cheek. She pulled back just far enough to look into his eyes. He wondered what she saw. He was probably a mess and she was so beautiful. Her wild curls fell around her shoulders. She was completely bare now except for her bra and knickers. Most importantly though were her golden brown eyes, so full of reverent understanding. He could still feel their magic connecting, twining together. He had no idea what she saw in him, but she lowered her head to kiss him sweetly again.

He touched his forehead to hers breathing each other's air, unable to articulate what was happening between them. He kissed her again and each kiss was a testament to his adoration of her. He tried to tell her everything he couldn't explain in words. Gratitude. Fear. Safety. Awe. He pushed his feelings into his magic, hoping she would understand.

What had started slowly was now growing into something more. Each kiss gained intensity as he felt their magic swirl around them. He felt himself growing hard again as she began to press herself against him, their bodies meeting with very little now left between them.

"Draco, please," she murmured. Hearing his name on her lips felt like coming home. He never wanted to leave. He'd give her anything she wanted.

"*Hermione*," he groaned, and they sank further into each other.

He reverently ran his hands down her back and reached for the clasp of her bra, only to remember that it must be held in place by a sticking charm. Instead, he laid her on the bed, then found his wand in his robe pocket on the floor, a quick Diffindo and he'd severed the charm holding it on. She laughed as she threw it aside and tried to pull him down toward her on the bed, but he paused to take her in. She was so beautiful with her hair scattered behind her and her breasts were just as magnificent as he'd imagined.

He threw himself down on her, catching himself, careful to not crush her. Her skin was so soft under his broom calloused hands. He couldn't help running his hands over her sides, her nipples, her stomach, watching her closely like a devoted acolyte dedicated to the study of her desire. She too suffered from the same thirst for knowledge and her fingers skimmed across his back and chest, and then lower. Perhaps in another life they both could have been in Ravenclaw.

Her hand grazed the top of his thigh and slowly brushed his skin as she moved her hand inward. As she grasped his length, he didn't know how long he could last. It had been so long and never anything like this. He was already painfully aware of the molten desire that had already dripped onto her thigh. He eased her hand off him, afraid he would come right then if she didn't stop. He realized he didn't know how or when he had lost his pants. Had she

vanished them? Clever witch. His clever witch. She was his. He would do anything for her, anything to ensure her happiness, to keep her with him. Mine. My Hermione. My. Always.

He reverently stroked her, continuing his explorations, his fingers and tongue coaxing gasps and shudders from her, building to climax after climax. Finally giving into her demands, he slipped himself inside of her, kissing her deeply all the while.

This was not the post-gala encounter he had originally anticipated, but instead he found himself desperately and intensely making love to her. His Hermione. He felt as though they both were trying to entwine their very being through their insufficient physical forms. There was an emotional intensity to their connection he could barely handle. When they came together, their magic intertwined and it felt like a promise. Draco felt at peace and whole and seen for the first time in years, maybe ever. He fell asleep holding her tightly in his arms, surrounded in a cocoon of their shared magic.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading and thank you for all the wonderful comments! I'm absolutely laugh out-loud giggling, jumping up and down, delighted by how much you're enjoying this fic!

Please check out our website healthyishobsession.com to see the invitation to the Magical International Cooperation Ball by Gossamer26, other in-universe fan creations, playlist, quizzes, and more!

Thank you @PartyElephants for the chapter title image of a Golden Snitch!

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 16: The Samodiva Hotel/Vratsa Vultures Stadium/The Cornish Comet. February 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

“Too bright.”

“What time is it?”

“Last night was amazing.”

“You’re amazing.”

“I think I’m dead.”

“You killed me.”

“Where’s my wand?”

“Where are we?”

“That Bulgaria Hotel.”

“Right.”

Hermione slowly woke up, in a much too bright hotel room, under a white duvet nestled warm in Draco’s arms, his leg thrown over her for good measure. Did he think she was going to try to escape? Or be taken away? More like he was trying to keep her. Even asleep, he really was a possessive dragon. As though there was anywhere else she’d rather be than trapped between his powerful thighs.

Suddenly, she felt Draco jolt awake, his arms tightening around her.

“Fuck, I’m sorry, I never cast a contraception charm last night. My, I’m sor-”

But her laughter interrupted his apology. “I’m a Healer, Draco. I’m on the pill. Birth control? Er, it’s like a long-term Muggle contraceptive charm.”

“That’s a thing?”

“Yes, that’s a thing, but you’d know all about that because of your O in Muggle Studies.”

He growled in response and nuzzled his face farther into her, his light stubble making her giggle again. Then she felt him tense, just a bit, like he was suddenly worried.

“I’d guess Muggle contraceptive control would make sense. You’re so beautiful, you wouldn’t want any accidents with all the wizards you bring home.”

Subtle. A possessive and insecure dragon. She just laughed. What did she expect from Draco Malfoy?

“No, just Ron and a while ago now.”

“That’s impossible, you’ve - you’re perfect, Golden Girl,” he said, giving her a squeeze.

“Well, not everyone agrees.”

“Their loss.”

“Ultimately, Ron and I were better as friends than in a relationship.”

“Tosser.”

“Oh, don’t you know? Theo didn’t tell you?” Hermione twisted in Draco’s arms to look at him. His hair was a complete wreck and she grinned thinking how she’d done that to him. She kissed him good morning and smiled as he kissed her again before she cuddled back up onto his shoulder this time draping her arm across his chest. “The baby isn’t Ron’s. Baby Seamus is Seamus Finnigan’s son!”

“Wait, what?” Draco exclaimed incredulously. Hermione was surprised Theo hadn’t already explained, but was only too happy to fill him in on the absurd comedy-of-errors.

Draco chuckled. “After Mother said she was going to check on you and Theo, she never mentioned it again.”

“I’m sure I looked a fright,” said Hermione. “There’s no telling what she thinks of me now.”

Draco asked, “You? You’re the Golden Girl. What would your parents think about me? I remember seeing them in Diagon Alley and the platform a few times, but we’ve never been introduced. You should bring them to a match.”

“Oh, well,” said Hermione, feeling the previous smile die on her lips, not sure what to say. She hated to bring down their conversation, but after last night she wanted to tell him the truth. She didn’t want there to be any secrets between them. She laid her cheek back down on his shoulder, unable to look at him right now. “Well, um, they’re gone, actually. A casualty of the war really. I um... well, the truth is, when things got bad, I had to obliviate them to protect them. They live in Australia now and they don’t recall anything about magic or ever having a daughter. It was the only way I could think to keep them safe. It was the right thing to do... I think. Usually. Most of the time.”

“I’m so sorry, Hermione,” he said, gathering her up tighter in his arms again and kissing her. “That was really brave. And clever. I never would have thought of that. You saved them, you know. I’m sure they were at the top of the Death Eaters’ list and unable to protect themselves.” She swallowed and took a deep steadying breath. She knew he was right. That she had been right in her decision, but it was still hard if she thought about it for too long.

“It’s alright, it’s fine really, I rely on my found family now and you already know all my friends. So I suppose we already know each other's families. But your parents would never approve of you being with someone like me, a Muggle-born.” She found his hand under the blankets and ran her fingers around his rings. No matter what type of connection they had forged between them last night, the mantle of responsibility was heavy upon him as the head of two ancient magical houses. Regardless of what he wanted, she knew that he could never

truly be hers. Prejudice in the Wizarding World ran deep and it would take more than a war to undo generations, centuries really, of bias.

“I don’t communicate with my father and my mother is a mystery to me, but I can handle my family,” said Draco, flipping his hand to interlock their fingers. “All of Wizarding society would disapprove from every direction. The pureblood supremacists would despise you for being Muggle-born, but what about the other side? They'd condemn you for associating with me, a former Death Eater, someone who could only damage the Brightest Witch of Her Age's hard-won reputation and standing.”

“Society’s erroneous assumptions mean nothing to me,” she declared, but even as she said it she knew what people thought of him. The pain he represented. The youngest and now the only free Death Eater, released from Azkaban only months ago and the most visible person to blame for all the grievances of the war. She hated to admit it, but it would be difficult for them to be together. It might even be dangerous. Fortunately, Hermione Granger was nothing if not stubborn and determined to get things her way.

“If people knew we were together,” he said with quiet intensity, “they could try to hurt you. I couldn’t handle it if I caused you any more suffering.” Frustrated, he reached for her arm and gently caressed the letters on her forearm. Then he moved away a few inches to give himself some space as he took a deep breath and ran his hands through his already dishevelled hair.

“Nothing like that is going to happen, Draco. I’m a war veteran, member of the Order of the Phoenix, founder of Dumbledore’s Army, I can handle myself. ”

“Your resume didn’t save you from being tortured once already in front of me. You’re lucky to be alive, much less essentially unharmed. Do you want to end up like Cho? Or Neville’s parents? Or Seamus? These people are sick, twisted. I was in their inner circle. They lived in my house. They don’t mess around and you know that hatred is still out there. The Dark Lord might be gone, but that prejudice is still alive and well, even inside The Nest.”

She didn’t have a good response to that. Marcus Flint might be gone, but there were plenty of wizards around that shared his views. She moved across the cool sheets to settle back into the circle of his arms. She didn’t know how they could move on from here, but knew this, right here, was all that really mattered to her. The tension dissipated as they silently held each other; breathing each other in and out.

Draco broke the silence, “Maybe we just need time to figure this all out. Would it be alright if we kept this to ourselves, just until we get things sorted?”

“Fine, yes, I see the logic in it,” said Hermione, resigned. “But I hate it. I’m not ashamed or embarrassed, I want people to know. I want to be with you. Who cares what the Prophet says?”

“I just want to keep you safe,” said Draco cupping her cheek with his hand. “I’ve never felt like this before.” Hermione felt his magic seeking hers out, so full of feelings of such devotion and adoration it took her breath away.

“Nothing even close to this has ever happened to me before.” She put her hands on his chest and looked deeply into his eyes.

“You know,” said Draco, the trace of a smirk on his lips, “I have a pretty hard time casting a Patronus, I have very few untarnished happy memories...” He left the rest unsaid as he moved closer to her making his intention known, his hands starting to drift lower.

In response, she pressed herself against him under the duvet, but scoffed. “Seriously? That’s a terrible line. Does that usually work?”

“I’ve never used it before. Did it?”

Hermione rolled her eyes, but kissed his smirking mouth as she rubbed against him in answer. He whimpered softly. She was certain he’d prefer she think of it as a deeply masculine groan or even a growl, but it was the most adorable little whimper, full of unspoken tender yearning. He moved to nibble her neck and ear.

“I bet you wish your Patronus was a dragon because of your name,” she taunted.

“My name has nothing to do with it. Everyone wishes their Patronus was a dragon, now be quiet,” he said, moving to kiss her down her neck as his hands found her breasts.

“I bet yours is actually a little kitten, -”

“Witch,” he said warningly.

“or a snake, or an albino peacock, -”

“That’s not... every Patronus is the same colour, My. Alright, you asked for this,” he said, flipping her onto her back and moving to her breasts. He popped one nipple into his mouth while his hand began to tease the other. She felt desire flash through her body, threatening to overtake her.

“or I know a - a ferret,” She could barely speak from giggling and the sensations he was stirring in her.

“Ok, that’s it,” he laughed and moved back to capture her mouth with his. His one hand stayed on her breast, but the other slowly travelled down her body until reaching between her legs. She knew she was already dripping with anticipation. She had woken up awaiting his touch and moaned when he finally reached his destination. They couldn’t have been awake that long, but that was apparently already too long for Hermione to wait. He trailed his fingers through her slick folds circling and caressing just right as she began to stroke him. She rubbed her thumb over his seeping tip and knew she wasn’t the only one that woke up filled with anticipation.

She broke her mouth from his for a moment, “I’ve got it! A hippogriff. You’re both proud, violent, and incredibly vain.” This time he really did growl as he kissed her and slipped his fingers inside of her. Her mind went blank for a moment and she couldn’t remember what she’d been sassing him about.

“Oh God, Draco,” she moaned. “Yes.”

“Hermione,” he whispered, holding her tight.

She felt herself letting go. There was nothing but Draco and whatever it was he was doing to her. It was incredible. She felt her magic pulsing to reach toward his and there he was wrapping her in his body and his magic. She felt herself falling under a wave of sensation and as she reached her climax she thought she might float away, but there he was with her. Draco. Hers. She needed him.

And then he was kissing a trail lower and lower still. Realizing his plan, she tried to demur.

“Wait, Draco, you don’t need to.”

“I want to,” he said, dropping his head lower, but stopped, “if it’s okay?”

“It’s okay.”

“I’ll make it better than okay.” Another smirk.

She laughed and said, “Well, then yes please.”

His mouth was on her in an instant and she felt her brain short-circuit. She’d never, well, Ron had never really. Oh God. What was he doing? He moved her leg over his shoulder and was able to get a better angle, deeper. She gasped as he did something with his tongue and then as he began to suck, he added his fingers and - *"Jesus fucking Christ"*.

Her fingers carded through his hair, at least that’s what she thought she was doing. She really didn’t know what was happening. She had lost all rational thought and was ablaze with sensation: want, desire, longing. It was incomprehensible how she could yearn for a wizard that was literally right here with her, inside of her, but simultaneously so far away. There was almost no warning when she came again, right there with his face buried between her thighs. She threw back her head and laughed as she came, a nearly delirious laugh, at the sheer joy of being with him, here, like this together; the silver and gold tendrils of their magic entwined. Her heart was so full.

Draco seemed to think she was done and tried to settle beside her, but before he had time to react, she pushed him over on his back and sank down on him. He was the perfect fit and the last flutters of her orgasm were still ongoing as she began to ride him, chasing her own pleasure again, knowing he couldn’t be far behind. She knew she was going to come again quickly, but he was in a frenzy as well, their need all consuming. She climaxed again only moments later and he followed her over the edge.

Hermione collapsed on his chest, burying her face into his neck, and his arms came up to hold her. She laid there, with him still inside her, for a moment? An hour? Until she felt herself slowly coming back.

“Draco?”

He grunted sleepily in response.

“What’s your Patronus actually?” she said sleepily.

“You’ll laugh.”

“Never. Well, maybe if it actually is a ferret,” she would laugh, but didn’t have the energy.

He chuckled drowsily, “Good enough. I’ve only managed a corporeal Patronus a couple of times, years ago, and I don’t know why, but it was...well, it was this cute little otter.”

Impossible.

Suddenly Hermione was wide awake. She sat up and looked at Draco quizzically, “Are you having me on?”

“What? No. My?”

Hermione reached across him to grab her wand off the nightstand. After a quick Scourgify, she sat upright, still on him, and his hands casually on her hips. She didn’t really even need to think of anything particularly happy, because she was already giddy. She cast the charm, *Expecto Patronum*, reflexively. From the tip of her wand erupted silver wisps that formed into the unmistakable shape of her otter Patronus. She had no idea what it meant, but she felt a sudden surge of joy as Draco ardently pulled her closer.

Hermione loved magic.

Draco

Although Draco was ostensibly watching training from the Vulture’s sidelines there was only one thing on his mind... and it was not Quidditch. He would have completely forgotten the afternoon Vultures/Falcons training session if Hermione hadn’t set a reminder on her wand. As it was, they were both suspiciously the exact same amount late even though they tried to appear to come from different directions. Had he gone around the bend trying to keep this a secret? He resigned to do better in the future. Right now for example, he would normally stand beside her, but would that be too obvious? Or was it more obvious if he suddenly changed routine to stand with Pansy or Blaise? Fuck.

How had Snape been a double agent all those years? He was exhausted already. That might have less to do with the 10 minutes of secrecy and more to do with the fact that he’d been in bed for the last 15 hours, but only got a few hours of sleep. Insatiable. If it was mid-afternoon now, this would wrap-up, then there was dinner on the Comet, and then perhaps he could sneak into her compartment. It was a long trip back to Falmouth... 36 hours. That swot was rubbing off on him. He’d never been so keyed up by maths before.

The Falcons, led by Wood, worked with the Vultures, led by Krum, on a series of drills. The Vultures club owner stopped by to chat with Draco and they spent a bit of time discussing the club structure for Quidditch in Bulgaria. Fascinating stuff. He wondered if it might work in the UK or not.

He might have been going through the motions, but his attention from Hermione never faltered. She occasionally ran out onto the pitch to fix jammed fingers and the like, nothing major usually happened at training. The biggest injury of the afternoon was when Krum took a Bludger to the knee and came down, landing hard. Hermione darted out and of course Draco couldn't help but watch her, helplessly drawn to her like a niffler to a gold pocket watch. Merlin, he was pathetic.

He watched from afar as she knelt down next to him and ran a diagnostic on the git's leg. She didn't seem too worried about the injury. He heard her laugh as Krum said something and she swatted his shoulder. Draco felt a stab of jealousy. *She's mine and I'm hers*, he thought bitterly, a bolt of possessive rage flashed through him. But he took a deep breath and tried to steady himself. *She's mine and I'm hers*. He knew it was true. He knew it deep inside of himself to be true.

If they were going to be together in secret, something he had asked for, he'd need to get a grip. Krum was just her old friend. Hermione was friends with multiple wizards. It didn't mean anything. If anything it meant that she'd chosen him above all the rest.

As she finished with Krum and trotted back toward him on the sideline, Draco flashed her a knowing grin. Her gait visibly faltered and she lit up with a full smile. This secrecy thing wouldn't last long at this rate. He resolved to do better.

She resumed her position on the sideline and they watched the training wrap-up. The team looked good, still riding high on their win yesterday. Cho, in particular, was in top form. That confidence boost from catching the Snitch before Krum and then benefiting from practicing with him would hopefully transfer back to continued success in the UK. Draco had to hand it to the Department of Magical Games and Sports, this event actually had been quite lovely. Not that he'd ever admit it.

The teams said their goodbyes. Krum gave Hermione a frankly unnecessarily long hug then handed her a letter. Draco rolled his eyes. He supposed they really were pen pals. Seeing Krum walk his way, Draco braced for another absurd hug.

"I may be putting my head in bag, but..." said Krum, pulling back, but still holding Draco's shoulders. He looked at Draco for an uncomfortable amount of time before continuing, "...but take good care of Herminee, da?"

Dumbstruck. Draco just stood there. Krum winked at Draco, slapped him heartily on the back (causing his knees to buckle slightly) and walked back toward the Vultures' clubhouse.

"Right," said Draco, raising his voice. "Let's go. The Comet will leave with or without you, as Blaise and Greg found out in Chudley, and the Knight Bus will not pick you up from Bulgaria." For once, Draco happily climbed aboard his barmy bus, delighted to put Krum behind him.

Dinner was a boisterous affair in the Cornish Comet's lounge. Unfortunately, the opulent train cars were a thing of the past. Now the lounge was covered in fake grass and white

painted picnic tables covered in red and white checkered tablecloths. Given the Comet's lunacy, Draco couldn't believe how many people chose to come home on the bus instead of taking a portkey. He saw Theo, Potter, even Pansy. He wondered what threat or coercion made her ride along, but decided to never tickle a sleeping dragon. One table at the end of the room had an array of Bulgarian takeaway options set-up as a buffet.

Filling a plate, he found an open spot near Theo and Wood, who were sitting with Hermione, Potter, and the Weaslette. The open seat was across from Hermione. Convenient. Hermione's "cat" jumped onto his lap and he decided to not make any sudden moves lest he upset the creature. Not as convenient. Hermione was killing him by running her foot along the side of his leg. Sitting here might have been a mistake. The "cat" ran off and he adjusted his robes. Definitely inconvenient, that.

Still it seemed like a good spot. They were each buffered by a good mix of both of their friends, neutral territory. Perhaps if he could win over the Weaslette and Potter, gain their approval, it would be a first step for gaining public favour.

"I just think it would be a good idea if we all went," said Wood, continuing a conversation Draco was just now paying attention to.

"I'm not going to stand around in some marsh with you," said the Weaslette.

"Queerditch Marsh is the birthplace of Quidditch," said Wood.

"Is there a museum or something there?" asked Potter.

"No," admitted Wood. "The Museum of Quidditch is in London. Queerditch Marsh is just the marsh, but you get to imagine what Gertie Kettle must have seen as the first Quidditch spectator; watching the first players throw their cabbage-sized leather ball with two enchanted rocks as Bludgers."

"I'm always up for anything queer!" said Theo.

Draco caught Hermione's eye and tried not to laugh. Everyone else refused to join the field trip, so Wood and Theo planned their excursion alone.

"Oi, Ferret," said the Weaslette. "Why are you always flying alone at night?"

He tried not to balk as all eyes turned toward him for the first time since he'd joined the table.

"I... um, well," he stammered uncertainly, his immediate reaction was to lash out for asking a personal question, then realized she wouldn't know it was personal and decided to give a nearly honest answer so they might decide to like him. "I guess because I've loved flying my whole life and I couldn't during the war or in Azkaban, so I dunno, making up for lost time I suppose."

She looked a bit unsettled by his response, no doubt she'd been expecting him to give a dismissive answer.

“You’re looking better out there,” she said thoughtfully, but then got a wicked grin obviously about to move back into the realm of teasing that she preferred. “Nearly as good as at Hogwarts, but that isn’t saying much.” Turning to Potter she continued, “You should have seen him practicing against Cho. It was kind of him to lose so spectacularly to make her look good.”

Potter flashed her a grin, but then addressed him, picking up where he’d left off. “I didn’t get to play nearly as much as I hoped at Hogwarts; they were always cancelling the season or banning me for something.”

“Something like attempted murder?” deadpanned Draco.

“Yeah, like that, but in my defense, you really were a secret Death Eater.”

“I’ve still got the scars.”

“So I’ve seen - and so did the whole Wizarding World after the Prophet photo. I’d say I’m sorry, and I am, but I think Pansy has spun it all in your favour. Wasn’t there an entire Witch Weekly article just about that scar?”

“Oh yes, I read that article,” said the Weaslette, “They speculated it was from a Death Eater initiation rite or flying injury. An eye witness said it was from a hippogriff attack while you were at Hogwarts. But no one suspected it was the result of two crying boys having a wand fight in a bathroom.”

They all laughed and Hermione just shook her head. Draco hadn’t read the article and couldn’t tell if Ginny was taking the piss or not. She was pretty funny actually. He found that he liked her more and more - Potter too. He’d been a decent bloke since his release. Was he becoming friends with Hermione’s friends? He sort of hoped he was, even if it felt a bit... unnatural.

That night Draco’s compartment decided to have a large four poster bed like they had at Hogwarts. That bed... he could just imagine her here with him. He was absolutely besotted about that witch. He had to see her tonight, but how? Her compartment was at the far end of the hall from his. Should he wait until later when more people would be asleep? Or go now but pretend he was looking for Theo or Blaise if caught?

He considered giving her space. Maybe he was being too much; too needy. They hadn’t discussed what she preferred in terms of togetherness, and he wanted to respect her wishes. He’d give her whatever she wanted, but his own desires were simple and absolute: to never wake up without her again.

There was a quick knock at the door and a moment later Hermione, cloaked by a disillusionment charm, slipped in without waiting. She removed the charm and launched herself into his waiting arms. Thank Salazar.

“I couldn’t wait to see you again,” she said.

“I missed you too.”

“Plus my compartment is just a damp first aid tent with a folding cot like at a Girl Guide camp.” Draco wasn’t sure what most of those words meant, but he understood enough about her not wanting to sleep in a damp tent. “I just fed Crookshanks and I thought I’d take my chances that you got something better. I only passed Neville in the hall and he didn’t see me. I think he was preoccupied searching for his compartment.”

“Longbottom?” It was just like Longbottom to forget the location of his own room; he probably shouldn’t have stolen his Remembrall first year. “Why is he on the Comet?” He didn’t think Blaise had hired Longbottom for anything; unless he had? It was impossible to keep track.

“Who knows. We seemed to have picked-up a bunch of hitchhikers for the trip home.” He wondered how that worked and if he was paying for all these extra random friends that were joining them. He’d have to ask Blaise about it, but another time. Now he had more important things to think about.

“Well Golden Girl, you can stay with me anytime and for as long as you like.” He tried to make it sound suave and meaningful, but she just sort of ran with it in terms of logistics. That brain of hers was constantly whirling.

“Is that a promise? Because my room is always something medical themed, with decidedly mixed results. Is this what you always get as the owner?”

“No, it’s usually something much more annoying than this. On the way here it was arranged like a mattress store, with a dozen beds, but no linens.”

She giggled. His heart swelled.

“It’s not funny, I had to transfigure one of my jumpers into a blanket and I don’t think it’ll ever be quite right again.” He wanted to hear her laugh so kept going. “And for a sheet, I transfigured a pair of my silk pants, you know I need to sleep on silk, Granger, I’m very sensitive.”

“Stop, you didn’t,” she said, now gasping for breath.

“I did,” he said, grinning at her smiles.

She calmed a bit then looked around the current compartment. “This room looks nearly perfect, but I have some ideas for improvement.” She waved her wand and transfigured the hangings on the bed to green and silver. He did not see that coming and tugged at his collar which seemed to be getting a bit tight.

“Not yet, Mr. Malfoy,” and with that she transfigured their outfits into their Hogwarts uniforms. “Too bad we never got the chance at school.”

The sight of that line of skin below her skirt but above her stockings already had him hard... well, harder.

This witch was going to kill him.

He felt his knees give way at the sight of her and was thankful the edge of the bed was so near. Had her uniform always been this tight and short? She stood between his knees and pulled at his tie to bring his head up to kiss him. As her hands came to cup his jaw, her tongue broke the seal of his lips. He groaned and ran his hands up her thighs to that exposed line above her stockings.

All of 6th year, despite the darkness, the loneliness, the guilt, he'd dreamt of touching her, just there. Watching her had been his major motivation to attend class. One thing to look forward to in his bleak existence.

Now with that silky centimeter of skin at his fingertips, he felt his control slipping. Oh Salazar. He was never going to last. She shrugged out of her red and gold trimmed robes and began to slowly unbutton her white Oxford, but kept on her red and yellow tie, dangling between the swell of her breasts in her Gryffindor red bra. He tried to touch her, but she brushed him away and so put his hand back on her thigh, tracing patterns in her smooth skin just below her skirt. She left him in his silver and green tie, but unbuttoned his shirt and divested him of his trousers and pants. All the while, she danced away from his advances. What was his witch up to?

She dropped to her knees and began kissing his Oh Godric, he had a pretty good idea of her intentions.

“Hermione, please I can't... I won't last,”

She shushed him softly, “You can do whatever you need to do. We won't be back in Falmouth for another day and a half. We have time.”

She slid her mouth down his considerable length as far as she could and used her hand to cover the rest. Oh Helga, he couldn't handle it. It was too much, she was too much, she was perfect. She used her other hand to pull him closer and he felt himself spasm. The bottom of his stomach tightened and fought with his baser instincts to keep from thrusting into her mouth. He was afraid of hurting her, but it felt so incredible. He wanted the feeling to last forever, but knew he couldn't stay here in this liminal space between arousal and climax.

He felt himself losing control. Oh Rowena, he had to stop... they hadn't discussed... he couldn't...

“My, wait.” He tried to pull himself away from her the moment before his release, but she seemed to intuit his intentions and held on to his hips.

By the fucking Founders, at this point he couldn't stop, he could barely think, and felt himself spill down her throat as wave after wave of pleasure coursed through his body. He wasn't sure what she did, but he felt yet another wave follow the first onslaught. He felt like some type of helpless bystander as he lost himself in the sensation as she continued to coax him into elongating his orgasm.

He was sitting on the floor, his back against the bed with Hermione cuddled in his lap. He wasn't sure how they had gotten on the floor and how long they'd been sitting like that.

"Hey," she said, as he began to stir.

"Hey," he said, twisting his fingers in her curls and nuzzling her cheek. "That was amazing."

She hummed in agreement and burrowed deeper into his arms.

"You know what, Granger?"

"What?" she said, looking at him with her beautiful golden brown eyes.

"Turnabout is fair play." With a smirk, he scooped her up and tossed on the bed as she shrieked. "How many more hours until we get to Falmouth?"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, commenting, and sharing this fic - I've even seen it recommended a few times online! Thank you!!!

This chapter features another sensational image by Gossamer26. Goss, you are amazing and I love working on this project with you! There's more of their work posted on healthyishobsession.com. Join us to see more "in universe" content, explore our Spotify playlist, quizzes, and more.

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 17: Falcons' Stadium/Hermione's Falmouth Flat/Malfoy Manor. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



(You can read the full visual edition of this Seeker Weekly article at healthyishobsession.com.)

Seeker Weekly: Falmouth Falcons' Sensational Turnaround

By: Miles Bletchley

The Falmouth Falcons' season continues to astound as the team continues its weeks-long winning streak. A truly legendary turnaround, one might say, considering their unorthodox approach, but they've certainly been on fire the past month with wins against the Cannons, Magpies, Tornados, Kestrels, Catapults, and Wanderers, marking a 6 league-game winning streak. The Chasers squad, Weasley and Pucey, especially, have been looking great, moving as a fierce unit to bring the Quaffle down the pitch. Beaters, Bulstrode and Goyle, have continued their partnership from America and have a 6th sense for anticipating each others' moves and getting the Bludgers where they need to be. But it is Wood and Chang that are getting the most attention. Opponents can't score past Oliver Wood's tight goalkeeping and Cho Chang has shocked everyone with her ability to snatch the Snitch from her opponents despite her ongoing health challenges.

Oliver Wood has played a tight game since his Hogwarts days. His teammates often say he eats, lives, and breathes the sport, coming in before anyone else and staying up late planning the next day's training. He captained the Gryffindor team for four years at Hogwarts before committing to Puddlemere United, although he never played for them in a match. He spent several years languishing on their training squad until Blaise Zabini (Falcons' Head of Quidditch) and his associate, trainee Healer Theodore Nott (his association with the team remains unclear), poached Wood by offering him the chance to captain the Falcons. Critics will say he's too young and inexperienced to fill the role, particularly given the team's rather unconventional new training regimen. Nevertheless, whatever he is doing seems to be working, and whispers suggest Oliver Wood is a strong contender for the National Team this year for the Quidditch World Cup. The Department of Magical Games and Sports won't make their official selections until the end of the British and Irish Quidditch League Cup season next month.

Seeker Cho Chang has been thriving since rejoining professional Quidditch after taking time off from a checkered 2000 season. The Quidditch community was shocked when team owner, Lord Draco Malfoy, personally hired her to replace headline maker Cormac McLaggen. Chang has been very open about her health history and her road to recovery since the war. She credits her recent success with the 'genius breakthrough' treatments she has received from the team's trainee Healer Hermione Granger, the famous Muggle-born. We suppose such alternative methods might be aiding in Cho's recovery, but we at Seeker Weekly strongly suspect that her triumphant win against the legendary Seeker Viktor Krum was the real catalyst for her renewed confidence and success. Beating Krum would give anyone confidence to succeed in their comeback season.

Who knew we'd be heading into April and the last few matches of the regular season with the Falcons this close to leading the pack? No one saw this dark unicorn team coming and now their story is sweeping the nation. Falcons Fever is catching! If this team gets another win in the last two home matches of the season it would guarantee their spot in the playoffs. Can they do it? Only time will tell.

Hermione

Success! Hermione had finally done it. She was once again brewing a potion variant for Cho, and was nearly positive this would be the final version. They had run so many tests and potion variants over the past few weeks, but this was it. "Curing" Cruciatus Curse exposure had been a long-time goal of the medical community; the real breakthrough hadn't been the potion she'd made but the approach she'd taken. Previously, healers had attempted to counteract the symptoms, but the core cause persisted. Perhaps it was Hermione's outside perspective, the influence of her dentist parents, her own brilliance, or just her inexperience in the field, but once she addressed the problem in a new way the answer was clear to her. Exposure to Dark Magic left behind a residue on the magical core, building up with repeated exposure and causing a variety of symptoms. It seemed so simple and yet most breakthroughs were in hindsight. The potion was tricky to brew, but straightforward to develop. Surprisingly it did not target the Cruciatus Curse per se, it was mostly just a cleanser and she supposed it could work on any Dark Curse that left an imprint on the victim's magical core.

This work was so engaging and, while only tangentially part of her work as the team healer, it was her favourite part. If she had to do another Episkey (or her least favourite Accio teeth), she might just lose it. Luckily there were only two matches left in the regular League Cup season, then possibly the finals, if the Falcons qualified. After that, she would choose her final rotation and start studying for her Healer's Advanced Rigorous Examinations (HAREs). If she scored well enough, she'd finally be able to start in the subfield of her choosing. The Labour Ward was out, same with A&E, Memory Care, and most other subfields she could think of centered on patient care. But wasn't patient care the whole point of being a Healer? She was in trouble. And this rotation hadn't been much help either. Sports medicine was out too. She was having a lot of fun, but her work here didn't fulfill her major life goal to meaningfully improve the magical world.

Maybe she just needed to focus on one thing at a time. After an early morning training session the team had off until tomorrow's match, it was the perfect day where she could settle into her medical center and focus on research as she finalized her brewing.

Draco, of course, had other plans for her day.

"Now how did I guess I'd find you here?"

She smiled when she saw him, but had to focus on her simmering cauldron. The team had just finished and Draco seemed to be lagging behind to sneak in to see her. He was still wearing his Quidditch leathers and his hair was windswept. Windswept hair. Now that's a thought for her safety reforms, perhaps Quidditch players should all wear helmets. Or could they enchant the pitch to be bouncy? Hmmm... She was happy no one had been injured during training today, it had given her so much time this morning to focus.

"Did you catch the Snitch in your scrimmage?" she said without looking up, knowing the answer.

"No, I haven't beaten her to the Snitch in a match since 5th year."

"Well that's good, isn't it? Because she's on the team and you're not. From what I hear you're absolute rubbish on your right side."

Draco chuckled and closed the distance between them. He tucked her frizzing "potion brewing" hair behind her ear and kissed her cheek in greeting.

It was such a sweet and casual gesture, but Hermione's heart raced at the closeness. Godric, he looked amazing in his leathers. Her hands were full, chopping the last of the lionfish spines, but she leaned into his touch and he nuzzled her cheek affectionately. They had shared the most amazing few weeks filled with more road trips with the team, an astounding number of wins, flying lessons, clandestine dinners in the Muggle world, mind-blowing sex, and just pleasant things like reading together until she couldn't handle seeing him in his reading glasses, and then more mind-blowing sex.

She'd never felt like this before. This intimacy, this bond with another person; it was completely new. Harry and Ginny and Neville had always been good friends of hers. She had liked to revise with Viktor in the library. And Ron, well, Ron was more complicated, he always made her laugh, he had loved her, but there was always something just a bit antagonistic in their relationship. They never quite trusted each other, or perhaps were always just at odds over something? Everything? As much as they enjoyed being together, they never felt quite natural together. This thing with Draco, whatever it was, well, it was no contest. Being with him was the most natural relationship she'd ever had.

Hermione was at the critical last step of her potion and needed to focus, but Godric, the things that wizard could do with his tongue... Draco placed a takeaway bag on the table and started to pull out blueberry scones, apple turnovers, and tea from Kowalski and Sons Quality Baked Goods.

“This,” he said gesturing to her frizzy potion brewing hair, “reminds me of double potions with the Gryffindors. I always loved watching your hair get bigger.”

“I knew it!”

“Guilty, on all counts... but rehabilitated.”

Hermione snorted, then focused on the last clockwise stir and began to bottle up her finished potion. “Why do you think Snape made all the Gryffindors and Slytherins share double potions? Was he mental? Did he enjoy the chaos?”

“Masochist?”

“Sadist?”

“In this case, I think it works both ways.” They shared another grin. “Is this another variant of your brilliant magical-residue-abrading Cho-saving potion?”

“Haha, yes, it’s the final brew, I think.” She was a bit giddy with how it had turned out. Cho had taken earlier versions and it still wasn’t completely working. Hopefully this final variant would do the trick. Her hypothesis about the magical residue seemed to be correct and the Cruciatus Curse remnants were slowing debriding with each dose. In Cho’s case, her Quidditch injuries still left her with fragile health, but this should help her achieve long term recovery. She was excited to try it on Draco. He only had an occasional tremor, but she knew he was self-conscious about it. She was nearly positive this would work on him too. “Can I try it on you?”

“If you kill me, will the Wizengamot put you in Azkaban?”

“That would be a nice role reversal wouldn’t it?”

“Witch.”

“What, too soon? You just made the same basic joke!”

She transfigured the brown insulating sleeve of one of the takeaway tea cups into a new cup and filled it with her potion. She held it out to Draco who looked at her with mock skepticism, “I’m trying to help you, don’t be a baby.” Draco drank it then without hesitation. Even though he had joked with her about it, she knew he trusted her implicitly.

“How’s that feel?”

“I’m not sure,” he said while experimentally flexing his hands, “but it comes and goes. I’ll tell you if I notice a difference.”

She finished bottling, then grabbed a blueberry scone. “So why did you really drop by, just to bring over brunch?”

“I decided you need to have an actual flying lesson, flying your own broom. How much have you honestly ridden without me before?”

“Obviously, I’ve flown before. I rode a dragon once, Draco.”

“Actually multiple times,” he said with a smirk. “You seemed to enjoy it.”

“How... but, you weren’t there?... Oh Godric,” she felt her face flush as she understood his implication. “You’re the worst.” She laughed and kissed him, shaking her head in exasperation the whole time. “I’ll have you know,” she continued. “I spent a whole summer playing 2x2 Quidditch with Harry, Ron, and Ginny, but I was dreadful. I haven’t flown much since the war.” She tried not to remember that nightmarish flight through the Room of Requirement when Crabbe had died. “I’ve always been terrible at flying a broom, but I have flown on a hippogriff, and thestrals twice, which were, at the time, invisible - once in a battle and once all the way from Hogwarts to London.”

“I’m sorry, what?! ...and just to be clear, you’re scared *now*?”

“Anyone that tries to teach me wants me to go too fast and too high. Or tries to make me look bad so they feel good that they beat the great Hermione Granger at something.”

“Love, obviously none of that is true in this case. Flying is one of the best parts of having magic. I don’t want you left out because you didn’t have the same opportunities growing up. You know you’re always safe with me. Besides, I’m not a prick... anymore, most of the time, well, hmm... I’m not intentionally a prick towards you.”

She laughed. She knew he was right, he might joke around, but he was exceedingly kind to her now. “Ok, fine,” she acquiesced. “But only if you agree to go skiing with me, I’m quite good at it actually. Once you get the hang of it, I bet you’d love it.”

“Is that the thing where you put long planks on your feet and you throw yourself off a mountain like in ‘*The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle*’?”

“This from the man with an O in Muggle Studies.”

“If it would make you happy, *and gets you on a broom*, I promise you I’ll try whatever recreational Muggle idiocy you want.”

“It’s a date, dragon” she said, shaking his hand with mock sincerity, then pulled him toward her to seal their deal with a kiss.

They finished breakfast quickly and made their way to the pitch where Draco already had two brooms set-up. She recognized his Supercell EF5 and grabbed the other one. Obviously, it was another posh broom from Draco’s collection; she could tell immediately because it smelled citrusy like his favorite Fleetwood’s High-Finish Handle Polish. She mounted easily (noting the excellent cushioning charm) and started a slow loop around the pitch at the height of the middle hoop. This broom was something else. It wasn’t nearly as intimidating as Draco’s custom professional broom and seemed just perfect for her: steady but eager. She knew from skiing that she liked to be in control, and enjoyed picking up speed down the mountain when she felt confident. This broom was the first she’d tried that she felt that same confidence. She wondered where Draco had found it.

Draco stayed near her, but was obviously enjoying showing-off by swooping around her or hanging upside-down near her. Occasionally he'd pop closer and suggest she shift her posture or relax her "grindy low" grip. Hermione had never felt so at ease on a broom. Plus, she knew if she were to fall, he'd be close enough and paying attention to catch her with any number of spells. She tried going a bit faster and gained altitude as well. It was actually quite exhilarating and she hovered just above the stadium. From this high up, she could really see that it did resemble a giant nest. She'd never been this high up before alone on a broom. She took a deep breath, more firmly squeezed the broom and chanced a look out of The Nest, toward Falmouth Harbor and was rewarded with a view of tiny boats stretched out towards the horizon.

"Lookin' good, Granger," said Draco, coming to a stop near her.

"I have this great teacher."

"Anyone I know?" he winked. "On the way back down, try to make a series of shallow dives, so you'll go down for a bit, then come back up, like a snake or zigzag through the air."

"You mean like a rollercoaster?"

"Sure, of course, yeah, like that."

"You don't know what a rollercoaster is, do you?"

"Alright. That's it," he said, flying right toward her.

She shrieked and dove with a laugh to escape, just like he'd told her to as he pretended to chase her. It was fun, like a rollercoaster or skiing, but she was in complete control now that she understood the basics better. She knew she could shift her weight and stance back and forth to control herself. Now that she felt more confident, Hermione hated to admit, this really was an amazing perk of being magical.

She didn't know how long they'd been diving and chasing on the pitch, but after a while her arms were starting to feel a little shaky and her legs were getting tired. They came in to land near her medical center doors. She came in a bit hard on her tired legs and stumbled.

"That was great," said Draco. "You were amazing."

"This broom is amazing," she said, holding it out to him a bit reluctantly.

"Oh it's actually yours; I got it for you."

"You didn't need to do that."

"Obviously I did or you'd still be trying to share mine."

She rolled her eyes knowing he loved when she rode with him. He loved anytime they were close enough to touch - without anyone catching them. "Thank you, but wait, what type is it? It was really expensive, wasn't it?" Obviously it must be a really nice broom since nearly everything he bought was prohibitively expensive for normal people.

“Well, um, it’s a custom Corona Series Nimbus 360.”

“Custom? You had a broom made for me?”

He shrugged. “I ordered it as soon as I realized you’d only ever ridden those appalling school brooms or Cleansweeps.”

“That was weeks ago, we weren’t even together then!”

“It seemed like the right thing to do.”

“Thank you, dragon. I’d kiss you but I know you wouldn’t like anyone to see.”

Draco ran a hand through his white blond hair and sighed dramatically.

“What do you have on today?” she asked.

“Mother has some type of plan for me. Tonight we were invited to a fundraiser organized by one of her old schoolmates or something...,” he looked as though he might add more, but decided not to. “She’s always salvaging the Malfoy name one donation at a time. I don’t want to go though, I just want to be with you.”

“What about right now?”

“I need to shower, then I’m all yours.”

“Why am I only yours *after* your shower?” she said suggestively, imagining untying his Quidditch training leathers and the feel of his muscular thighs honed from hours astride a broom.

“You really are the Brightest Witch of Your Age.”

They made their way towards the locker room. The team’s early morning training was long over and they had the place to themselves. Still though, she’d hate to get caught, but that was no trouble, she had gotten quite good at casting wards during the war. Draco clearly hadn’t thought that far ahead though and snaked an arm around her the moment the door closed.

“Draco, wait. How good are you at casting privacy and silencing charms?”

“Excellent. Remember the Isle of Skye? I slept through the whole thing, Potter nearly bombard-ed my door to wake me up.”

“Okay Mr. 10 NEWTs, let’s see then and I’ll add my own wards too.”

Alone, in a locker room Hermione was sure even Voldemort couldn’t breach, she looked over the team’s space. She hadn’t explored this part of The Nest much since the players usually just came to her medical center if they needed something. It was immediately clear this was a space the previous owners had lavished with galleons, and she wondered if the beautiful space was meant to bribe the players into looking the other way. There was an entire spa back here with individual showers and changing rooms, wet and dry saunas, and soaking pools of

every type from large hot tubs to polar plunge tanks. She should incorporate some of these into her training procedures, yet a more salacious idea floated into her head.

Draco took her hand to hurry her along from her self guided tour.

“Where are you taking me?”

“I thought it was obvious, I’m going to fuck you in the shower.”

“No.”

“No?” he said, stopping confused. “I thought -”

“No, I mean, yes, but...”

“But?”

She draped her arms around his shoulders and got on her tiptoes to whisper in his ear. She could feel he was already hard against her. “I have a better idea. Do you know what a spa cycle is?”

“No?”

“I learned all about it when I was researching Muggle physical therapy and alternative medicine.”

“And you think right now is the opportune time for a lecture?” he said, pressing against her.

“Shhh... you’ll like this. You spend the first 15 minutes in the ‘hot phase’ to stimulate blood flow, eliminate toxins, and relieve muscle pain. You can do it in the hot tub or sauna or shower. Then you spend 15 seconds in the cold phase, plunging into ice cold water to release adrenaline and improve circulation. Then you rest for 15 minutes and start again. It’s Nordic. Muggles love it.”

“When does the shagging happen?”

“While not a traditional part of the spa cycle as discussed in the literature-”

“Swot.”

“- with those wards we set?” She pretended to think, “All day.”

Draco

He fucked her in the shower.

It only made sense to start there, they were so sweaty from flying, but quickly Draco lost track of how many times and ways either of them had come. It was all a hedonistic blur. After

the first time in the shower, they endured a 15 second ice cold shower followed by a rest in a “giant bean bag” chair Hermione conjured. At the 15 minute mark they moved to the hot tub where they used a lubrication spell quite effectively under the water, then they jumped in a pile of snow he conjured. After that, the lounge chairs they found had an interesting angle that led to a new, and rather adventurous, position. Then the sauna (Salazar that had gotten hot), then the polar plunge pool, then he held Hermione in a transfigured hammock while they lazily dozed. He woke up first and slowly coaxed another orgasm out of her with his hands.

Satiated and exhausted, they dropped the wards, stumbled through the Floo, and tumbled into Hermione’s bed. He was absolutely knackered and woke up hours later wrapped around her and starving. The sun was casting long shadows outside the window. It must be getting late. Shite. He needed to get going, but how could he leave her? Moving even a muscle felt like a violation, a fracturing of their perfect peace. He let his eyes drop closed and breathed her in, curly hair tickling his nose. She smelled comforting, familiar, but some of the normal amber tones had been washed away by their long spa session. He smiled at the thought. All he wanted was to keep her here, just like this in his arms forever, but he knew it was impossible. He kissed Hermione’s bare shoulder and she snuggled deeper into him.

“I have to go,” he groaned.

“Stay,” she mumbled sleepily.

“I don’t want to go,” he said mournfully. “But I have that bloody fundraiser.”

“Can’t the Malfoy name rehabilitate itself?” she said, twisting to face him. The long golden strips of light slanted through the curtains, glowing across her skin. Her big eyes were not only looking at him, but silently asking him for something else entirely.

“Wait, My, I’ve been putting my mother off for weeks. I have to go to this Ogden thing.”

“Ogden?” she asked, sitting up pushing away from him. “Draco, what Ogden thing?”

“The fundraiser, it’s for Ogden, I dunno, for his firewhiskey or politics or something...”
Hermione wouldn’t care about the details.

“Draco, Tiberious Ogden is a well known blood supremacist. You don’t want anything to do with him.”

Draco felt a chill at her words and sat up as well, but tried to shrug it off. “Maybe I got the details wrong. My mother knows what she’s doing, trust me.”

“Well, my mother used to say, what we permit, we promote,” she said, looking in his eyes meaningfully. “It wasn’t long ago that people like Ogden were hunting down Muggle-borns, like me, and snapping their wands. Please be careful. What you do matters, you’re a public figure.”

He scoffed and pulled her back over towards him, “Speaking of figures...” he said caressing her curves, “I quite like this one.” He kissed her and she melted back into him, but he knew

he had to pull back. "I'm sorry, but I have to go." He gave her a chaste kiss and Accio-ed his clothes. What a day, he hadn't even remembered taking them off at her flat. He Scourgified, then pulled on his Quidditch training base layer, not bothering with the rest since it was only a quick Floo from her flat to his chambers at the manor.

Hermione got up, wrapped in a blanket, to see him off.

"I had a good day with you today," he said.

"The best."

"Yes. I'll see you tomorrow at the match, right?"

She pretended to think about it. "Maybe, what type of match is it?"

"It's called Quidditch; 14 players fly around on brooms with 4 balls and 6 goals, you'll like it."

"Sounds a bit hectic, but it could be interesting. I'll try to clear my schedule," she said with a grin.

He leaned down to kiss her goodbye and she let the blanket fall away, her body soft and warm in the golden light. Her hair, an absolutely wild mess cascaded down her shoulders. She put her arms around his shoulders and pressed up against him as her mouth found his. His arms immediately came to hold her and he stroked her soft skin against his clothes.

"Normal seats?" he said in a huskier voice than he'd intended. Maybe he'd been too hasty. Perhaps he had a bit of time to spare after all.

"I'll be there," she said, kissing him again, then pulling away. "Now go, you're going to be late."

"I'm already late." All he wanted was to go back to bed with her.

"Extremely late then," she laughed and pushed him towards the Floo. "Go!"

He growled with annoyance. Bloody Malfoy name, it was just a burden. He grabbed a handful of Floo powder and said "I'll see you tomorrow. Goodnight, My," then called out for his chambers at the manor before he could change his mind.

Formal dress robes were set out on his dressing room and a fromage board was sitting on the table under stasis. Thank Merlin. He devoured the food, then ran to the shower. How many showers had he taken today? Best not to overthink that or this one would last longer than he could afford.

What a day. Hermione was so much better at flying now after just a few weeks of instruction. It was an incredible change. As he got in the shower he thought about Muggle-borns and the disadvantages they faced when it came to Quidditch. It was a shite realization. He

begrudgingly admitted Potter clearly had a natural talent that had never been properly honed. There needed to be training opportunities for Muggle-borns in summer between Hogwarts terms.

Actually that wasn't a bad idea. Genius really. He could create a Falcons summer training camp for Muggle-born students starting after their first year of Hogwarts through their last summer before seventh. Then they could keep up with the pureblood students who commonly trained for Quidditch over the summer. He could hold it at the Falcons' pitch. It might even be a way forward for creating a true Quidditch club like he'd learned about in Bulgaria. Maybe they could even bring in expertise specific to training Muggle-born wizards and witches. Hermione would love it, he'd have to discuss it with her at the match tomorrow.

Hmm... but he wasn't so sure about all those kids. He'd be happy to fund it and help organize, but he'd need to hire other people to actually do it. He didn't know the first thing about kids. Potter brought Draco's Aunt Andromeda and, a rather sticky, Teddy Lupin to the Tornados game and Draco hadn't known how to interact with his small cousin. Perhaps he could reach out to his aunt, maybe she would have some ideas. He doubted parents, even Muggle parents, would be happy to discover their sprogs were spending their summer with an ex-offender. He'd have to find someone to run it. Someone that understood Quidditch, but with a clean reputation, and patience, who would also agree to work with him. That meant most of the snakes were out, but then so were most other wizards and witches. Well, one step at a time. He'd figure it out eventually.

He turned off the water and used a quick drying charm. Fuck, he was running late. He threw on his formal dress robes only stopping to fix his cravat and hair in a mirror. He wondered what exactly he was getting himself into tonight, but decided it didn't really matter. The cause never really mattered at these society events, it was always just an excuse to see and be seen. Ogden was probably running for office and needed funds. Politicians had always skulked around the manor asking his father for galleons. He checked the time again. His witch and her flat were like Calypso's island. He wished he hadn't needed to leave, he was desperately late.

He strode out of his chambers and toward the parlor his mother favoured on the first floor, but stopped short. His mother wasn't alone. She was waiting for him near the Floo with guests. Oh Merlin's beard. The sodding Greengrasses were here with their daughter. Was this some type of set-up? Daphne was a friend of his, well, really a friend of Blaise's, but no such luck. It looked an awful lot like they were expecting him to escort their younger daughter, Astoria, to the event. Fuck. He did not agree to this. He made a fist and ran his thumb over his signet rings. Destination, determination, and deliberation. As Lord of the Manor he was the only one that could apparate within the wards, but it would create a terrible mess if he just left.

"Mother, a word?" he said with false politeness.

"I'm afraid there's no time, my darling," she said, coming to give him an air kiss and unnecessarily fixing his cravat. "We need to go, you're so very late. You remember the Greengrasses, yes?" He went to politely greet them and his mother continued, "and their daughter Astoria?"

Tori was a couple years younger than Draco and must have recently graduated from Hogwarts. Hogwarts seemed like a lifetime ago and Tori had always just been Daphne's little sister with scraped knees and pigtails. Obviously she wasn't that little anymore, but he had grown up fast on account of the war and Azkaban and even now through the mantle of team ownership. Shite.

He hated everything about this. All he wanted was to be with Hermione. They could be ordering takeaway right now curled in bed or going out to the Sipping Selkie or what about Paris? He really should take her to Paris. He didn't think she knew he could speak fluent French. He could take her to a hidden bistro for dinner and then make love to her all night whispering to her in French.

But, he was the one that wanted to keep their relationship a secret. And now he was paying the price. There was no way to get out of this. He couldn't just refuse to escort Tori without a kerfuffle at best or a duel at worst.

His mother must have noticed his hesitation and cleared her throat with a glare in his direction. Shite. He was resigned to this unavoidable evening. He'd have to transform into a stuffy lord, act as platonic as possible and then make a swift, but polite exit.

"Lovely to see you again, Miss Greengrass. Apologies for my tardiness," he proffered a steady arm and felt the jaws of his mother's trap spring closed as he stepped through the Floo.

Chapter End Notes

We finally made it to the "sex montage" that I promised in the tags. See you Tuesday for chapter 18, which I affectionately refer to as: "oh no, the consequences of my actions!" Thanks for reading and I really appreciate all your amazing comments, they make Tuesday the best day of the week!

This chapter features an adorable chubby little cauldron by @PartyElephants. Come join us at healthyishobsession.com if you'd like to see more "in universe" content (like the magazine layout of the Seeker Weekly article in this chapter), link to our Spotify playlist, FanArt, quizzes, etc.

Go Falcons!
-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 18: Falcons' Stadium. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

This chapter has a content warning located in the end notes to avoid spoilers.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)



2001 BRITISH AND IRISH LEAGUE

FALMOUTH FALCONS

SCHEDULE

January

6, 10, 13	Preseason	VS	Birmingham Badgers (Amateur) Oxford Mammoths (Amateur) Quiberon Quafflepunchers (France)	<i>L x 3</i>
20	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Wimbourne Wasps	<i>L</i>
26	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Appleby Arrows	<i>L</i>

February

3	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Puddlemere United	<i>W</i>
10	Falmouth Falcons	AT	Pride of Portree	<i>L</i>
17	Falmouth Falcons	AT	Chudley Cannons	<i>W</i>
24	International Friendly	AT	Vratsa Vultures (Bulgaria)	<i>W</i>

March

3	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Montrose Magpies	<i>W</i>
9	Falmouth Falcons	AT	Tutshill Tornados	<i>W</i>
17	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Kenmare Kestrels	<i>W</i>
30	Falmouth Falcons	AT	Caerphilly Catapults	<i>W</i>

April

7	Falmouth Falcons	AT	Wigtown Wanderers	<i>W</i>
14	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Holyhead Harpies	
21	Falmouth Falcons	VS	Ballycastle Bats	

May

Semifinals TBD

Finals TBD

“United we soar.”

2001 British and Irish League Falmouth Falcons Schedule (image transcript)

January

- Preseason: 6th vs Birmingham Badgers (Amateur); 10th vs Oxford Mammoths (Amateur); 13th vs Quiberon Quafflepunchers (France) Lx3
- 20 January - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Wimbourne Wasps L
- 26 January - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Appleby Arrows L

February

- 3 February - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Puddlemere United W
- 10 February - Falmouth Falcons at **Pride of Portree** L
- 17 February - Falmouth Falcons at **Chudley Cannons** W
- 24 February - Falmouth Falcons at **Vraysa Vultures (Bulgaria)** W

March

- 3 March - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Montrose Magpies W
- 9 March - Falmouth Falcons at **Tutshill Tornados** W
- 17 March - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Kenmare Kestrels W
- 30 March - Falmouth Falcons at **Caerphilly Catapults** W

April

- 7 April - Falmouth Falcons at **Wigtown Wanderers** W
- 14 April - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Holyhead Harpies -
- 21 April - **Falmouth Falcons** vs Ballycastle Bats -

May

- Semifinals TBA
- Finals TBA

“United We Soar”

Falmouth Falcons 7-3

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Ginny Weasley: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cho Chang: Seeker

Draco

Another matchday and the challengers were the Holyhead Harpies, but it would be an insult to consider it a challenge. Should be easy enough. The Falcons were on a roll and everything was looking up. Draco's team was winning and he was going to get to spend another day with Hermione. Except for dinner last night, he'd had a perfect day with Hermione, mostly spent buried inside of her or, at worst, less than a wand length away. He could do with more of that. Everything was going his way. He couldn't remember ever being so happy. And he just knew the Falcons were going to get another win today. If they did win today or next week, they'd make the playoffs. They'd really turned things around. And if they won quickly today, maybe he could see Hermione tonight.

He wondered if she would be okay with a surprise trip to France tonight. They could do anything she wanted; an expedited portkey would be no trouble. Or he could hire an aeroplane like he'd learned about in Muggle Studies just to prove he did know Muggle things. Either was fine with him as long as he was with her. As he walked, he let his training Snitch fly a few feet away down the corridor before catching it again.

It would certainly be better than whatever shite he'd had to do last night. It was the absolute worst type of Sacred Twenty-Eight nonsense - stuffy, formal, and teeming with wizards he'd gladly forget. He'd played the part of "Lord Malfoy" all night, smiling at heiresses and shaking hands until his arm ached, all the while missing Hermione the whole sodding time.

The silver lining was that all anyone wanted to discuss with him was the Falcons' winning streak; thankfully there was no blood purity or Death Eater rhetoric. It felt almost like a type of acceptance or redemption. Like maybe in certain circles he didn't need to be worried about his messy history, maybe as long as he had his vaults, all was forgiven. It was nice that so many people seemed to want his opinion, they wanted to court his favour, they wanted to support the team, or consider sponsoring the Falcons. Yes, although it had been stuffy, he'd liked how easily he'd not only been accepted, but appreciated. It was nice to feel wanted again. Perhaps he should attend more fundraisers, it might be fun to spread a bit of the Malfoy wealth. His father was constantly attending events and supporting causes. Since they'd arrived fashionably late, Draco still wasn't sure about the details on what the event had been for, but he'd enjoyed it nonetheless. He enjoyed the attention, even if it was only for his galleons.

He threw open the door to the Team Room with a spring in his step, but for an underdog team about to crush the Harpies and fly into the playoffs, the mood was decidedly not *springy*. All

eyes turned to him as he entered.

“What’s going on?” he asked, with a smirk despite the obvious tension. “Has a dementor just passed through? I’m afraid I don’t have any chocolate.” The whole team seemed to be present, so it didn’t feel like whatever was wrong was Quidditch related. And why were they all glaring at him? Okay, perhaps he had monopolized the locker room yesterday. But the team was off, and for Merlin’s sake, he did own The Nest. It wasn’t unreasonable for him to occasionally use the facilities.

The Weaslette stood up, a copy of the Daily Prophet crushed in her hand, “And here I thought you were making progress, but I should have known better.” She threw the paper at him and he could thank his seeker reflexes that he caught it before it hit him in the head.

He flattened it to see it was a copy of this morning’s edition and once again he was on the cover. He felt as though he’d been punched in the gut as he fumbled to locate his reading glasses in his robe pocket.

From the Dark Mark to Dance Floor: Draco Dazzles at Ogden’s Opulent Extravaganza.

In a move that has sent shockwaves through wizarding society, Lord Draco Malfoy (allegedly a former Death Eater) made a stunning, if not utterly bewildering, appearance at a high-profile campaign fundraiser for Tiberius Ogden as he rallies support for his Magical Citizen Census. Astute readers will recognize Ogden’s “census” for what it is: a thinly veiled resurrection of the draconian Muggle-born Registration Commission (for a detailed eyewitness account of Dolores Umbridge’s Muggle-born Registration Commission and the Ministry’s dark history of the degradation and imprisonment of Muggle-borns turn to page 7).

Witnesses report Malfoy was not only present, but was, by all accounts, the unmistakable wizard of the hour (a title one can only assume he relished). He escorted and “ardently danced” with heiress and Sacred Twenty-Eight darling Astoria Greengrass. He was also seen engaging in “intense conversation” (the very air around them positively crackling with undisclosed purpose) with the divisive candidate himself and his nephew, former Falmouth Falcons’ Seeker, Cormac McLaggen.

A man of Malfoy’s means (and nefarious dark history!) supporting a candidate for Minister for Magic would have a powerful sway over the election. What, indeed, does this utterly perplexing and undeniably calculated display of solidarity mean for the very fabric of magical Britain? Stay tuned Dear Readers as we find out more!

And, Merlin’s saggy left bullock, the photos were ghastly. There were two, one showed him and Tori dancing while talking intently and the other showed him laughing with McLaggen, drinking Ogden’s Old Firewhiskey, like old friends.

Fuuuuuuuck.

“Look, I can explain. My mother -”.

“Blaming mummy are you?” she snapped. “Fuck off, Ferret.”

“Ginny, let’s cool it,” said Wood, moving to stand between them. “Malfoy, maybe you could go find your seat?”

Draco looked at the faces around the room and they ranged from bewilderment to hurt to furious.

“I didn’t-,” he started.

“Please,” interrupted Wood. “Let me handle the team, we’ve got to get on the pitch in a few minutes.”

Draco left the team room still holding the paper in a bit of a daze. How had he been so blind? Why would his mother want him to support this? He felt like he was losing his gobstones.

He headed to his seat in the coaching box, but was now full of trepidation.

And Tiberious Ogden?

Fuck.

And restarting the fucking Muggle-born Registration Commission?

Fuck fuck fuck.

Hermione was right. She was always right. Why hadn't he listened? Had he ruined everything with her?

When he finally arrived, slightly out of breath still clutching the Prophet, Hermione wasn't there, but the snakes were. Blaise glared at him. Theo was for once speechless, which in of itself spoke volumes. It was the cool collected Pansy Parkinson that had lost it.

“You useless wanker,” said Pansy with her bloodshot eyes conveying more hurt than all the acidity she could throw at him. “Did you even think that now I have to undo this nightmare of a PR stunt you’ve just pulled. Your behavior reflects on the team’s fucking branding you bloody idiot. The fucking Magical Citizen Census? Really? What the fuck were you thinking? After all we’ve done to help you. We should have left you in that drawing room to rot.”

“I’ve made a huge mistake. I never meant - fuck,” he dropped into his seat with his face in his hands. He realized he was still wearing his reading glasses and put them in his robe. The Weasley twins started their commentary as the teams flew onto the field, but the sound of the match was a distant hum. Draco realized that Hermione should have been here by now. “Has anyone seen Granger?”

He had to see her to set things straight. Then he could deal with the team and the snakes and the press and his mother. Why had she done this? New plan: he’d talk to Hermione, his mother, anyone that would let him explain himself, then Hermione again.

He heard Theo suck a breath through clenched teeth, “Mate, I don’t think you want to-”

“Fuck, I’m going to find her.”

Hermione

Hermione was ostensibly dressed and ready, on duty, as the team’s healer watching the match from her large office window, but she barely noticed the match. She just kept re-reading the same well-worn copy of the Daily Prophet. She knew Rita Skeeter had her own version of the truth, but the basic facts and the pictures told a story she couldn't ignore. The moving image of him laughing with Cormac McLaggen was one thing, it might have simply been a fleeting terrible moment. But the photo of him dancing with Astoria Greengrass, the graceful witch with a perfect pedigree, settled around her heart.

She couldn't stop watching the figures loop over and over. He looked so at ease, so natural in that world. Perfection. But how could he spend the day *with* her and then smile and dance with pureblood princess Astoria fucking Greengrass that same night? And at such an odious event thrown by people actively trying to subjugate Muggle-borns? What did Draco think would happen to her if people like Ogden were back in power? She was so hurt she found it difficult to breathe and tried to just focus on her anger or even confusion. Was she a fool to think he had really changed? To think she, Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born witch, could ever truly be enough for him?

He had known it was a fundraiser for Ogden, yet he had willfully dismissed the importance of the event. She didn't think he was lying about that part, he wasn't that good of an actor. Why did he go along with it? The pictures were not of a man being forced. What did that mean for them? Was this the reason why they had been seeing each other in secret? So he could do this behind her back? Was she just his secret mudblood mistress while he courted pureblood witches more worthy of his vaults and heir? OK, that was going too far, maybe, probably, but she was livid and deeply hurt. She tried to watch the match, but it was just a blur. Her eyes kept glazing over with tears making it impossible to see more than a green blur of the grass. Her heart ached with a familiar, terrible pang of not being good enough. Of not belonging here.

She heard him running into the medical center long before he appeared looking disheveled, and a bit crazed, at her office door.

“Hermione, I’m so sor-”

Grabbing her wand, she pushed him backward with a Flipendo, the knockback jinx, causing him to stumble back away from her office door and back into the main room of the medical center. Then she threw up a Protego shield to keep him on the opposite side of the room. She could tell he had a half-baked plan to hold her and apologize. Well, he wasn't getting off that easy.

“You’re either an idiot, a hypocrite, or a cheater, but it could be all three,” she said, twirling her wand, unspent magic crackling around her.

Malfoy, for his part, looked like he’d just run here after reading the Prophet. His normally impeccable shirt was partially untucked and he had loosened his tie. She realized he had run

across The Nest when she didn't show up in her seat. He held up his hands like you might around a surprised manticores to show you weren't a threat.

"I'm a fucking idiot and I'm so sorry. I didn't think. Didn't think about Ogden or McLaggen, and didn't know about Astoria. I didn't think it would be in the Prophet. Mother wanted me to go and I knew it was Ogden, but I told myself it didn't matter. Hermione, you know I didn't mean anything by it."

She scoffed, his mother, of course. She should have seen that coming. Even after all this time, he was still choosing to act like the perfect little heir who put his parents' wishes above all else.

"It was a setup with Tori," he continued. "Since we've been keeping everything a secret, I didn't have a good excuse to get out of it. By the time I realized what was going on, I had to go with her. I just thought I'd be as boring and proper as possible to get through it without offending anyone."

"Obviously that didn't work."

"Obviously," he replied, sensing she wouldn't hex him again he lowered his hands to fiddle with his rings.

"And here I thought someone with 10 NEWTS, the heir to both the Malfoy and Black lines, and the richest bloody wizard in Europe you might have had a bit more sense. I don't care about Astoria," she spat. And thought that she might care a bit, but that wasn't the point right now, she could loop back to that. "I care about you. What you do matters. People listen to you. And you're such a prat. And a fucking coward. So desperate for acceptance you'll join any club that will have you - Inquisitorial Squad, Death Eaters, Magical Citizen Census. You have a history of making terrible decisions."

She stopped to take a breath. He just nodded and looked down at his dragonhide shoes avoiding her eyes.

"Malfoy, you could do real good in the world," she said, softer, nearly pleading. "Did it ever occur to you that you can wield real power? People would follow you if you asked them to. Instead you let yourself continually be used. The Prophet publishes your every move and the Minister for Magic invites you to tea because people care what you do."

She waited until he looked back at her again. She motioned to his rings and continued.

"You control *two* seats in the Wizengamot! And probably a third soon since Rodolphus LeStrange is unlikely to produce an heir from Azkaban. Who is even filling those seats right now as your proxy? Do you even know who they are or what they are voting for? Those are your votes, your legacy, and you don't even care. You could be one of the most powerful wizards in England and all you're doing is watching Quidditch."

The words hung in the air between them, sharp and undeniable. The silence in the medical center was profound, broken only by the muffled roar of the crowd from The Nest outside. For the first time, Draco wasn't trying to defend himself or side-step his complacency. He

just stood there, his jaw tight, his eyes locked on hers, with a look of dawning, gut-wrenching realization.

“Hermione...” he started, his voice a broken whisper. He rubbed his silver eyes, and she could see he was fighting a losing battle against tears. “Please. I’m so sorry, I’m so so sorry. I can’t do this without you. You’re the best of all of us. I need you,” he finally begged, the words tumbling out as he took a hesitant step forward.

She was still furious, but was starting to come down and his show of emotion made her remember her own hurt. She hated that she felt this way, but she couldn’t help herself. She had to ask about the pureblood princess hanging on his arm last night with perfect breeding, manners, and so gorgeous. Astoria Greengrass was a far cry from Hermione Granger, the frizzy know-it-all Muggle-born. They looked so beautiful, natural, together dancing in the Prophet and clearly discussing something they both found captivating. Meanwhile she had eaten takeaway Chinese and fallen asleep on the pillow he’d used that afternoon because it still smelled like him. Her heart ached at the thought.

She felt a stab of jealousy too. Why couldn’t it have been her with him, in public, gliding across the floor in his arms? After the lovely day they had spent together, she could just imagine him insisting they had to get dressed up and then he could have taken her out somewhere special. He could have said that he was in love with her and didn’t care who knew. They could have gone dancing at the new place in Diagon Alley and the headlines today would be about them. Instead the incontrovertible fact was that Draco Malfoy had shagged her all day and then left her bed to take out Astoria. She dug the heel of her hand into her chest to alleviate the burn she felt, but it didn’t help.

She gulped and cleared her throat which was suddenly thick with emotion. Had it all been meaningless? It had meant a great deal to her. Her heart swelled in her throat and she had to ask: “What about Astoria? Are you-”

Now it was Draco’s turn to cut her off, “No. Absolutely not. She doesn’t mean anything to me. I promise you Hermione, I was just being polite. I only want you. I don’t want to betray her trust, but she doesn’t want me either, not at all. That was what she was telling me in that photo. I’m so sorry for hurting you. Hermione, love, please drop the barrier?”

She relented and he rushed toward her, enveloping her in a deep embrace. His one hand in her curls tucking her head under his chin as he held her tight. She could feel his breath stuttering and knew he was crying in earnest now.

“I’m so sorry, Hermione, please,” he said, peppering her with kisses. “How can I make this up to you?”

How can I make this up to you? The question only rekindled her anger. She didn't want grand gestures or empty apologies. She wanted him to care. To recognize that this wasn't about appeasing her or smoothing things over until the next time. She needed him to want better for himself, to be confident in his competence and driven by something deeper than just keeping other people happy. Infuriatingly, even now she felt the pull of him, the warmth of his mouth against her skin, the now familiar ache of wanting him despite everything.

“Malfoy, I fucking hate you sometimes,” she said roughly kissing him back and then biting him hard on the neck and shoulder needing an outlet for her anger. Needing to mark him as hers.

“Let me prove I want you. Only you,” he whispered between kisses. His mouth found hers. His passionate apology met her passionate rage as their emotions, and tongues, battled. His magic reached out to soothe her, but she wasn’t having it and her magic sparked around them.

“Oh, you’re going to,” she said it like a threat and grabbed him by his collar to pull him closer. She wrapped her legs around his waist, pulling him flush against her and making him groan.

“I never wanted to hurt you,” he said, holding her tightly and walking them into her office. “I’m going to fix this.”

“Yes, you did hurt me and you will fix this,” she spat. “You never think before you act.” Draco wandlessly slammed the door shut. The walls shuddered and her framed Order of Merlin certificate fell off the wall creating an empty space that he pressed her against.

“I’m completely yours, always,” he said, transfiguring her athletic pants into a short sporty skirt. That was actually a pretty neat charm, she’d have to learn that. Everything this wizard did charmed her, his smirk, his competence, his devotion, Godric but he was such a prat. She hated him for it, for wasting all his potential.

“You need to do better,” she said, still angry as she kissed him deeply while fumbling with the buttons of his trousers.

He pushed her knickers aside and stroked her as he whimpered apologies and begged forgiveness like a mantra as he worshiped her with kisses and nuzzled her cheek and hair. She just wanted him. She wanted to be with him and she hated all the reasons they couldn’t be together. Over his shoulder, she could see the Daily Prophet on her desk and watched while he laughed and spun another witch. *He’s mine*, she thought with a fierce possessiveness and kissed him harder.

As he started to move inside of her, she felt the dam break on all her emotions and she sobbed into his kisses. She felt their emotions and magic reaching a crescendo twining together tightly. He kissed her tears and she clung to him as she came. He was crying again too. Every snap of his hips came with another apology and he followed her, her name on his lips like a plea.

She felt his steady hands stroking her hair as he continued whispering his apologies to her. They sunk to the floor physically and emotionally wrung out. He transfigured his silver Falcons pocket square into a blanket and tucked it around them, still tangled together.

“Please, My, I can’t lose you,” he whispered, holding her close.

“I want to be with you, but you really hurt me and I’m still so angry with you for doing this,” she chastened, nestled into his chest. She heard her voice crack with emotion and she

couldn't seem to stop softly crying. "And I'm scared that this, us, we won't work if you can't do better, Malfoy."

From the pitch, she heard a roar from the crowd and the twins' excited response.

"Can you believe it folks?" said George over the roar of the crowd.

"What a finish! The Holyhead Harpies have caught the Golden Snitch breaking the Falmouth Falcons' winning streak," added Fred.

"This will send the Harpies into the European Phoenix Cup and the League Cup playoffs, but the Falcons future prospects remain unclear. This might signal the beginning of the end for this mercurial team."

Hermione was certain Draco must have heard, but he didn't seem to care about anything except her. He kissed her forehead and murmured, "I'll do better. I promise."

Chapter End Notes

Content Warning:

This chapter contains themes of political subjugation (mentions of the Muggle-born Registration Commission), intense emotional conflict, intense consensual physical intimacy, and graphic depictions of Draco groveling. Remember this story has a guaranteed HEA (Happily Ever After). We'll get through this together!

End Notes:

Congratulations! You've made it through the most angst-filled chapter of this fic. I spent ages re-writing this to make sure the emotional weight landed right. Thank you so much for reading and I'm so interested to see what resonated with you.

This chapter features an updated 2001 Falcons' League Cup Season Schedule designed by the incredible Gossamer26. You can see the updated season schedule and the full Daily Prophet article featured in this chapter at healthyishobsession.com along with other in-universe content, the link to our Spotify playlist, etc.

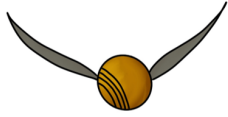
Go Falcons! (They've got their work cut out for them if they still want to make the playoffs)

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 19: Malfoy Manor/Hermione's Falmouth Flat. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Draco

Draco spent most of the night pacing in his father's, actually no, his study. Sleep was impossible, and while the pacing itself accomplished little, the introspection had been useful. He briefly considered a brief wallow on his chaise in the drawing room, but stopped himself. He'd realized it wasn't enough to feel sorry; he needed to take responsibility for his life and forge his own path forward.

Hermione was right, as always. He had a history of terrible decision making.

He always wanted to do what his parents told him was right, but that time was over. He needed to start doing what *he* thought was right. He was the head of the Malfoy family. This was his legacy. His opportunity. Finally just before dawn, he'd fallen into a fitful slumber braced to confront his mother in the morning.

He showered, shaved, and was setting his hair just so... when he realized he was stalling. That wouldn't do. He couldn't afford to be a coward any longer. He needed to face this and then face the brutal apology tour he had planned this afternoon. Straightening his robes a final time, he strode purposefully to the morning room where his mother was likely working on her correspondence after breakfast.

The room was situated to let in the morning light with a full view of the gardens. Never a favourite of the Dark Lord's, but still, it too had been fully renovated in the past couple years. The bright cheerful room did nothing to lift Draco's grim resolve. He flung open both French doors, in an overtly dramatic gesture he hoped would set the tone, and confronted her.

"How dare you!"

"Oh darling, there you are. Tea?" she replied unfazed by his outburst, as though she'd been waiting for him to storm in at any moment. She stood from her writing desk and moved to a table with a waiting tea service set for two.

Draco's careful rehearsing from last night evaporated. He swallowed, forcing himself to regroup. He had envisioned her startled, perhaps even chastised. Instead, she looked perfectly at ease, as if he had simply arrived for a scheduled meeting. He could always trust his mother

to be utterly unreadable; after all she had famously lied to the Dark Lord's face. He'd fallen into a classic trap; no one should ever underestimate Lady Narcissa Black Malfoy.

"Why would you put our familial support behind an event intent on undermining Muggle-borns? Those people are sick."

She calmly served herself tea and carefully selected a biscuit. "I'm so pleased to hear you say that, my darling. One never knows though; I had to be sure," she said, her gaze met his, unwavering over the rim of her teacup. "Frankly, I'm a bit disappointed it took you over a day to confront me, but then you've had a rough year."

Unbelievable. "I trusted you."

"And you needed a little push. I thought maybe we could go with the Magical Heritage Preservation Society's annual gala, but then Ogden's campaign fundraiser was announced, and the bit about Muggle-borns, it was too good of an opportunity to pass up."

"Sorry, what?" Draco was having trouble catching up, this was not the conversation he'd rehearsed. Had she planned all of this? His mind replayed the past day and a half. She had admitted to purposefully crafting this elaborate stunt. He ran a hand through his hair forgetting he'd already spent far too long perfecting it.

"Do sit down, Draco," she said, indicating the seat across from her. "Nasty business with the Ogden family and restarting the Muggle-born registry, I'd hate to give the appearance of supporting them. However, sometimes sacrifices are necessary. Don't worry dear, I've already written a letter to the Prophet explaining that when we learned about his platform we found it distasteful and so will not be supporting his candidacy. We can owl it over this morning." She paused and frowned. "I had expected your appearance to appear in the society pages, not the cover story, so for that I sincerely apologize."

"So you planned this event and the fallout?" The implications crashed over him and he sat heavily in the chair opposite her. She hadn't just known; she'd choreographed it. He should have known. Of course his Slytherin mother had outmaneuvered him completely.

"You know I find this Quidditch venture distasteful, I suppose it's better than occluding while drinking firewhiskey moping in the drawing room, but still... you can do so much more. You're the Lord of the Malfoy and Black families and need to start acting like it."

"So you orchestrated this stunt on purpose? Why?"

"Why? My darling, so we could have this discussion right now. How else was I going to stop you from hiding your head in the sand, or should I say, stands? There are more important things for you to attend to. Albeit this Quidditch team redemption story has been good publicity and it's especially good if you continue to keep company with Miss Granger."

Draco straightened, determined to at least control this part of the conversation. "I don't know what you mean. Granger and I are just-," Draco began.

“Oh Merlin’s Beard Draco, don’t play games, everyone knows you adore her. You’ve been fascinated with her for years and now it’s your chance.”

“I wouldn’t say -,” he tried to deny it, but she cut him off with a wave of her hand. Draco set his jaw to hide the wave of panic washing over him. Surely no one knew. Right? He shifted uncomfortably in his seat, suddenly finding the pattern on the teapot more interesting than the glint in his mother’s eyes. The sheer audacity of her, bringing Hermione into this, yet also the thrilling, terrifying truth of her words. He wanted to argue, to deny it all, but the words felt hollow even to him.

“In 5th year, you mentioned her in every single letter you owed us and almost never mentioned Pansy, whom you were supposedly seeing.” She politely nibbled her biscuit then smirked. “Lucius and I used to joke about it.”

Draco felt his cheeks turning pink and decided to fix himself a cup of tea, simply to give his hands something to do. He considered occluding, just to get through this conversation, but felt that would immediately go against his plan to stop being such a coward. “I never -,” he tried to inject but was ignored.

“Malfoys get what they want. Hermione Granger is the best of the best. She’ll be the way forward for both the Malfoy and Black names. Your first child will inherit the Malfoy title and name, of course, but the second will inherit from the Black family, the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black did not survive this long without a dash of creativity. A witch like Miss Granger is what both families need.”

Draco tried to make sense of his mother’s speech, so apparently his mother, Lady Narcissa Black Malfoy, fully accepted the idea of Hermione with no concerns about her blood status? Apparently so if she was planning inheritances. Should he mention Hermione’s Lestrangle family heir theory? “Wait, can we -”

“But a witch like that,” she continued speaking over Draco yet again, “brilliant, motivated, compassionate, strong-willed, a war hero; she won’t be happy sitting around a Quidditch pitch with you long-term, or even bustling through the halls of St. Mungo’s. What more can you offer her? We haven’t had a Malfoy Minister for Magic or a Supreme Mugwump in a few generations. That’ll be just the thing. You’re both intelligent and your connections and wealth paired with her talents and public image, she’ll be unstoppable. You could do that for her. Malfoys have always been kingmakers.”

Draco was nonplussed. This wasn’t just acceptance of him seeing a Muggle-born witch; this was a full-blown multi-generational scheme for Wizarding World domination. His mother, the pureblood traditionalist, was not only embracing Hermione Granger but mapping out a path for her to be Minister for Magic, using the Malfoy and Black resources. The sheer audacity, the calculated ambition, mixed with what felt like genuine support for his happiness, left him speechless. It was overwhelming, yet strangely exhilarating. His parents hadn’t appeared concerned about anything he wanted for as long as he could remember.

“Surely you -”

“Think about it, Draco. She may be on a Chocolate Frog card, but how will you ensure she is truly an integral part of wizard society?” his mother finally wound down, finally giving him

space to respond. What could he offer her, beyond himself? Could he really do all those things his mother said? If Hermione wanted, could he help her become Minister? Helping her to overturn the tyranny and systems that allowed the Dark Lord to flourish was certainly a worthy goal. But then his parents had always had *questionable* judgement, at best, in their single-minded quest for Malfoy domination. He didn't want Hermione mixed-up in any of his mothers machinations. Perhaps he could convince his mother to go back to France, indefinitely. But wait, what had his mother just said?

“And how is it that my terribly refined mother knows Granger is on a Chocolate Frog card?” he smirked. It was the most forgiving comment he was capable of at the moment.

“What I do or do not know about Chocolate Frogs is strictly between me and the proprietors of Honeydukes,” she smiled at him.

Draco looked away from her and ran his thumb over his signet rings. “I do want to be more involved as the head of the family. No actually, I don't want to just be involved, I want to actually be the head of the family.” Suddenly, he pictured a warm toddler nestled between him and a pregnant Hermione reading aloud from the “Tales of Beedle the Bard” in the home they created together... Merlin, his heart stuttered.

“Wonderful, I've been waiting for this,” she said standing. “I have all the ledgers and parchment waiting for you in my office so you can get started. If you have time, I'd also like to discuss the drawing room renovations, which are long overdue.”

He grimaced at the thought of dealing with that cursed drawing room. She was right, it was overdue. It was the last visible reminder of the worst years of his life. He hoped his mother had a good idea for the renovations, because otherwise he was going to make it unplottable and hide the entrance.

“I have time now,” like the gentleman he was raised to be, he stood before his mother and proffered his arm despite his reservations about her methods. She looped her arm through his and began to leave the room. “I do apologize if I went too far with inviting Miss Greengrass. I am perfectly aware that it could never work between you. She is a sweet girl and it wouldn't hurt her image to be seen with you. It was just a way to hit two pixies with one stone.”

Draco hoped his (hypothetical) children would be sorted into Hufflepuff; this family didn't need anymore Slytherins.

Hermione

Hermione had spent Saturday night and all day Sunday alone. She needed time to think, away from him. Now that she was happy with her Quidditch training program and her treatments for Cho, she finally had time to focus on the safety protocols she wanted to submit to the Department of Magical Games and Sports for Wizengamot review. She knew there were dozens of ways to make Quidditch safer, but where to start? She was surrounded by books,

with Crookshanks nestled in her lap. As the light began to fade, she had to admit that she hadn't made much progress.

Her mind kept drifting to Draco. Prat. Coward. Ugh, she was so frustrated with him. He could do so much better if he only got out of his own way. He wanted to believe he was some type of lone wolf, but he actually needed constant praise and validation, regardless of who gave it. That was really the crux of it, wasn't it? He made the worst decisions if someone, anyone, had convinced him it was the right one. He needed to grow a backbone and make his own choices, choices he deemed worthy.

She'd received an owl earlier from him with an elaborate apology written out in his beautiful posh handwriting. There had been a second note asking if it was alright if he came over for a bit to see her in person this evening. She appreciated the gesture and agreed he could stop by, but she wasn't sure what to expect. She was glad for the apology, but she wanted him to do more than apologize. It wasn't about her, he should want better for himself too.

Sullen bastard.

Prat.

She'd seen the clarifying note on behalf of the Malfoy family in the paper, suggesting that they had thought it was a social gathering and did not support the Ogden platform after reading it thoroughly. While that might satisfy the magical world at large, Hermione's concerns about what had happened transcended the particulars of that specific event.

The Floo sparked to life as Draco came through, ducking his head to exit the fireplace. She didn't get up to greet him, but stayed sitting at the table with her work spread out. Crookshanks leapt from her lap to hiss at Draco, then sat guard by her feet.

"Hi Hermione. Um, Granger, um... I'm just, well, I spent all day going over everything with my mother and then apologizing to everyone on the team and the snakes and I...I saved you for last. Maybe because I'm afraid of what you'll say? Or maybe just because you matter more to me than all the rest. And I'm a coward who doesn't deserve you." He held a stack of parchment in both hands like it was a shield or perhaps as though he thought he could hide behind it.

"You can save your speech, I got your apology letter," she said. She wasn't sure yet how angry and hurt she was, but wasn't ready to forgive him yet. "I suppose you've gotten pretty good at writing those over the past year or so. I'll have to add it to my collection." It was a petty, low blow, but nothing he didn't deserve.

"Right," he said uneasily, looking down at the stack of parchment in his hands. "Can I sit down?"

She shrugged and moved the pile of books from the seat next to her at the table. He slid into the chair and twisted toward her slightly as he riffled through the paperwork. He was close enough to touch, but she didn't, even though part of her longed to.

“Well then, as you already know, I’m deeply sorry for what happened the other night, but it won’t happen again. I spent all morning with my mother and started going over all the family accounts. I should have done so sooner, right when I was released, but I suppose I was avoiding responsibility. I’ve, well, I’ve had a few rough years. Not that that’s any excuse. Anyhow, as of today, I’m taking over full control of Malfoy and Black families.” He fidgeted nervously with his rings and took a deep breath before continuing. “You told me that I needed to do better and you were right. I do. Not just for myself, but any children we... I need to do right for future generations. I want them to be proud of their family, like I used to be, before I understood the implications of my parents’ choices.”

She’d never heard him mention kids before. Her breath hitched. Wait, what? Did she want kids? Yes, sure, she always wanted to start a family, someday. But did she want Draco Malfoy’s children? They’d be half-bloods. Was he really alright with that? He certainly seemed to be. She saw it then, a vision of a tiny mop of radiant blond curls swam through her mind and she felt a throb of longing.

She wanted to shake her head to clear it. He had been such a prick. She was still royally pissed at him.

“Starting today, I’m going to stop whatever rubbish my father has set-up and course correct to support more worthy causes. As you suggested, I looked over the voting history of the proxy Malfoy and Black Wizengamot representatives and it was, well... I’ve already sent owls sacking them. I’m going to need to find new wizards or witches to appoint that answer to me. Or well, you if you’d like. Or you could help me screen candidates. Or if you wanted, you could fill the Black seat as my proxy, but you could vote on whatever you wanted; I trust you completely. Whatever you want. Anything. I know you’re not quite satisfied with the mundane day-to-day of healing. Maybe this could be a way you could really impact the Wizarding World and do all those good things you’re always on about.”

Well, that was a thought wasn’t it? Was that something she could ever seriously consider? But it was all too much, this conversation was too much all at once.

“I’ll do my best to manage all of this, but hope you’ll help me. That is... if you wanted. I’ll just mess it all up again. I need you. The Wizarding World needs you. Please. I’m so sorry, Hermione, about everything, but I’m going to try, no, I’m going to do better from now on. I want to be worthy of you. Please let me.”

Hermione was touched by how hard he was working to set things right. She cupped his cheek with her hand and put her forehead against his. Draco whimpered softly and let out a deep breath as though he’d been holding it all this time. His silver eyes sought hers and held them intensely trying to convey so many things he wouldn’t or couldn’t say. She felt the subtle shift in her magic as his reached out to embrace her.

“I thought, maybe,” he said hesitatingly. “We could start by drafting legislation on Quidditch safety? Those safety rules you thought of?” He stopped then, awaiting her judgment.

“I’m really proud of you Draco, this is a really good first step.”

He nodded sadly and kissed her cheek. His lips were a soft caress, another apology, but the subtle shift in his scent - less broom oil and leather, more parchment and strong tea - hit her much harder. She was overcome with an unexpected pull of desire that crumbled the walls she had built.

He had hurt her, but he hadn't meant to. Then instead of projecting blame, or hiding, or "telling his father about it", he was stepping up and trying to fix it. He wasn't perfect, no one was, but she was so proud of him and the good wizard he was trying to become.

He took another shuddering breath like he was trying to steel himself and pulled back slowly from her. "You can go over the details on the Wizengamot seat," he said, indicating the stack of parchment. "I have the originals, I made a gemino for you. There's no rush. Please think about it. If you chose to do it, I know you'd be great." He stood up slowly and walked toward the Floo, his body radiating resolve.

Was he really going to leave? Why? To give her space? To let her think about the paperwork? Sod the paperwork. There was nothing to think over. She didn't need any time. She knew. She knew even if he made mistakes, she still wanted him.

Hermione jumped up out of her chair and followed him across the room. "Draco, wait, do you want to, um... maybe go over it together or start on those Quidditch reforms, maybe order some takeaway?"

His silver eyes lit up and he looked at her like she had hung the moon.

Godric, how had she fallen so deeply in love with this wizard? He was an insecure prat who had a history of making terrible choices, and yet despite his faults, she knew it was true: she had fallen in love with Draco Malfoy.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading and for all the comments, kudos, and mentions that I've seen "in the wild"! I'm glad we can all have so much fun with this!

Image credit for the snitch: @PartyElephants

Join us at [healthyishobsession.com](https://www.healthyishobsession.com) to explore in-universe content, the link to the Spotify playlist we are building in the comments, Dramione quizzes, and more.

Go Falcons!
-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 20: Falcons' Stadium. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Falmouth Falcons 7-4

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Ginny Weasley: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cho Chang: Seeker

Hermione

Hermione awoke nestled into Draco's side with her head on his shoulder... in the coaching box. How long had she been out? It was cooler and raining hard now. Their match against the Ballycastle Bats had started at 9 am and thus far included the normal maladies: Pucey had broken his jaw, Katie had been impaled with part of a broken broom, and Millie suffered an illegal hex that caused her to only turn left. Now it seemed the foggy morning had given way to a rainy afternoon.

She heard Pansy and Neville laughing and turned to see the coaching box filled with their friends. Oh no. Everyone was here. She sat bolt upright, as though sitting up faster could undo it. What an embarrassingly bad attempted cover-up. She was wrapped in a light blanket. The DLM embroidered in the corner suggested it had started life as one of Draco's

handkerchiefs. It fell from her shoulder to her lap as she sat up, disturbing Crookshanks who jumped off her lap with a yowl of displeasure.

She hated Quidditch.

“What time is it?” she asked Draco, who was stretching and rolling out his shoulder.

“You were only out for an hour or so.”

“What did I miss?”

“Nothing much, we’re up 670 to 440. No one can see anything, let alone the Snitch. There was a pretty bad collision between one of the Bats’ Beaters and a flag pole, but nothing much else.”

Quidditch was so boring.

The players looked tired and the play had slowed down considerably, even George was clearly tired of announcing. Luckily they had Fred who “might be pushing up daisies, but I’m also as fresh as a daisy” so the commentary never faltered.

Hermione transfigured Draco’s handkerchief back into its normal size and gave it back to him. He took it distractedly. She was absolutely mystified how he could still care what happened on the pitch. She stood up to stretch and took in the rest of the coaching box. Everyone was tense and intently watching their final game of the regular season, except her. Given their rough start and recent loss to the Harpies, it was still possible to win the League Cup. From now on, they had to win each match to progress until the Finals. However, after hours of watching fog, then rain, with the only reward a glimpse of Quidditch, she couldn’t be arsed to care anymore. They would make the playoffs or their season would end today whether or not she watched.

Pansy, Neville, Blaise, Theo, and Harry were all sitting in a cluster across the central aisle from her and Draco, playing some type of Quidditch drinking game. She’d never seen Neville in here before, maybe he came to watch Ginny play? Occasionally they would all throw looks at Hermione and Draco. It was obvious they were talking about them, wondering about their relationship, but she pretended she didn’t notice.

Draco didn’t seem annoyed she’d slept on him in front of everyone, even though that wasn’t something that typically happened between work colleagues. Surely, everyone had to know they were seeing each other at this point. Maybe not the entire Wizarding World, but all their friends must suspect. Although Draco had wanted them to be a secret to avoid the press and attracting unwanted attention, he wasn’t very good at it. He was always flirting with her and trying to catch her eye around The Nest or on the Comet.

Draco had many talents, but secrecy was not among them. He had been a “secret” Death Eater at school and Harry knew immediately. Harry Potter who was not exactly known for his observation skills. For Godric’s sake, Harry never even noticed that, according to the Marauders’ Map, Peter Pettigrew was sleeping in his own dormitory. And yet, even 6th year Harry knew immediately that Draco Malfoy was a Death Eater. Draco might as well have

stood up on the Slytherin table and shouted “in case anyone wants to know, I’ve been coerced into being a secret Death Eater.” That same Draco was absolute shite at secretly dating Hermione Granger. She sort of hoped he would stand on the pitch mid-match and just belt it out. It would save her the hassle of remembering to call him “Malfoy.”

Hermione felt herself wishing someone would get minorly injured so she could do something, whereas Draco next to her was like a coiled spring. He pulled out his training Snitch and started releasing and catching it. She started internally timing him just to have something to do, he was still slower with his right hand.

“Do you see that?” said Draco pointing and snapping her attention to the pitch. “That’s a textbook example of a Hawkshead Attacking Formation. See how the Weaslette is at the point of the arrow with Pucey and Katie on the sides going full speed at the goalposts? It’s incredibly effective to cut through the other team’s defenses and score, but just as incredibly difficult to set-up.”

She watched the Chasers’ formation. She genuinely appreciated his attempts to teach the nuances of Quidditch, to help her catch-up after growing up in the Muggle world. Still though, she found it hard to pay constant attention, unlike Draco.

“Why are you so nervous?” she asked. “Didn’t you tell me that it didn’t matter who won and it had no bearing on you as a person?”

“Granger, this is a business venture. I’m simply eager for my investment to pay off,” he lied unconvincingly, then came clean. “And I want my favourite team to play in the European Phoenix Cup and have a shot at winning the League Cup.”

“But you being nervous won’t change the outcome.”

“I’ve been a Falcons fan since before I could fly.”

He sounded just like her dad watching Arsenal.

She’d never understand Quidditch or football.

He released his Snitch again, but Crookshanks beat him to it. Snatching the Snitch out of the air, he ran off with it.

“That bloody cat,” said Draco, chasing him.

“Oh you hate to see that,” said Fred. “Actually it’s nearly impossible to see anything in this rain, I’m not sure, yes, it looks like a nasty spill. Greg Goyle has had a nasty collision with the Bats’ Seeker. A collision, I might add, that would have been easily avoided with a pair of Weasley’s Wild-Weather Wondershields, the only enchanted goggles guaranteed to help you see the bright side.”

Hermione ran on to the pitch in the driving rain to check on Goyle. He was mostly alright. He was so big he had essentially flattened the opposing Seeker. Goyle shouted over the rain that

he never even saw the Seeker flying by. He was back up in no time, but the Bats' Seeker had seen better days.

Just brilliant. This match was never going to end. Now only Cho was looking for the Snitch and the Bats Seeker was simply drifting aimlessly clinging to their broom.

Having seen enough she decided to at least try and get some work done. She cast a drying charm, then transfigured the chair in front of her into a table and pulled out her notes on her Quidditch safety legislation plan. Just as he'd offered, Draco had met her several times over the past week to work on it and they had made solid progress. She loved working with him. He was smart and capable, and made a better work partner than Harry or Ron had ever been. And he wore reading glasses.

Plus she'd made an adorable discovery because he was left-handed and she was right-handed. He liked to put his right arm along the back of her chair, then they could huddle around a shared page as they worked with their dominant hands. It made working together oddly intimate. She had to admit, it might be the ultimate swot turn on. Sometimes, he would place his right hand on her thigh or hold her unused hand and she'd nearly swoon. Who knew she had a left-handed kink? She imagined them working together in the future, reading the paper, or doing jigsaw puzzles (did wizards do puzzles?). It was such a sweet intellectual fantasy.

For all their intimate evenings working together over the past week, they hadn't slept together since the incident. Everything felt just a bit raw between them. They had talked and kissed a bit and cuddled and talked some more, but nothing had escalated. She felt like they both needed a bit of space. The last time they were together had been *emotionally charged* to say the least. It was probably healthy to have some time to sort through their feelings.

She came out of her reverie as Draco dropped back in his chair. He flipped his now disheveled platinum blond hair out of his eyes. "Your hellcat still has my Snitch," whinged Draco.

She took pity on him and did the only sensible thing. "Oh honestly dragon, Accio training Snitch," she sighed as it flew into her hand and she handed it to Draco. "Are you a wizard or not?"

He just grunted and stuffed it back in the pocket of his robes.

"I finally have a name for my, well, our proposal. I'm thinking of calling it 'Quidditch: Unilateral Instructions for Management' or QUIM for short".

"Granger, you can't name it that."

"Why not?"

"The Golden Girl cannot present her quim on the floor of the Wizengamot."

"Malfoy, shhh, stop," she said blushing, "only if your mind is in the gutter. It's an antiquated word anyway, no one uses it, besides it's pronounced Q.U.I.M."

“I’ll prove it. Oi, Blaise, would you like to see Granger’s-”

She slapped a hand over his mouth and laughed. “Malfoy, stop!”

“What?” he said cheekily, removing her hand. “I’m just trying to show him your proposal.”

“Ok, fine. You made your point. How about the Quidditch Ultimatum to Ensure Exemplary Fitness?”

“Queef? Do you know what that means?”

“No, what?” she deadpanned. “Can you define it for me?”

Now it was his turn to turn pink.

She giggled, “Yes, I know what it means. That acronym was a joke, but would the Wizengamot members ever catch on? They are quite old.” She tapped her chin thoughtfully.

“I think you should go with something a bit more tame, like QUILL “Quidditch: Ultimate Improvement for Life-saving Legislation.”

She quite liked the sound of that one and tapped the parchment to change the name. She continued editing as Draco watched the match. When tea was served, she caught Draco Accio-ing a green apple from the sideboard rather than miss a moment of the game.

“I forgot to tell you,” said Draco interrupting her work, his eyes never leaving the pitch, “when you were sleeping, Slughorn stopped by to invite us to a Slug Club party. I sent our regrets on account of being on the road for the semifinals.”

“But we don’t know if we’ve made the semifinals yet.”

“All the more reason for us to win today,” he drawled.

She laughed. “It’s nice of him to extend an invitation. It must mean we’re important.”

“I was intentionally excluded from the ‘Slug Club’ at Hogwarts. Today it was an honour to finally be invited and it was an absolute triumph to decline that arse-licking tosser.”

“You’re such a snarky little shit.”

“I’m *your* snarky little shit,” he said, with a look that was half-challenge and half-devotion as he bit into his apple. Godric, she was utterly done for.

Although everyone in the coaching box was dry and well-fed, by early evening the players were still wet, miserable, exhausted, and the accidents had increased exponentially. This game was never going to end. Ginny and Pucey had a nasty collision. Wood took a Bludger to the back, knocking him off his broom. Luckily, he caught a hoop, and Greg brought him down safely. Cho was still looking for the Snitch to end it, but the Bats’ Seeker had mostly given up at this point. As a healer, Hermione was aghast the game was still ongoing. Even in the coaching box it was a bit bleak, their friends were mostly regretting the results of their

drinking game from earlier. How could this sport be so dangerous and so boring simultaneously? This was all so avoidable if the rules were different.

Cho was struggling. She was a shivering mess on her broom, pushing herself too hard, knowing everyone was waiting on her to find the Snitch on account of the other Seeker still being injured. Hermione flagged her over. If only they could call up substitutions, maybe the story of this game could be the big piece she should put front and center in her proposal. It certainly seemed like a deeper roster and substitutions would improve the player and audience experience. As far as she could tell, Draco was the only person left even watching the match. She'd prefer to propose a time limit on matches, but she knew that would never pass. Quidditch enthusiasts loved these long, drawn-out matches...for some reason.

Yes, the more she thought about it, the better the idea seemed. The best thing she could do for Quidditch would be to implement the three-substitutions rule. It was a popular rule in Muggle football, most famously in the FIFA World Cup. Once play began, each team could substitute three players at any point during the match. The limit forced coaches to be judicious about how and when to use subs and always be cognizant that a major injury could derail their plans. The rule even appealed to spectators because the addition of new players stimulated the play. It would work especially well in Quidditch since the matches had the potential to last so long.

It came to her in a flash and she knew it would be perfect. It would make play safer and maintain the essence of the sport - it might even improve it!

Cho came over to Hermione, landing in front of the coaching box.

“How are you feeling?” asked Hermione.

“I'm absolutely knackered,” Cho admitted.

Hermione gave her several potions and ran a diagnostic just in case, but she didn't need magic to tell her that Cho was pushing herself too hard. She was obviously mentally and physically drained and calling on all her reserves to continue on. Cho gulped down the last potion and flew back into the action again. She clearly needed a break. As a healer, Hermione knew letting her continue playing was a bad idea, but what was the alternative? This was exactly why she needed to get her safety proposal passed.

Merlin, she hated Quidditch.

Draco

It had taken 14 hours, but the match was finally over. They won, barely, somehow. It meant that they were in contention for taking home the League Cup and had placed high enough in their league to join the European Phoenix Cup, the most prestigious of the all European club tournaments. Draco had just finished a Floo call in his office with the Department of Magical Games and Sports and they had it all planned. The Falcons had officially made it to the British and Irish Quidditch League Cup playoffs along with the Wasps, Cannons, and

Harpies. The playoffs would kick-off with a gala at the end of April. In May, the semifinals would be played between the Falcons and the Harpies in Holyhead while the Cannons and Wasps played in Wimbourne. The winners would play in the finals (location to be decided). He planned a celebratory flight once they wrapped-up tonight and shouldered his broom as he went to find everyone downstairs.

This all meant the League Cup season would be finished before his birthday. There was a bit of a lull before the European Phoenix Cup started. Maybe he could celebrate with Hermione in France, or St. Barts, or Martinique, or hang on, didn't they own an island? He'd have to ask his mother. No, he'd check their current holdings himself. Regardless, he was nearly certain they owned an island somewhere. But was it a francophone island? If it wasn't a French island the whole thing was moot, because he wanted to impress her with his flawless French. He knew she was attracted to competence. Maybe he could rent a yacht to take her to a French island? Hmm... the idea of a yacht used by other people made his skin crawl. If they didn't own a francophone island already, he would need to buy a yacht and they could do the trip that way instead.

He put his broom down when he got to the Medical Center as Hermione was wrapping up. They should have been celebrating, but everyone was too exhausted. Instead of the Team Room, they all converged on the medical center after the match. Tonight marked the end of the regular season for them, if they hadn't won it would have been Hermione's last night with the team. He hated the idea of someone else running the medical center, but she couldn't stay here indefinitely; this had always been a temporary situation. She and Theo needed to finish a last rotation at St. Mungo's, then they'd sit for their HAREs to become full Healers and choose their specialty. There was zero chance Healer Granger would choose to stay in sports medicine. He chuckled to himself at the thought. She clearly still despised Quidditch. He'd have to talk to Blaise about getting a new trainee Healer from Mungo's or hire a couple mediwitches for the Phoenix Cup and beyond. No one would be able to fill Hermione's shoes... or her absurd Muggle joggers. Selfishly, he knew he'd miss those too.

The team looked like hell right now and there she was, tending to everyone simultaneously, totally in her element. Amazing. He knew the Gryffindor in her got off on being a hero and he got off on watching her so it was a win-win really. It was clear that Cho was in the worst shape. Hopefully, she just needed time to recover. Hermione's treatment must be helping, but Cho wasn't only ill from her encounter with the Death Eaters. It had started there, but she'd been in several high profile accidents on Quidditch pitches since Hogwarts and she didn't look good. Not good at all. Hopefully she hadn't set-back her condition after such a long day. Damn it. He knew she was trying so hard and would be harder on herself than anyone else if she had to step back.

Blaise slapped Draco on the back. "Against all the odds we did it!"

"Yes, but at what cost?" Draco said, indicating the pathetic state of the team. "We can't afford to lose anyone, especially another Seeker." He said the last part in an undertone so as not to be overheard.

"We'll just have to wait and hope, hopefully she's just tired."

It wasn't just Cho, the whole team looked a right mess. Goyle and Millie especially were both pretty beat up after the extended physical activity. Granger was working on them now, but it was clear they'd need time to recover.

Wood had yelled himself hoarse, and looked like he could barely hang on to his broom by the end. Luckily Theo had offered to take him home, insisted actually. Theo had his arms around Wood and he supported him tenderly as they limped toward the door and likely the Floo. It was really nice to have an extra healer around, even if it was Theo.

The Chasers mostly just looked exhausted. No additional injuries there. Thank Merlin for that.

Hermione finished with the Beaters, then passed out Pepper-up potion to everyone. Wood leaned heavily on Theo by the doorjamb. Theo was clearly impatient to get Wood into bed.

"Great job out there today," said Blaise. "We've got a bit of time before the playoffs so let's cancel training until Tuesday."

Draco doubted they really even heard what he said. Everyone began to Floo home or shuffled to the apparition point outside the stadium. Draco saw Blaise out of the medical center and realized it was now only Hermione left with him. It must be nearing midnight. They didn't get too many chances to be alone in The Nest. It would be a shame to waste it.

"You want to fly?" he asked.

"It's almost midnight, are you mad?" she said with a stretch and yawn.

"I am going a bit mad. And excited we, er... they made the playoffs! Look, I'm going to go flying with or without you, but I'd prefer it if you joined me."

"Fine, you win."

"I always do."

"That winning streak made you cocky."

"It'll be good to get moving after sitting all day."

"You do realize that you sit on a broom, right?"

"Oh you think you're so clever."

"Brightest Witch of My Age," she gave an exaggerated flourish, framing her face, "Better get used to it."

Hermione laughed and leaned in to kiss him on the cheek, but he turned and caught her lips. It was a bit of a gamble. He wasn't sure if she was ready yet to be with him again. In response she put her arms around his shoulders and pressed fully up against him.

An invitation.

He felt a tension release that he didn't know he was carrying. Thank Salazar. He moved his thigh between her legs and she settled into him trying to find purchase. Fuck he wanted her so bad, all the time. He wouldn't take her against the wall like the last time, desperate and half crazed. He wanted to make it good for her.

"I've missed you, My," he said, pulling back to touch his forehead to hers, staring right into her golden eyes.

"I've missed you too."

"So, about flying," he said with a smirk, straightening. "I have an idea, if you're up for it, but we're going to need to transfigure your athletic joggers again."

She blushed and nodded, standing up away from him and tucking her wand into her sleeve. With a flick of his wand he transfigured her athletic joggers into a hockey skirt that matched her lime green and grey Healer jacket. Hockey skirts were the best part of the Muggle Studies curriculum and he couldn't believe those images were allowed in a school textbook. In Azkaban, he'd spent an inordinate amount of time studying those particular pages. Hermione looked adorable with her little trainers and most of her curls tucked into a thick braid. He could imagine what he couldn't see. Given the way she flushed, he knew she would already be getting wet for him in anticipation.

"Now I'm going to need your knickers."

"What?! You want my knickers?"

"I could vanish them if you'd prefer or you could put them in my pocket."

She rolled her eyes, stepped out of her knickers, and handed them to him, "Only because you've vanished my pockets. And I want those back."

He nodded in agreement, but it was a lie.

She was still muttering about pockets and the patriarchy as he took her hand and his Supercell EF5 out to the pitch. They were the only ones left in the whole stadium. A cool breeze was blowing softly towards the sea. The lights were still on and air smelled of the wet grass. After all that rain, the pitch looked magnificent - a massive improvement since the season began. Still though it wouldn't do to get his dragonhide boots wet, so he stopped just inside and mounted his broom. Like he often did, he helped Hermione settle in front of him only this time she was in a skirt and her knickers were in his pocket.

"Nox Maxima," he cast, dousing all the lights. He kicked off into the dark pitch and Hermione squealed and leaned back into his chest. This was probably her first time flying a broom in the dark. He held her close, whispering words of encouragement: he had her, she was safe, she was doing so well. He continued taking them in slow spirals around the moonlit pitch. He nuzzled her cheek and waited until he felt her relax.

"Love, I want you to take over flying now."

Hermione gripped the shaft more firmly and leaned forward more so the broom would follow her.

“Why? Are you going somewhere?” she said cheekily.

“My hands will be busy with something else,” he said, placing his hands on her bare thighs.

She moaned with anticipation and pressed her backside deeper into him. He doubted she even realized she’d done that, but the effect on him was immediate.

“My,” he said momentarily breathless, “I want you to do that coasty rolly-”

“rollercoaster”

“- motion we practised the other day while I touch you. Would that be okay?”

“I’m not sure that I’ll be able to fly safely at the same time.”

“Just do your best, I can pretty much fly with only my thighs anyway, so don’t worry about it. I want you to have a good time, okay?”

“Okay, yes,” she breathed.

Draco kissed the spot where her shoulders met her neck. He moved his hands up her thighs until he reached her core with one hand in front and the other coming around to the back. As she began her first gradual descent, she leaned back, opening herself. His hand slid between her legs. She gasped from his touch, and he hummed in anticipation as she shifted forward to ascend; now his fingers could slip into her from behind (Salazar, she was so wet for him). She groaned as she realized what he had in mind and alternated climbing and diving through the air to maximize the sensation. Slowly, her flight path morphed into a quicker rhythm, more akin to an abraxans' canter as they circled the pitch.

He twisted his signet ring to rub her just there and he felt her arch with vibrating pleasure. He bit her gently at the spot where her neck and shoulder met and she came all at once with devastating intensity. He could feel the pulse of her magic drawn tight and then explode outward. She would have flown them right into the stands if Draco hadn’t taken over. It was more difficult than he anticipated to steer with only his thighs when he was completely hard and a witch was writhing in front of him. He managed, of course, but lacked his usual flair. Good thing the lights were still out. He removed his hands and took control of his Supercell EF5, while she slumped against him, his own magic wrapping around her.

“I’ve missed you Draco, I want you,” she moaned, rubbing her bum up against him. Merlin, he had to land this thing quickly or they’d both be goners.

“I know. I want you too, but let’s get you home first,” he groaned. “I think we’ve pushed the limits of good sense enough for one night.”

Thank you so much for reading and supporting this fic. I absolutely love chatting with you in the comments each week! This week's chapter doodle is a hilarious cartoon of the twins by Gossamer26. You can see more fan art, join the new mailing list, and more at healthyishobsession.com.

Go Falcons!

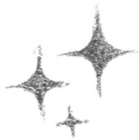
-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 21: The press. April 2001

Chapter Notes

Chapter 21 consists solely of two magazine interviews. You can read the transcripts of the interviews here as they were originally intended to appear. However, Gossamer26 has been an incredible collaborator and has caught my healthy(ish) obsession with this project. Goss took the Chapter 21 text and created gorgeous magazine style versions of both articles (inspired by the styles of the American magazines "Seventeen" and "Sports Illustrated") using all stock and original features. They can be viewed via the links in the chapter or at [my website](#) on the "In-Universe Extras" page.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)



Witch Weekly PDF: [link to pdf](#).

Witch Weekly Flipbook (This looks very cool on desktop, but is a bit glitchy on mobile): [link to flipbook](#).

We couldn't decide on only one Draco, let us know who your favourite is in the comments!

Witch Weekly: Exclusive Interview with the 2001 Winner of the Witch Weekly's Most Charming Smile Award: Lord Draco Malfoy

By: Parvati Patil

This week I had the opportunity to sit down with Witch Weekly's 2001 Most Charming Smile Award winner, my former Hogwarts' classmate Lord Draco Malfoy, to discuss what life is like for our favourite bad boy. It is well known that he is the richest wizard in Europe and has inherited his family's ancestral estate and seat in the Wizengamot. He is also the Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Black and has inherited control over the majority of its holdings, vaults, and Wizengamot seat as well. However, since his release from Azkaban he has eschewed his familial responsibilities and has focused on a recent passion project; reforming his newly acquired, and scandal ridden, Falmouth Falcons Quidditch team.

Draco, if I may, I'd like to start by asking about your fraught history. The Malfoys, among many other pureblood families, were supporters of Voldemort and resulted in you serving

time in Azkaban. You are still the only marked Death Eater to be released. Rumors suggest that the Wizengamot reduced your more substantial sentence after hearing testimony from war heroes Harry Potter and Hermione Granger. Can you comment on that?

First, I'd like to begin by thanking you for inviting me, Parvati. And of course, I'm grateful to the readers of Witch Weekly for the 'Most Charming Smile Award' votes. You are correct, I owe a great debt to Harry Potter and Hermione Granger for their testimony. We had an antagonistic relationship in school (all my doing I'm afraid) and I'll be forever grateful they saw past that to speak up on my behalf. Now I'm focused on moving forward and reforming.

Right. Thank you. And it seems your first order of business after Azkaban and the war was to buy a Quidditch team. That seems like an unusual choice.

I suppose it is. I've always been a Falmouth Falcons supporter. The opportunity to purchase the team entailed a bit of serendipitous timing. When they fell on hard times, I thought I might be able to help rehabilitate their good name.

I love that optimistic irony; however, you acquired the team in mid-free fall and it seems you've helped the Falcons soar. What's your secret to success?

The Falcons have been an inspiration to watch this season. Everyone on our team has done an amazing job. We are excited to be heading to the League Cup playoffs and to have qualified for the European Phoenix Cup later this summer. I'm not sure I have a secret to success. Most of the credit goes to the team itself and if there's any secret, it's the training program developed by our captain, Oliver Wood, and our team healer, trainee Healer Granger which mixes traditional Quidditch training with Muggle sports medicine.

I heard a rumor that you escorted Chaser Katie Bell's Muggle father, as your personal guest, to the Caerphilly Catapults match. That seems like an exceptionally kind and an unexpected move for a marked Death Eater. Is that true and how did that come about?

I'm surprised you heard about that. Katie's mother was a witch who passed away shortly after the war. Her father never had the opportunity to attend one of her matches. The truth is, I... well, I did something terrible to Katie years ago. Unforgivable, really. Helping her now is the absolute least I could do. I'm just grateful she's even given me the chance to try. Honestly, any rumors of my involvement are greatly exaggerated. Granger was raised by non-magical parents and so she organized it with Katie. I just apparated her father over and spent the day with him. Obviously Katie and Granger are busy during the matches, and there's nothing I really need to do, so it was my pleasure to help. We had a great day. Granger and I look forward to attending a Muggle West Hammers United and Arson All football match with the Bells soon. Apparently, they only use one ball and two goals, and even though each team has eleven players only one of them can use their hands. It sounds fascinating.

With the League Cup set to wrap-up soon, what are you working on now?

Yesterday, Hermione Granger and I sent a proposal to the Department of Magical Games and Sports for review. We are hopeful it will pass after Wizengamot approval. The "Quidditch: Ultimate Improvement for Life-saving Legislation" or QUILL is an important piece of safety legislation that proposes dozens of basic minor safety policies, such as: "all

Keepers must wear helmets”, which maximize safety while minimizing any change to the tone of the game. The hallmark rule change we are proposing is the implementation of a three-substitution rule, whereby up to three players may be substituted for other uniformed players waiting on the sideline. Granger has explained to me this is a popular rule in Muggle football that maximizes safety, provides coverage for injured players, and increases audience engagement. This means team rosters would include extra players that would wait to play as needed. Apparently nearly every Muggle sport is played this way. We think the basic safety policies proposed in QUILL are a bare minimum and long overdue for professional Quidditch.

You’ve certainly kept busy these past 6 months, making up for lost time. What are your future plans?

I’ve been toying with a few ideas, but have been busy recently with the League Cup and assuming the position as head of two ancient wizarding families. I’ve been spending a lot of time trying to course correct the investments and holdings of both families to reflect a more progressive ideology. One pet project of mine, that I hope to start soon, is a Quidditch training camp for Hogwarts-aged Muggle-born students. One of my close friends, my um, best friend, well, er - I’ve become quite close to a Muggle-born witch recently and it has been eye-opening and disheartening to see the Wizarding World through her eyes. Hopefully I can continue to use what influence I have to advocate for greater equality and understanding between all magical people.

Draco, let’s get down to what our readers really care about and there’s no easy way to ask it: are you seeing anyone? You’re one of the most eligible wizards in England and your name has been linked with Astoria Greengrass recently. Could you comment on your relationship with her?

While I understand the public interest, I try to keep my personal life as private as possible. That being said, Astoria is just an old family friend. We recently attended an event together with our families. Neither of us support Tiberious Ogden or those that subscribe to his regressive politics. Quite the opposite and I don’t want my silence to be viewed as acceptance. So, the Malfoy Family and the Falmouth Falcons are joining The Quibbler’s call to boycott Ogden’s Old Firewhiskey.

Perhaps not Astoria, but are you quite sure you aren’t seeing anyone else? In nearly all of your answers today you seem to be utterly fixated on a certain Muggle-born witch.

Is that so? Well, thank you so much for the award, Parvati, and thank you for having me, but I really need to get going.

Thank you for your time, Draco, and for having such a gorgeous smile! And please do send our warmest regards to your completely platonic colleague Hermione Granger, if you happen to see her.

Seeker Weekly PDF: [link to pdf](#).

Seeker Weekly Flipbook (This looks very cool on desktop, but is a bit glitchy on mobile): [link to flipbook](#).

Seeker Weekly: Exclusive Interview with the Falmouth Falcons Muggle-born trainee Healer, Hermione Granger on Bringing Muggle “Innovation” into Wizarding Quidditch

By: Miles Bletchley

It's truly something to sit down with the Wizarding World's own Muggle-born Wunderkind today. You'll know her, of course, as Harry Potter's rather resourceful Muggle-born friend. Now, apparently, as a trainee Healer, Hermione Granger is trying her hand at working with the Falmouth Falcons for the League Cup season. She's nothing if not ambitious.

Let's start with the erumpent in the room. Word has it the Falcons' sudden improvement is due in part to your new, rather bohemian, Muggle-inspired training program. Oliver Wood is a talented and traditional Captain; how did you possibly convince him to entertain these sorts of ideas?

Oliver was a fantastic collaborator on this project. He's hard working and extremely knowledgeable about Quidditch. I was not very familiar with Muggle sports medicine or training, but given the opportunity I found the subject fascinating. Oliver and I developed a plan to improve every aspect of what we do by consulting with Muggle expertise on the subject. There are 6 billion Muggles and it would be foolhardy to discount their knowledge.

We've certainly heard the whispers about your... unique approach to treating Cho Chang's alleged overexposure to the Cruciatus Curse. And while there's certainly some buzz about this 'ground-breaking' new potion of yours, don't you think it's a bit presumptuous to claim ownership over intellectual property you developed entirely while working for Lord Malfoy? Especially when it's clearly within the scope of your paid employment?

It is because of my “unique approach” that the treatments have been so effective. I'm hopeful that with more testing and refinement this same approach could be used to treat any number of magical maladies. But the ultimate goal is to improve lives, not squabble over galleons. For what it's worth, I am a trainee Healer at St. Mungo's currently on an educational training rotation working with the Falmouth Falcons Quidditch team. As always, my professors at St. Mungo's are thrilled with my progress. I do not report to the Falcons' management team or the team's owner as you have insinuated.

And yet, you've wormed your way into working quite closely with Lord Malfoy. You've managed to convince him to put his name on your rather disruptive and unnecessary QUILL proposal to inject Muggle-inspired changes into the venerable Quidditch rulebook. We understand you didn't grow up playing Quidditch, so perhaps the traditions of Quidditch are simply beyond you, but it truly beggars belief that you managed to talk Lord Malfoy into this.

Quidditch is unnecessarily dangerous. My job the past few months has been to keep players flying only for them to get injured again, thanks to your negligently dangerous “venerable Quidditch rulebook.” QUILL is going to address only the most basic safety concerns that anyone with a bit of common sense can see are needed. As for Draco's involvement, I can only assume he supports my solutions because they are obviously necessary. They don't hamper play – in fact, they'll likely improve it for everyone: the players, the fans, and their Healers.

Now, we all know “Draco” has been making an effort to, shall we say, rehabilitate his image since the war. But enabling your rather ambitious machinations with the Quidditch rulebook seems entirely out of character for him. One has to wonder what leverage you possibly have to convince him to go along with something so... unnecessary. Is there something we should know about your working relationship with him?

Frankly, I find your persistent insinuation unprofessional and irrelevant to the work I'm doing. My professional collaboration with anyone, including Draco Malfoy, is purely on the merits of improving magical healthcare and the sport of Quidditch. Since Seeker Weekly appears to be more interested in baseless gossip than in genuine innovation and player safety, I think we are finished here. Thank you so much for having me.

Thank you for your frankness today, Miss Granger. One does hope your next professional rotation proves a more appropriate fit for your rather infamous talents, particularly your well-documented disregard for established wizarding traditions. After all, some things are simply not meant to be meddled with by outsiders.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this unique chapter of "The Golden Snitch and a Silver Lining"!

Did you check out the versions on the website? Isn't Gossamer26 great?! Did you realize that she even created an entire archival system for ALL of the periodicals in this fic?! Incredible! To see more of Goss's work, join the mailing list, listen to the playlist, and more visit healthyishobsession.com.

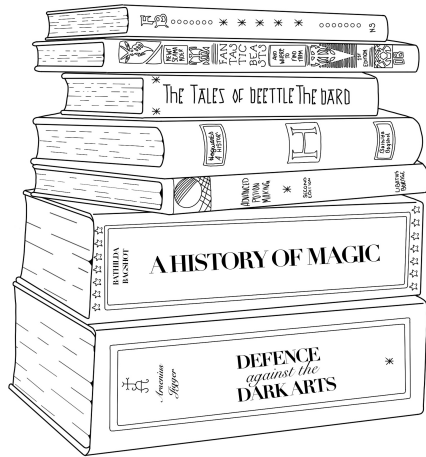
Next week, we're back to normal chapters and you're cordially invited to the League Cup Championship Gala at Malfoy Manor.

Go Falcons!
-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 22: Malfoy Manor. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Draco

It was decided, by Pansy and his mother, that Malfoy Manor was the perfect place to hold the League Cup Championship Gala. They'd been quietly remodeling the manor for the past two years and jumped at the excuse to showcase their work under the guise of doing a favour to the Department of Magical Games and Sports. The magical community would be salivating to judge a wrecked, post-Voldemort manor. His mother couldn't wait to flip the narrative and unveil the restoration, complete with carefully curated historical displays on the family's regrettable history with dark magic.

Draco wasn't so sure though. He usually saw Hermione at The Nest, the Cornish Comet, or her tiny St Mungo's Falmouth flat. He hadn't brought her to the manor yet and wasn't sure how she'd react. The last time she had visited their hospitality had been... somewhat lacking. He hadn't wanted to push her if she wasn't ready and now this event forced his hand.

Much to Draco's dismay (and his mother's delight) the night was turning into an event to see and be seen. Everyone from the Department of Magical Games and Sports and all four playoff teams and their management staff would be present. He assumed there would also be joined by his mother's several hundred closest friends and the press. Everyone was expected to be in Wiltshire tonight.

That meant Hermione would have to come, especially after that biased Seeker Weekly interview. He knew his brave little witch would want to be seen at the height of her power, indomitable in the face of the article's thinly veiled hatred. He knew she'd deliver, but he wondered at what cost. He could barely handle it on her behalf.

His own Witch Weekly interview had prompted a few eye-rolls and audible groans, but reading that Seeker Weekly article this morning still had him seething with rage. He'd made peace with his own name being dragged through the mud; it was a penance he had largely accepted. But to see Hermione's name linked to his, then smeared by the press - it was intolerable. This was the very nightmare he'd tried to prevent by keeping their relationship a secret. He had foreseen this weeks ago. This was an unjustified assault on her character, wholly triggered by her connection to him. And now not one, but two articles, openly hinting at them being together? Just bloody brilliant.

And while he might be raging, he knew this was about her, not him. There were plenty of damning things in the interview that would likely also upset her: insinuating against her character, her blood, her abilities. And on top of that, she was forced to see the press tonight in his befouled manor? To stop himself before ruining his perfect hair by running an agitated hand through it, he settled for fidgeting with his 16th century cufflinks instead.

He tried not to pace in front of the Floo, but instead played the role of host as their guests arrived. There were so many guests; so many smiles, but none of them was hers.

Fucking Seeker Weekly.

Suddenly the Floo came to life and there she was. He had to remember to breathe. Her tight, floor-length Muggle dress, a shocking Slytherin green, was a deliberate choice. Strapless, it left the slur on her arm clearly exposed. He'd never seen her bare it in public before. She was here to control the narrative, to show she wouldn't be cowed by the press. Fucking Gryffindors. That witch was going to kill him. He felt a mixture of trepidation and pride so potent he wondered if his Diagon Alley tailor had correctly fit his muggle trousers.

"Ms. Granger," he said, advancing to greet her like a proper gentleman and quashing the urge to carry her off to his bed.

"Why are you wearing a muggle tuxedo?" she said, stopping to take him in.

"Why do you think, Golden Girl?" he said, pleased with himself. He turned to give her a better view as she blushed prettily.

"Do you like mine?" she said, brushing her curls over her shoulder and showing off her green dress. Merlin help him, it had a slit up to her thigh on one side. "Pansy helped me find it, but it's Muggle so it doesn't have a wand pocket. Could you hold on to mine for me?" she said, holding out her wand.

"In the future, know that you're always welcome to use my wand," he said with a smirk, sliding her wand into his dress trouser pocket. "It already responds to you quite well."

"Draco!"

Her cheeks flushed from pink to crimson and he felt his pulse quicken, but they couldn't stay here flirting in the Floo parlor long. Other guests could arrive at any moment.

“I want to talk to you about the Seeker Weekly interview,” said Draco in an undertone. “I’m so sorry, love. I’m going to buy it and then sack everyone involved.”

“What? No. Why?” she asked dismissively. “I felt that went as well as could be expected.”

“You think that pile of rubbish ‘went well’?”

“Yes, I got through all my talking points and it never dissolved into outright slander.”

“Hermione, that piece was wretched: he was prejudiced and patronizing, questioned your integrity, disregarded your work, undermined -

“It doesn’t matter, Draco. I’ve been the subject of libel since I was 15. There were good things in there too.”

“He insinuated you were in a *relationship* with me,” he said quietly, trying to be discreet.

“I *am* in a *relationship* with you,” she said, matching his volume, but mocking his tone.

“That’s not... we’re not... it’s not some sordid... you know that’s not what I meant,” he spluttered, exasperated. His composure threatened to shatter. How could she be so calm about this? The article had directly attacked her honour, intellect, and their private relationship in a classless attack driven by bigotry and, he assumed, jealousy. She was his and anyone who disrespected her would face his full, unbridled wrath. But that wouldn’t be possible if she continued being obtuse.

Perhaps the part that rankled him the worst was just how resigned she was. He realized that when she accepted the interview, she had already also accepted this outcome. Here he was worried on her behalf and she was unphased. Maybe that was the worst part. He wished he could protect her from it all. He wished he could use what power or privilege he had to shield her while helping her make the better world she envisioned.

He tenderly twisted his finger through one of her perfect curls, momentarily at a loss. The Floo sparked to life again. Draco hadn’t realized how close he’d drifted to Hermione and jumped back, but not quick enough.

Pansy appeared on the hearth and shot Draco a wry look, “Subtle.”

If he was serious about keeping their relationship under wraps he’d have to start being more careful. Luckily it was only Pansy. The Floo sparked again and Longbottom appeared next to her on the hearth.

“Hermione, you look stunning - just like we planned,” said Pansy, in a black dress that likely cost more than a Firebolt, ignoring Longbottom’s sudden arrival. “Come on Draco, you can’t linger here indefinitely.” She looped her arm through Draco’s and made him lead her through to the ballroom. He’d have preferred to have Hermione on his arm, but knew the wisdom in leaving her with her old housemate. It was terribly convenient that Longbottom had arrived right then.

“Parks, how did you allow two articles to be printed with speculation about me and Granger?” he smiled as he walked into the ballroom, nodding in greeting to people he knew, but his true focus was on their conversation. “I thought part of your job was to keep libel out of our press coverage. For next steps, I think we should have our solicitor investigate or we could just buy both magazines.”

“Draco,” she said, with similar focus. “Don’t do anything hasty. A bit of Dramione-

“I’m begging you not to call it that.”

“- speculation is good for public perception. Nothing will increase interest in the Falcons like the sensational maelstrom of polarized views caused by a Malfoy/Granger relationship. She won’t be with us as our team healer much longer. Draco, you need to take action if you’re going to seize the opportunity.”

“You can’t meddle with this, she’s not a pawn.”

“You’re right,” said Pansy and winked. “She’s the queen.” She unhooked her arm from his and walked across the ballroom.

Draco watched her walk toward the bar, momentarily flummoxed. He really should befriend more Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs, Slytherins were exhausting.

He sighed and floated between groups, accepting congratulations on the Falcons’ shocking season, the undeniable commonsense of QUILL, and good natured ribbing on his award-winning smile. His focus, however, was elsewhere. He couldn’t see her at the moment, but he found nearly everyone else. Potter and Ginevra were dancing near her Harpies friends. The couple laughed as they spun, heedless of any sense of the rhythm - or good taste. He hated to admit, even to himself, that a sharp jab of jealousy struck him that they were free to be so openly together in a room like this.

In an adjacent group, he overheard Theo and Wood having the damndest conversation about broomsticks and balls that was far too innuendo-filled. Theo never stopped to think before speaking; but Draco expected better from Wood.

Goyle and Millie appeared to be doing some sort of ill-advised feats of strength competition against the Cannons’ Beater duo. And there was the Cannons’ Keeper, the Weasel himself, with Lavender Brown gushing to anyone that would listen about ‘adorable’ baby Seamus, at home with his grandparents.

He spotted Pansy and Longbottom laughing together at the bar. They seemed a bit chummy, despite the empty bar stool between them. Maybe Pansy was getting some tips for his office plant collection. It had grown excessive these past few months. He noticed Flint alone at the bar (maybe he’d already estranged his new teammates). After scowling at the Muggle whiskey he had been served, Flint turned to glare across the room. Draco followed his line of sight and his heart lurched as he found the object of Flint’s ire: Hermione deep in conversation with Kingsley Shacklebolt, the Minister for Magic himself. He longed to seek her out, his hand closing around her wand in his pocket. He was worried she might need it, but knew he had to keep his distance for now as she charmed the Minister.

An hour passed that oscillated between thoughts of Hermione and excruciatingly dull conversation, punctuated by a hundred repeated quips about his charming smile. Eventually, he was summoned to the stage to join his mother and the head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports to formally welcome their guests.

The department head droned on about the season of the century, a tedious parade of drivel. Draco couldn't be bothered to listen, instead his gaze swept the ballroom for Hermione's curls from his vantage point up on stage. He found her standing near the far side of the stage making surreptitious comments to Katie who was trying not to snigger. Merlin, he wished he could be with her instead of standing up here. Perhaps once he was finished with his speech he could shirk his hosting duties and steal a moment alone with her. Until then, he'd have to bear the mantle of the gracious and most honourable Lord Malfoy, the head of two magical households. He forced his hands into his pockets to avoid fiddling with his rings.

Applause filled the ballroom and Draco found himself politely joining almost instinctively, a habit born of a lifetime in the public eye. As it subsided, a nod from his mother prompted him to stride to the podium, a confident, seemingly easy smile graced his lips, even though he knew it didn't quite reach his eyes.

"Good evening, everyone," he began, his voice smooth, carrying effortlessly across the room. "Welcome to the newly renovated Malfoy Manor. It truly is a pleasure to host so many distinguished guests and, of course, the four magnificent teams who have battled their way into the playoffs. Congratulations to the Holyhead Harpies, the Chudley Cannons, the Wimbourne Wasps, and yes, even my own Falmouth Falcons, for an absolutely stellar season. It's been a journey, hasn't it? Especially for us Falcons, even though we started with a few more character-building moments than we planned, I daresay we've found our stride." He paused, a hint of self-deprecation in his tone, eliciting a few chuckles.

"I also feel I must address the erumpent in the room that has, shall we say, caused a bit of a stir," he continued, a mock-apologetic sigh escaping him (Salazar he hated this shite). "Yes, I'm referring to the 'Most Charming Smile Award' I inexplicably received this week. You may direct all your complaints – or indeed, your congratulations – to my formidable Head of Media, Pansy Parkinson. Honestly, I'm still trying to figure out if it was a genuine compliment or the result of a very elaborate prank." A collective laugh rippled through the room.

"But in all seriousness, I do want to thank Pansy. Her relentless efforts to 'make the Falcons' shine' has inadvertently allowed us to shine a much-needed light on a piece of legislation we've been working on. QUILL, co-authored with the incredibly astute trainee Healer Hermione Granger, aims to significantly improve player safety in Quidditch. We've submitted it to the Department of Magical Games and Sports, and we're hopeful for Wizengamot approval. It's a small step, perhaps, but a crucial one for the future of our beloved sport. Thank you all again for being here. And enjoy yourselves tonight, because once the playoffs begin it will be every team for themselves."

Applause and spattering of chuckles greeted him as he descended the steps of the stage to join the delighted crowd. He had no idea why though. He'd only said the most basic

boilerplate rubbish, but it was a nice shift from the press hounding, and literally spitting, from half a year ago.

Draco tried to make his way, casually, toward where he'd last seen Hermione on the side of the stage, but he was delayed by far too many well-wishers and acquaintances. He was, finally, able to politely manoeuvre away from the horde, but was surprised to see Hermione chatting with Flint. No, not chatting. More like pretending they weren't arguing. Their posture was tense, as though they might face off for a duel at any moment.

"... and now you're trying to change the traditions of the game that you are too ignorant to appreciate," said Flint, splashing firewhiskey out of his flask as he gesticulated wildly.

"Flint, our safety rules are going to pass, because they are so obviously needed."

"So you can make Quidditch more Muggle?"

"So I can fulfill my mission as a healer to prevent injuries and save lives."

Draco, snatched two glasses of champagne off a floating tray and sidled up into their conversation.

"Granger," he said, handing her a glass. "Flint," he added, sneering pointedly at his smuggled Ogden's Old Firewhiskey.

"Malfoy, we were just discussing QUILL," said Hermione.

"Not a fan, Flint?" said Draco.

"No, I can't say that I am."

"Have you read it?"

"I don't need to read it to know this is what happens when Muggle lovers decide they know better than centuries of tradition." Flint looked between them, his eyes narrow slits, "Just remember, Malfoy. Some lines aren't meant to be crossed." With that, he turned and disappeared into the crowd.

"Tosser," said Draco in an undertone to Hermione.

"Shhh," she giggled, "he could hear you."

"Let him, he's just upset that QUILL will clearly pass in the next couple weeks and he still hates anything he sees as a Falcons' success."

"Do you really think it'll pass that soon?"

"From the praise I've heard tonight about it? Yeah, I do."

As absurd as that Witch Weekly puff piece was (and he hated everything about it), it actually paved the way for a lot of public approval with a demographic of witches that usually didn't

care for Quidditch. It was a master move by Pansy. He was still unhappy that it ended with Parvati speculating about his interest in Hermione, but he really did think it was only a matter of days to weeks before QUILL would get approved.

He imagined that it would be the first of many bills they could collaborate on, if she wanted. He wasn't sure if she knew what she wanted though. As far as he knew she still hadn't chosen her next rotation, much less answered him about the future of his Wizengamot seats. Draco didn't know how to interpret her silence, but assumed she needed time. He needed to have a proper conversation with her before he got ahead of himself and ruined their chances.

But that could wait. Right now all he wanted was to get her alone and see what she had on under her green dress. Hmm, he'd promised his mother he'd get Hermione's opinion on part of the manor remodel. He could do both, right?

"Granger," he said in nearly a whisper without making eye contact and taking a casual sip of champagne to make them seem like colleagues distractedly chatting. "Would you like a private tour of the renovations?"

She grinned, a bit wickedly, "How private?"

Hermione

Draco surprised her and actually gave her a private tour of the manor. They'd already found plenty of empty rooms for brief moments together and a few dances just out of sight on the balcony. The feel of him, moving in tandem with her, was intimate in a way that felt nearly indecent. Now, away from the public gaze she didn't need to keep her hands off him. Godric, he looked incredible in that tux, which he'd worn for her and was perfectly tailored, selected to set off his bright eyes and hair and shoulders and... She wasn't entirely sure why he was so committed to showing her the manor when she was so clearly committed to seeing his room - or wing or whatever.

She had to admit that the tour, while unexpected, was fascinating. She really was a swot. Draco eagerly shared insider details: which portraits were permanently silenced, which albino peacocks were most likely to bite, and which artifacts were secretly the most valuable.

It was only her second visit to Malfoy Manor and her first visit made by choice. The remodeled manor was astonishingly lovely, almost unrecognizable from the building she'd been dragged through during the war. She couldn't even recall where the snatchers had taken her, it was all so new and different. Everything was brighter and, while still traditional, had clearly been recently redone, from the marble floors to the gilded moldings. The biggest improvement though was the absence of the cloying feeling of Dark Magic that had overwhelmed her on her last visit.

She hadn't admitted it to Draco, but she had been a bit apprehensive about visiting Malfoy Manor again. But it was Draco's home, and her excitement to see it had outweighed any apprehension. Now she knew there had been no reason to be anxious at all. In fact, it was adorable watching a nervous Draco try to soothe worries she did not feel. He seemed on edge

enough for both of them. They had already toured much of the first floor, but his demeanor shifted from nervous to actually hesitant about the room in front of them.

“I, um, that is to say, if you wanted we could go upstairs, but my mother wanted you to see... um, if you’re up for it.” Draco’s normal confidence wavered as he hesitated over a grand set of closed double doors.

“Draco, what are you on about?” She wondered if this was what he had been winding himself up over. She felt like whatever this was about was the real reason for this tour.

“This, well,” he ran his hand through his hair, “this used to be the drawing room.”

The drawing room. That was where they had taken her that night. Unconsciously she felt her right hand drift toward the slur on her forearm. Draco’s silver eyes looked pained by the action and she dropped her hand.

“It’s just a room, dragon. It doesn’t matter.”

“Pansy has been unusually busy lately, so my mother and I redid it ourselves. Mother sort of, well, it held a lot of terrible memories for all of us. She saved it for last and we only just finished it.”

Of course Narcissa and Draco were reluctant to deal with the room. It had been the site of not just her torture, but presumably the site of countless atrocities. The Malfoy family themselves had probably been tortured there as well.

“We can skip it,” said Hermione, “if you’d prefer.”

“No, no, you should see it. Mother really wants to get your approval.”

“My approval? Draco, I don’t know the first thing about-”

“You’ll see,” he said, opening the heavy doors.

The drawing room had been transformed into a breathtaking library. Floor-to-ceiling warm maple bookshelves now commanded every wall, a rich tapestry of spines waiting to be explored. The entire space glowed with an almost ethereal white, bright and clean. Occasional warm peach and deep russet accents dotted the room in rugs and pillows on reading settees. A magnificent wall of windows dominated the far side, promising a cascade of natural light that, even now, hinted at the room's dazzling daytime brilliance.

“It’s beautiful,” she said in awe of the transformation.

“It’s for you,” said Draco.

“You can’t give someone a room in your house.”

“In your honour then,” he said grinning. “Go on, check the shelves.”

Intrigued now, she approached the nearest bookshelf: Austen, Brontë, Christie, Doyle... What? None of these authors belonged here in the Wizarding World. And yet as she ran her fingers down the spines around her - they were all Muggle authors. She shot Draco a puzzled glance and he just smirked. On and on. She found Shakespeare and Shelley and Tolkien ... until she hit the end of the first wall. As she turned the corner, she assumed she would find all the old magical favourites from Bagshot and Whisp. However, she was surprised again as she ran her fingers over the spines of more incongruous books. There was a shelf of books on philosophy, then psychology, religion, economics, law, languages... across all the shelves in the entire room.

“Draco? Is this the Dewey Decimal System?” she said in awe. This was impossible. She’d never seen anything like it in the Wizarding World.

“I told you,” he said, startling her a bit. She was so focused on the shelves, she hadn’t realized he was so close behind her. He placed his hands on her hips and leaned down to whisper in her ear. “I got an O in Muggle Studies.”

A laugh bubbled out of her. She twisted in his arms to face him, giddy with delight. She put her arms around his neck and she held him tight.

“You built a Muggle library?”

“It was my mother’s idea. She designed it, but I found all the books. This room represents the way forward for the Malfoys. Our future. Our home.” The way he said it made her stomach flip. They hadn’t talked about their future much and his meaning was vague enough that she wasn’t sure if he meant to insinuate something about their future home together or the Wizarding World more generally.

She released her hold on him to better see his eyes and he kissed her deeply. It was an apology and a promise that she felt all the way to her toes. The unexpected emotional connection caught her by surprise.

Not sure what to say next, she chided him to release the tension, “I’m just shocked you did this without my help.”

“You’re not the only one that reads, you know,” he said with a smirk. “Do you like it, My?”

“I love it, you know it’s brilliant. But I do have some suggestions...”

“Of course you do.”

“Technically, or perhaps by tradition at this point, you wouldn’t typically place Shakespeare’s plays alphabetically in the fiction section, but instead in the 800’s under literary -”

“Swot.”

Hermione giggled and caught his beautiful eyes.

“Thank you, Draco,” she said with deep sincerity and kissed him again, running her hands over his neck and back of his hair. This was by far the greatest gesture of inclusion anyone in

the Wizarding World had ever made for her. She could barely believe she was standing here in one of the most beautiful modern Muggle libraries she had ever seen and it was inside Malfoy Manor, the pureblood stronghold of Voldemort himself.

Godric, Draco was not what she had expected at the beginning of the season. Perhaps he wasn't who he had been then either. And yet, here she was trapped against a bookcase in the circle of his arms and she couldn't think of anywhere she'd rather be. Honestly this was better than one of her Hogwarts library fantasies. She never could have even imagined him in a tuxedo in the Malfoy Manor's *Muggle* library and suddenly that was all she wanted. To be surrounded by him, enveloped in the scent of citrus and tea, layered with crisp parchment: everything that was unmistakably Draco. She went to kiss him again, but he was looking down at her arm. Her forearm was near his line of sight. It hadn't occurred to her that it would bother Draco.

"I'm still so sorry about the Seeker Weekly interview."

"Bigotry has been part of my whole life in the Wizarding World. And despite all its faults, I still love it."

"I don't know how you bear it. I feel terrible for all of it. For Merlin's sake, I was the one that... that taught you the word..." he couldn't say it, or wouldn't, and traced his fingertip over her scar.

"Draco, that isn't you anymore," she kissed him softly and then pulled back and tried to change the mood. She didn't need his penitence right now. "You're completely reformed. And I'll just have to reform them all, one by one if necessary." She unbuttoned his jacket and ran her hands along his bracers and pulled him closer so their bodies were flush. "My hands-on personal rehabilitation has shown to be very effective."

He leaned into her with one of his adorable whimpers and slid his knee between her legs. "Now that I think about it, I'm not nearly reformed enough."

"No?"

"I'm going to need daily," he paused to gently suck at her pulse point on her neck, "personal", he began to trail kisses up her neck, "hands-on", a small bite, "attention", he kissed along her jawline, "from you", nibbled her ear, "every day", he kissed her lips tenderly, "for the rest of my life."

She pressed down against his thigh and groaned. "I suppose, it's the right thing to do, for the public good and all."

His tongue broke through the seal of her lips and her eyes fluttered closed. She could feel moisture gathering at her core, anticipating him.

"It's a big job, that will take *constant vigilance*," he said while sliding his hand through the slit in her gown and up until he had his hand on her bare hip.

She wondered if he'd noticed she wasn't wearing any knickers.

“Just doing my civic duty as a dragon tamer,” she said with a gasp as he brought his leg more firmly under her, pressing her against the shelves.

The door to the library was thrown open. They jumped apart, startled by the intrusion, but the look on Flint’s face told them he’d seen more than enough.

“What the fuck, Malfoy,” spat an unhinged Flint.

“Flint-” said Draco.

“It’s true. You’re actually fucking her? Laying in the mud?” He continued, walking further into the room towards them. Hermione instinctively grabbed for her wand, but realized it was still in Draco’s pocket.

“You need to calm down,” said Draco as he stepped in front of Hermione. Flint was a known hothead and had been thrown off half the league teams for fighting. She needed her wand, but she couldn’t cast Accio wandless. Not to mention pulling it from Draco’s trousers would distract him. Damn the pocket-stealing patriarchy.

“You’re already on some pathetic post-Azkaban apology tour and now you’re with this filth? What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“Flint, let’s just-” said Draco again, his hands raised to show he was unarmed and actively trying to defuse the situation.

“And Granger is the worst of the mudbloods. Her ideas are ruining Quidditch and the Wizarding World.” For the first time he addressed her to snap, “You need to go back where you came from, you don’t belong here with wizards.”

Hermione wasn’t as hurt as she might have been years ago, but it still stung. Even if she wasn’t terribly surprised to hear him parroting ideas alluded to in the Seeker Weekly article. Maybe she should let Draco buy the publication - that type of rhetoric often emboldened hatred.

Flint drew his wand and Draco pulled her closer behind him, angry now. It seemed as though Draco was willing to defuse the situation if he was being attacked, but once Flint had gone after her, he’d gotten angry. She could hear people in the hall, drawn to the sound of raised voices. It was a slight distraction that allowed Draco time to draw his wand.

“*Confringo*,” shouted Flint, aiming right at them. Hermione ducked behind Draco, useless without her wand, but his nonverbal “*Protego*” shield sent Flint’s curse ricocheting off. It hit one of the bookshelves and pages exploded around them, like falling snow.

Flint tried again. Again Draco blocked it and it exploded off another shelf. Hermione couldn’t stay behind him forever, protecting her would drag him down in a duel. She was a sitting fwooper without her wand. As more books exploded above her, bits of paper floating around the library, she tried to dive behind the nearest shelf.

She'd barely moved past Draco's shoulder when she heard Flint cast "**Crucio**" at her. An Unforgivable Curse. Unforgivable because there was no counter-curse. Unforgivables could only be dodged or hit by something else. Before she could even register the words, before her mind could scream a warning, Draco's damn seeker reflexes kicked in. He moved, impossibly fast, stepping in front of her. The red flash hit *him* instead. He screamed and fell to the ground, exposing her.

She could now see a few people had gathered by the doors, but it was Flint's maniacal eyes that pinned her in place. Her mind whirled, trying to think of her next move. She dropped to her knees to reach for Draco's wand. Then Harry was there, pushing past the crowd in the doorway and casting a "*Stupify*" that Flint barely blocked.

It was enough though that Flint's concentration broke and so did his Cruciatus Curse. Draco tried to sit up, but before anyone could react, Flint, eyes still wild, spat another curse. Something dark and shimmering emerged, like poisoned amethyst, that shot across the room and slammed into Draco's side. Draco screamed and curled around himself, his hands at his side trying in vain to staunch the flow of blood.

Immediately their professional training took over. Harry, on Flint's flank, cast "*Expelliarmus*" followed by an "*Immobulus*", as Hermione grabbed Draco's abandoned wand. She did her best to stabilize him, wishing for dittany, but there was so much blood. She hadn't studied enough about Dark offensive magic to know the counter-curse. Moments later, Theo was at her side, his face grim.

Draco's blood was everywhere. No one could survive long with this much blood loss. She needed wiggensweld and blood replenishing potion to stabilize him and she'd need to get him to a specialist fast to determine the counter-curse for whatever that Dark Curse was. And there was no telling how many times he had been hit with Crucio during the war. It was incredibly dangerous for him to take any more, meaning he'd also need her new potion as well. And she felt completely useless, unable to help him on the floor of this cursed room.

"Hermione, we've got to get him to St. Mungo's," said Theo authoritatively. She was so glad he was there and currently practising this type of work in his rotation.

"We have clearance to apparate patients directly to A&E, but we won't be able to go through the manor's wards," she said, focused on conjuring a bandage over his wound. "Should we levitate him through the Floo?"

"No, he can do it as Lord of Malfoy Manor."

"He's not in any condition to -"

Theo put an arm around Hermione, while she focused on her stabilizing charm, and placed his hand against Malfoy's bloody signet ring. "Sorry, mate, this is gonna hurt." He twisted the ring and all three of them disappeared.

Thank you @PartyElephants for the detailed sketch of wizarding books at the beginning of this chapter and thank you all so much for supporting this fic - this week we passed 400 subscribers!!! If you are interested in following my future projects please join the mailing list on my website. I've also posted the gala invitations (created by Gossamer26) which encourages guests to explore and reflect on the manor's tumultuous history through a series of carefully curated exhibits.

You can check it out at healthyishobsession.com.

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 23: St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. April 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

With a crack of apparition Theo landed the three of them directly into an empty room in St. Mungo's Accident & Emergency wing. Theo immediately levitated Draco onto the bed. His open wound left a bloody trail, which Theo quickly Scourgified.

"This is the resus room," said Theo. "Get whatever basic supplies you need from the cupboard, but we shouldn't try any complicated magic until we know more about the curse." Although Hermione had never done a formal rotation in A&E, she knew the basics from her lab courses. A&E and the *resuscitation* room, in particular, violated her plan for a "happy" rotation, and yet here she was - in the most wretched spot in St. Mungo's.

"I'm going to find Healer Ague," continued Theo. "He's an expert in Dark Curses and maybe Chief Healer Laece, if she's here." Theo ran out the door leaving Hermione alone with Draco.

His wound was still open. Draco was barely conscious of what was going on, the squeeze of apparition had nearly knocked him out. He seemed to exist in his own cloud of pain. He clutched his side, curled on the bed breathing heavily as though remembering to do so took all his concentration.

Hermione couldn't do Occlumency like Draco, her professional armor would have to do. A lot of the diagnostics and basic treatment she did during the war, and now with the Falcons, transferred to A&E work. She used his wand to Accio hers from inside his pocket. She placed his wand on the bedside table and got to work; her vinewood thrummed.

She wished she had her Cruciatus treatment potion with her. He'd been tortured so many times by Voldemort and his sick aunt and who knew who else. That couldn't be helping

matters. *Hurry, Theo*, she thought.

She took a deep breath. First things first, she Accio-ed dittany and blood replenishing potion from the cupboard. She used a gentle Diffindo to regretfully sever through the layers of his tux to more clearly see his wound. The dittany helped, but the wound from the Dark Curse still wouldn't stop seeping blood. He was more stable now, but it was clear to her that he'd need a specialist that knew the counter-curse to finish the job. She fell back on her basic Muggle first aid training and after using a Tergeo to clean the site, pressed a bandage tight to staunch the flow, hoping it might start to clot. It was all she would do until Theo found more help.

Draco, nearly insensible, kept trying to put his hand over the wound and finally settled on placing his hands over hers as they applied pressure to the bandage.

"I'm sorry," he moaned.

"Shhh... it's fine. You're going to be alright." She kissed his temple. A few tears, she couldn't wipe away, slipped down her cheek. It was difficult for her to maintain professional mode with Draco bleeding out in front of her, but she was going to have to try.

"No. It's not fine." Was his breath more laboured or was she just reading into things? "I'm sorry. You were in danger because of me."

Hermione scoffed, "I was in danger because of a violent bigot - and the patriarchy, I mean honestly would a pocket be asking too much?" She tried to keep the mood light, but her attempt at levity fell flat. He wasn't really listening at this point.

"He tried to torture you, My. In my own home. I had to watch that once. I couldn't let it happen again."

"Shhh...it's fine. I'm fine," she crooned. "You protected me; I didn't even have a wand. You're going to be fine, we're just waiting for the specialist to arrive." Shite, the bandage was already soaked, she used another Tergeo to syphon the blood from the sodden bandage. He was losing too much blood, despite the replenishing potion she'd given him. Where was Theo with the specialist? She put her forehead to his, willing him to hold on.

At least he was still talking, that was a good sign, even if he wasn't listening to anything she said.

"What if I'm not there next time? Or worse, what if I am? I'll never escape my past, my family. Look at you. You're the Golden Girl and I've tarnished you."

Hermione looked down at her blood soaked gown and arms. Oh for Godric's sake. What a drama queen. This was going to be like that damn Hippogriff injury all over again.

Hopefully.

The wound in his side was no closer to healing. Hopefully he would get the opportunity to whinge on about it and drive them all mad. He was going to be just fine, right? Where the

fuck was Theo with the goddamn specialist?

“Draco Malfoy, you listen to me. I don’t care about any of that, because I’m in love with you.”

She had hoped that sort of declaration might merit some type of a positive reaction, but no.

He just whimpered and retreated into a miasma of pain.

Finally, Theo rushed in with A&E’s veteran Dark magic specialist, Healer Ague, close at his heels. Hermione was still applying pressure to the bandage, while Draco limply pressed his hands there too.

Healer Ague immediately took control of the situation. This was a man who might have been bowed with age, but those years accounted for a lifetime of fighting darkness. The healer exuded confidence and cast “*Maleficium Rerum Cognoscere Causas*” with practiced efficiency. Hermione felt the first flutters of hope since Draco had been hit.

After skimming the Dark magic diagnostic charm, Healer Ague quickly vanished Draco’s ruined formalwear, leaving him bare from the waist up. Theo and Hermione assisted the senior healer by gripping Draco’s hands to firmly restrain him and exposing the wound. Hermione laced her fingers through his left hand and vanished the bandage. They both looked at the wound with as much dissociated medical interest as they could muster given their relationship to the patient. It looked deeper than it had earlier, as though the Dark Curse was still burrowing into his side. Hermione had never seen anything like it. She looked up to track Healer Ague’s confidence level, hoping for a slight nod or twinkling eye that would tell her he knew what to do.

But no such reassurance was forthcoming. After a beat Hermione realized that Healer Ague was not focused on the wound at all.

“A Death Eater,” he said, recoiling in shock and staring at the Dark Mark on Draco’s left forearm. “You...you brought me here in the middle of the night to treat some Death Eater?”

“I already told you,” said Theo. “We were at a party; he was attacked.”

“He was attacked? The Death Eater? Good. I’ve spent a lifetime fighting Dark magic and healing its victims.” Healer Ague took an unconscious step backward, retreating from the Mark. “I couldn’t... I won’t... I thought they were all dead or rotting in Azkaban.”

Draco was still bleeding, now without the bandage. They were losing time. Hermione was utterly exasperated by the narrow-minded perspective of the Wizarding World.

“*Healer Ague*,” said Hermione righteously, “when I took my oath, I swore to do my utmost to treat all patients. Did your oath have a stipulation that you would not treat adult wizards coerced into regrettable acts as minors who already served their time in Azkaban? Theo, did your oath have that clause?”

Healer Ague's mouth formed a thin line. She watched as his eyes drifted from Draco's Mark to the letters that made up her scar to their entwined bloodied hands. He shook his head as if to clear it and didn't respond immediately. Instead his gaze darted back to Draco's forearm then to his wound. Finally his hardened gaze met Hermione's eyes, which were filled with unyielding desperation. "I'm sorry trainee Healer Granger, you're right, of course. I...I was just surprised."

Hermione nodded sharply to the healer, afraid to speak past the lump forming in her throat. A chill settled over her. For people like Healer Ague, the war would never be over. He had never stopped fighting, would never stop. Some hatred went too deep to forgive. But surely, he knew what to do and he was going to save Draco, regardless of his past. Right?

Healer Ague looked hard at Hermione. "When this is over, make sure this bastard knows my parents were Muggles. I'll make sure he lives if only to have that on his conscience."

Brilliant. One more thing for Draco to twist into a complex, but she was so relieved she couldn't help but nod sincerely to Ague.

Healer Ague focused back on the wound and Hermione saw the twinkle in his eye that she had hoped for before. She knew that feeling, in fact, she loved that feeling of solving a complicated puzzle. She could tell Healer Ague knew the counter-curse and had solved the riddle, now they'd have to hope it worked. Dark magic could sometimes react in unexpected ways.

Performing the counter-curse, he repeated the spell several times drawing his wand in a complex pattern over the wound. The wound began to close up and she could see Draco's breathing even out.

When the wound was nearly closed, the healer told them to hold Draco down in anticipation of the final step; drawing out the remnants of the Dark Magic was extraordinarily painful. Healer Ague instructed "trainee Healer Nott" to perform the complex Epiduraious charm and Theo tapped Draco's spine between his shoulder blades, which relieved most of his current pain from his chest down.

Hermione thought Draco had passed out again, but was surprised to see his silver eyes were open, watching her. He weakly squeezed her hand. She brushed his sweaty blond hair back from his eyes. "He's almost done, you're going to be alright."

He pulled her hand closer and she leaned down, their foreheads nearly touching.

"I love you too," he said weakly.

Healer Ague began the final terrible step of the extraction. He pulled purple tendrils of Dark magic from deep inside the wound. Hermione had never seen anything like it. Even with the Epiduraious Charm, Draco was obviously in pain. As the last of the tendrils snapped out of him, he screamed one last time, and finally collapsed, unconscious.

Draco

Draco awoke with a frantic start. Where was he? He felt terrible, a deep ache settling over him, especially in his side. He flopped back down again and closed his eyes.

“Welcome back,” he heard someone say. Someone...not just someone, it must have been Pansy. It was said in her clipped sarcastic way.

He cracked open his eyes carefully and tried again. He was in a hospital-looking room and Pansy was sitting in a chair next to his bed. A copy of the Daily Prophet was open in her lap reading, “Malfoy Manor Mayhem: Flint’s Fury Rocks Revelers!”

“Are we on the Comet or is this actually St. Mungo’s?”

“Do you think I’d go on that horrible bus just for you?”

Great, he was going to die alone in St. Mungo’s with no one but Pansy for company. Where was Hermione and what about Theo? They worked here, they were Healers. Why weren’t they here? He needed medical attention.

“I’m going to die, aren’t I?”

“Salazar Draco, you’re such a baby. You’re just fine or will be,” said an exasperated Pansy. Then to no one in particular she mumbled, “Why me?”

“I feel terrible. You can tell me. I can take it, the hard truth this time. I’ll never be cured will I?”

“Oh you’re fine. Merlin. You were hit by a Crucio and something really dark by Flint. Do you remember, he attacked you at the manor?”

Right, he had been showing Hermione the new Muggle library.

“Is Hermione okay?” he said sitting up. He had her wand in his pocket, and a jolt went through him - she needed it. He frantically patted his pockets, only to realize his pockets were gone. What was he wearing?

Pansy slowly put away her paper, then with a tap of her wand, his bed inclined, so he was seated more comfortably.

“What? Don’t you remember? She’s fine. You were protecting her actually, it was quite heroic - at least that’s what I told the papers. That’s how you got hit. She, and Theo, brought you to Mungo’s after the attack and got you patched up. You’ve been out for over a day. They’ve both been here with you, Narcissa too.” Pansy paused, to gauge his reaction and then continued.

“They were all afraid that, since you’re so melodramatic, you’d panic if you woke-up alone and well, here I am... I’m currently in charge of making sure you aren’t doing anything theatrical, like apparating off to find Hermione or kill Flint. Flint is in custody, by the way, raving about pureblood extremism so there’s no need to kill him while he’s busy digging his own grave. And Hermione is hopefully sleeping at her flat where I sent her. Oh, she made me promise I’d make you take this.” Pansy turned to the bedside table and held a vial of

Hermione's potion out to him. He swallowed quickly and slumped back against the pillows too tired to keep sitting upright. "They're saying you'll be out of here in a couple days and make a full recovery, thanks to Granger."

Hermione was okay. He was going to be okay. That was good. Great even, he supposed. He couldn't remember all the details, but one thing was clear. She was almost hurt, they were attacked, because Flint saw them together. This was exactly what he'd feared and what he was trying to avoid. He was dangerous for her. He couldn't be with her anymore. It was just that simple. He'd have to break it off, for her own safety.

"When is Granger's rotation over?" he asked, trying to infuse his voice with a command he didn't feel.

"What are you on about?" she said, arching a perfectly sculpted eyebrow.

"Obviously, it's dangerous for her to be anywhere near me. We'll have to ask St. Mungo's to place her somewhere else. She can start her next rotation early. We can't let her get hurt if she's seen with...well, with us. With the Falcons."

"Draco, stop creating drama," Pansy sat back in her chair and rolled her eyes.

"I'm not, Parks. We tried to be secretive and it still wasn't enough. She could have died," he said, his throat constricted and his voice became gravelly. "It's not worth it."

"Are you finally admitting it then?" She let out a dry laugh. "Thank Merlin, because you're as subtle as a pair of graphorns. And I have a great deal of love for you, but let me be frank: you are absolute shite at secrecy."

"I'm sure it wasn't that obvious," he mumbled.

"Not that obvious? Draco, you sit leaning into each other at every match in public, touching from shoulder to knee, whispering and giggling like 4th years. Was that supposed to be subtle?"

"Maybe we looked like good friends?"

"You wear your heart on your sleeve, Draco Malfoy," she said. He automatically reached toward his Dark Mark. "No prat. Everyone knows you're crazy about her and she's crazy about you. I'm surprised the press hasn't been speculating more, does Hermione have dirt on Skeeter? Because, literally everyone already knows or suspects you're together."

Draco grimaced thinking about all his recent interactions in this new light. At least they'd managed some privacy, Pansy was closer to the truth about the Daily Prophet than she realized. Rita Skeeter might be a pest, but years ago she had learned the hard way not to underestimate his witch.

"Since we're chatting openly," continued Pansy. "Did you first shag before or after you sacked McLaggen on the Isle of Skye? I've got 50 galleons riding on this with Potter and Ginny."

“Alright, I get it. It’s not funny, Pans. Her safety is at risk. I ruin everything I touch. I don’t want to bring her down with me. Everyone loves the Golden Girl. I can’t be with her.”

The gleam went out of Pansy’s eyes. She straightened, her usual sarcasm replaced by a quiet seriousness. “I understand, but you’re wrong. She was attacked because of who she is, not who you were. You rescued her, she’s safer with you.”

“You couldn’t possibly understand,” he scoffed.

“Actually, I do,” she said in a quiet voice. “I’ve been seeing Neville all season, but we’ve fancied each other since 7th year.”

“Longbottom?” Surely not. What?

Pansy stood and looked out the window, lost in thought.

“Seventh year at Hogwarts, you were so wrapped up in your own misery, you had no idea what the rest of us were going through.” Before he could interject, she cut him off, “It wasn’t your fault.”

“One day the Carrows made me come to detention to torture Neville for defiant behaviour. You know the drill. They brought you in to run detention dozens of times.”

“It was horrible,” he said, shuddering at the memory of his own evenings spent “assisting” the Carrows to administer punishments against his will.

“I know, and I... I couldn’t do it. Dark Curses need intention and I had no intention of hurting Neville. I couldn’t do it, so the Carrows punished me instead.

Neville was a fighter though. Merlin, he ran the whole resistance, Dumbledore’s Army, at school. He found me later and we started meeting in secret so we could plan how to make it look real when I had to ‘torture’ him in the future. We figured out a charm I could use that looked like a Dark Curse, but was mostly just purple light, then he would scream and drop to the ground. It was his way of protecting me. Me, the daughter of Voldemort’s supporters. Neville was fearless, and so sweet, even in the face of evil.

After the battle, when my parents were sent to Azkaban, I was finally free to follow my own path, but I was so afraid of the consequences of a public relationship. He might be Sacred Twenty-Eight, but he’s a Gryffindor war hero and I’m the Slytherin socialite who tried to sell out Potter. For a few years we had only seen each other a few times, until I had Blaise hire his herbology company for the Falcons’ landscaping.”

So that was why Longbottom was always popping up unexpectedly. He’d never admit it to her, but Pansy was right, by comparison, he truly was rubbish at secrecy.

“I’ve been scared something like this would happen to me or Neville,” continued Pansy indicating Draco and the hospital room, “and we aren’t nearly as famous, or as mismatched, as you and Hermione. So I really do understand what you are going through. But for what it’s

worth, I've realized that this self-loathing has got to stop, for both of us. We need to learn to be brave like all these damn Gryffindors. They deserve better."

"I'm in love with her, but I've already hurt her so many times. I didn't do anything when she was tortured in the manor. I don't want her to get hurt again because of me."

"You are such a prat. You quite literally saved her this weekend in the same room at the manor. Hermione Granger is '*The Brightest Witch of Her Age*,'" said Pansy, unable to stop herself from rolling her eyes. "If she wants to be with you Draco, then she must know something we don't. You know she is never wrong. Do you trust her or not?"

He'd have to think about that; he didn't have an answer at the ready. Instead he smirked and shifted the conversation, "So, you and Longbottom, eh? Do I have him to thank for all those plants in my office?"

She shot him a wry smile, but before she could answer Theo entered in his lime green healer robes reading a file. When he noticed Draco sitting up in bed talking to Pansy, his eyes lit up. "I thought you'd wake up soon. Good to see you mate. How are you-"

But Draco cut him off. "Theo, did you know about Parks and Longbottom?"

"Um..." Theo looked over at Pansy for permission, she nodded and he said, "...yes?"

"What about me and Granger?"

"...um, yes? Clearly. I mean, we're all with Gryffindors now, right?"

"Wait, what? We are? What Gryffindor could date you?"

"Wood."

"Fine, what Gryffindor would date you?"

"Oliver would."

"Wood would?"

"Yes. Wood and Nott."

"Oliver Wood would not?"

"Oliver Wood. Theo Nott."

"You wouldn't?"

"Draco, I love you like a brother, but you are an idiot."

I told you there would be "secret relationships" in the tags. I know our swottiest readers already spotted these two secret couples - well done!

After the big reveals at St. Mungo's, I thought it would be fun to do a short trivia quiz that covers chapters 1-23 of "The Golden Snitch and A Silver Lining"! You can find the [quiz here](#) on healthyishobsession.com.

Thank you all so much for reading, commenting, and supporting this fic. And Gossamar26, thank you for the St. Mungo's logo at the start of the chapter.

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 24: Falcons' Stadium/Hogwarts grounds. Remembrance Day. May 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Draco

He watched as the Falcons whipped past during their early morning training, but they were just a distraction as he scanned for Hermione's curls and crossed the pitch to stand next to her.

"Hey, Granger," he said tenderly, squeezing her hand for the briefest moment in case they were spotted.

"You were released early?"

"For good behaviour," he said with a smirk.

She rolled her eyes and shook her head gamely, but her smile gave her away, "That's not funny."

"I mean, it's kinda funny."

"All good then?"

"Why don't you tell me? I know you've been studying my file, even if you aren't technically supposed to."

She waved his concerns away. "Being St. Mungo's resident celebrity comes with some privileges."

"Then you already know I was given the all clear yesterday, but they kept me overnight again for 'observation'. They didn't want St. Mungo's biggest donor to die unnecessarily. I had Theo sign the forms first thing this morning and I bolted."

He knew she'd be here overseeing the early training and wanted to surprise her before she left for Hogwarts. Maybe it hadn't been such a good idea though. He didn't know what to say to her about Remembrance Day. *Happy 3rd Anniversary of Beating Me in a War* was seldom seen on cards. Add in that he was part of a terrorist group and was personally convicted for war crimes and it, well... it felt like an insurmountable conversational hurdle. So he just

stood there with her watching as training wrapped-up and hoped, futilely, that Remembrance Day simply wouldn't come up.

His thoughts were interrupted as Blaise joined them on the sideline and soon the team was dropping down to join them as well.

“Malfoy, glad to have you back,” said Cho.

“Wotcher!” said Katie.

“Did you see Flint’s out of the tournament?” said Pucey.

“Means we’ll play the Cannons in the Finals for sure, once we beat the Harpies,” said Goyle.

Weaslette walked up, “Draco,” she held her hand out to him, “thank you for protecting her the other night.”

“It goes without saying,” he said, shaking her hand. And in response to her use of his name, added, “Ginevra.”

She smiled at him and stepped back into the group.

“Alright, yes, he’s back, let’s focus,” said Wood. “We’re gonna call it for today, because we all have places to be for Remembrance Day.”

There went Draco’s hope for simply avoiding talking about it. It was a rubbish plan anyway.

They had all worked so well this season together, but the anniversary of the Battle of Hogwarts was a harsh reminder of who they had lost... and to who. They all knew who fought with the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore’s Army: Hermione, Ginny, Katie, Cho, Wood. Whereas Greg, Millie, Pucey, Pansy, Blaise had all been sympathetic to the Death Eaters or in his case was an actual Death Eater. All of them were forced into the war far too young. None of them were given a true choice.

“Before we go our separate ways today,” continued Wood, “I just wanted to say that we’ve had an amazing season. Obviously, we want to win this thing, but I think something more important has happened this season than our winning record. It’s about us.” He paused and looked at each of them. “We’re, all of us, from different sides of the war. We all lost friends and all lost parts of ourselves. And while there is no denying we all know where each of us stood three years ago, it’s more important to know where we all stand now. So this year, as we remember the Battle of Hogwarts, I hope we can reflect on all the ways we are more similar than we are different.”

A muted clapping of hands wearing Quidditch gloves and nodding followed Wood’s speech. Wood looked at Draco and Blaise, “Did you want to add anything?”

Blaise shook his head, but Draco surprised himself by seizing the opportunity. “I know there’s going to be plenty of speeches today, so I’ll be brief. First, I’m so glad to be back and although it was touch and go for a minute there, I had an excellent Healer,” he paused to look meaningfully at Hermione and heard several chuckles. “And they tell me I’ve made a full

recovery,” he was surprisingly touched to hear a few people whoop at that. “I also just wanted to thank all of you for taking a chance on the Falcons, and me, this season. You all took an incredible gamble taking a position with such a disgraced team, but we worked together-”

“-eventually-,” interjected Ginny and got a few laughs.

“-and pulled it off. We had a few stumbles, but in the end we got there. It doesn’t matter what happens over the next week, or two, what matters is the unbelievable season we’ve had and our capacity for healing and moving forward together.”

His speech was also met with more muted applause and a few “here, here”’s.

“Alright Falcons,” said Blaise, clapping his hands twice. “We’re leaving for Wales tomorrow after our morning training. That will give us time for some solid training Friday before the semifinal on Saturday morning.”

It was all going so fast. If they lost to the Harpies on Saturday, it would be the last match of their season. If they won, they’d be in the finals the week after, against the Wasps or Cannons. Then there was a short break and they would be competing across Europe in the Phoenix Cup, during which they might lose a player or two selected for Quidditch World Cup teams, and then they’d be ready for the British and Irish Quidditch League Cup to start again. He hoped he could get his Muggle-born training camp organized by next summer. But between owning the team, running the Malfoy finances and properties, dealing with those Wizengamot seats, and spending time with Hermione, he was swamped. He’d need to hire a director soon to help him create and subsequently run the camp.

Everyone began to disperse. Some people were headed to the locker room and a few went directly towards the Floos.

“I’ll see you in a few hours, yeah?” Ginny asked Hermione in parting.

“Yes, see you soon,” she replied.

He maneuvered, subtly, toward Hermione, knowing she was his future plan.

Millie asked Cho, “Are you going to Hogwarts?”

“No, I’ve been knackered since the Bats match,” said Cho.

“I’ve been rundown too lately. I’m doing a bit of a grill with some friends and their kids this afternoon, you could pop over instead of going to the Hogwarts thing.”

“That would be lovely, I’ll come after my kip. Maybe we could organize a game of Kid-ditch?”

“That would be brilliant.”

Draco gave Hermione a look and motioned his head toward his office. She smiled in agreement. He jogged up to his office, knowing she’d be along in a bit. Draco threw his robes

over his desk chair, taking a moment to survey his space. It had been taken over by a lush jungle of greenery; resembling a proper greenhouse. Then he snatched his training Snitch off his desk and casually let it fly away, his right side still needed work, but he thought he was now faster than he'd ever been with his left.

He didn't have to wait long, Hermione threw open the door and rushed in to throw her arms around him.

"I'm glad you're back. Do you honestly feel better?"

"I'm completely fine."

She smiled and looked at him, a question in her big eyes. "Then do you, well, would you come to the ceremony at Hogwarts with me this afternoon?"

"No, wait," he said dramatically. He pulled away from her and flopped down on his green sofa, artfully flipping his hair over his eyes. "I changed my mind. I'm, oh no, I feel terrible. I'm probably dying. I'm dead."

"Oh my poor little dragon, it is so good to see you whinging about again." Hermione laughed and sat next to his prone form on the sofa. "But I really do think you should come with me today."

He grabbed her around the middle and pulled her down on top of him. She giggled as he kissed her. "We could just stay here instead. I'm only just out of hospital. I need medical attention and you're a professional."

"You just said you were 'completely fine'."

"Hermione, look," he said more seriously. "I can't just waltz into Hogwarts on Remembrance Day. I'm not welcome there. I started the bloody war when I brought the Death Eaters into the castle."

"If you helped start it, then I helped finish it. I've been to this ceremony for two years now and I really think it would be good for you - and everyone else - if you came. I want you there with me this year."

He admired her bravery, her strength, her idealism, but he couldn't share them. "It's a bad idea. It would upset everyone to see us together. I've hurt so many of those people already, you most of all. I'll never forget when my Aunt Bellatrix hurt you that night, and I stood by unable to help."

She shook her head. "But you saved me at the manor last week and I had to stand there unable to help you. That makes us even, don't you think? You should come with me today. You're a good person, Draco. I think you're the only one who doesn't know it."

Draco thought about what she'd said. She was right. He did protect her at the manor last week, but that was different, wasn't it? It didn't feel very heroic, despite the way the press had reported on it. Did it make up for past misdeeds? He didn't know if any future action

could ever make-up for his past. Now, there was a depressing thought. He needed to believe that eventually he could move on. He'd done nothing but repent for years. He couldn't hide in the manor forever. That was why his friends made him buy the team in the first place and that was why Hermione wanted him to attend the ceremony today. There would always be people that couldn't forgive him, but perhaps he could try to forgive himself.

"Fine," he pouted, "but we can go as colleagues, friends at best. That might be as much as the public can handle between me and their precious Hermione Granger."

Hermione nuzzled her cheek against his and kissed him. "Thank you," she whispered and dragged her hand down his chest, resting it on his hip.

"If we go, you can't touch me like that. Friends only. And you definitely can't look at me like that." Hmm... he wasn't sure Remembrance Day was quite the proper time for this sort of thing. Hermione shot him a wicked grin and he decided he could be convinced. She sat up to shoot a Colloportus at the door to lock it.

"We will need to get it all out of our systems before we go," she said, winding her curls up on top of her head and stuffing her wand through it.

Draco felt a jolt of anticipation. The click of the lock seemed to seal them off from the world outside, from the weight of Remembrance Day and public scrutiny. All that mattered was the sudden, charged silence between them, broken only by the soft brush of her fingers as she tamed her wild hair. He watched her silently, waiting for her next move, a challenge and invitation passing between them.

"Now, as I recall," she continued, "we were in the middle of something in the library when we were so rudely interrupted." She leaned over him to kiss his jaw and throat, then started unbuttoning his shirt.

"I seem to recall that, yes, but the details of that are still pretty blurry, you'll have to remind me."

She continued kissing and unbuttoning him, but between kisses said, "You were standing then, but I think you had your leg just like, ... that." She straddled his strong thigh and let out a small moan of pleasure as he pushed his leg more firmly against her, his arousal already evident.

There were still so many layers. Draco tried to help her pull off her Falcons training jumper, but it got caught in her hair and wand. She laughed as she slid her wand out, releasing her hair, then stood up and surprised him by undressing fully in front of him.

Draco's breath caught in his throat. Obviously, he'd seen her naked plenty of times, but this was different. In the face of the coming public scrutiny, he couldn't help but feel that each garment fell away like another layer of the world's expectations shedding from her, from them. And there she was, his brave witch, standing there unafraid in a world that had repeatedly shown her cruelty. He swallowed, unable to tear his gaze away, captivated by her sheer, unadulterated beauty. He supposed he could have done something, anything, but he just sat there too in awe of her to move.

Merlin, she was gorgeous. Clothed only in her hair streaming down her shoulders like a goddess, she straddled his lap. She kissed him as he caressed her skin. Running his fingers down her back and sides and finally finding her soft breasts and her hard nipples. She moaned and he felt it deep within his core. He'd missed her. Had it only been a few days since the gala? He never wanted to be away from her again.

He was so in love with her. Completely gone. He had to tell her, but didn't know how. Fuck, he loved her so much it burned through him.

She finally finished his buttons and ran her hands across his chest and shoulders and he groaned with pleasure when her skin met his. The fabric of his trousers was strained where she rubbed herself. He rolled her nipples until she was nearly senseless and she scrambled to undo his belt and push down his trousers. Hermione surprised him then by settling down onto him in one fluid motion. The world narrowed to the pressure of her weight, the friction of her skin, the impossible heat of her engulfing him. He groaned, a sound torn from deep in his chest. Every nerve ending seemed to ignite, singing with the sheer undeniable rightness of her with him. Her hair, a soft curtain, brushed his shoulders; how had he ever mocked it? He felt utterly consumed, his mind reeling as pure sensation obliterated thought.

He nearly came right then. Fuck. Draco tried to slow down, to think of Quidditch stats or fouls or history, but nothing came to mind. The feel of her on him, her skin, her hair, her golden brown eyes, their magic entwining. He snapped his hips, reaching up to meet her and she made an indecent sound.

"My...", he said with a warning, he couldn't last long with her riding him, so deep, so frenzied, like this.

"Just there, yes," she moaned, "Jesus Christ. Yes. Oh God yes." He followed her, spilling into her faster than he ever had before. Sweet Salazar.

Hermione collapsed into his embrace and he held her close. He wished it could always just be like this, just them. No war, no press, no outside judgement. Just them. Together. He wound his fingers through her curls and sighed with contentment breathing her in. This was all he wanted.

Hermione

Hermione was delighted it was Ron's turn to give the speech, but was disappointed she was still expected to sit on stage with Harry, Ginny, Luna, and Neville. It was all very tastefully done and highly reminiscent of Dumbledore's funeral, but she felt guilty for having convinced Draco to come, then abandoning him straight away. Luckily, Pansy was also inexplicably there alone and so they sat together in the back, slightly apart from the rest of the audience. Hermione watched as a few heads turned. Aside from a few whispered comments that followed them, they were left alone.

Once the speeches were over, she tried to make her way towards Draco, but he waved her off. Curious, she watched as he conjured flowers to put by Crabbe's name on the Monument to

the Fallen. She was secretly pleased he walked right by his Aunt Bellatrix's name, but not surprised.

"Mione," said Ron, distracting her from watching him. "What did you think of my speech? As good as yours last year?"

"It was brilliant," said Hermione.

"Careful not to say things you don't mean. I thought it was passable at best; I only wrote it last night. I just tried to remember all the drafts you made me listen to last year and borrowed your best unused lines."

She laughed at how typically Ron that was. That was right though, she'd nearly forgotten. A year ago she had been working so hard at St. Mungo's and then stayed up late, for weeks, perfecting her Remembrance Day speech. Her hair a mess, dirty dishes accumulating around her office, balled up parchment littering the floor... She'd barely seen Ron except to make him listen to endless revisions.

And now, everything about Ron seemed like an eternity ago, a bygone era. She realized that she missed him, not their relationship, but she missed his friendship. Missed his goofy grins and terrible jokes and big hugs. She wasn't in love with him; she wasn't sure if she ever had been. But she did still love him.

"I'm really glad you were able to reconnect with Lavender," she said and found that she meant it. "She's lucky to have you."

"Yeah," he responded, "baby Seamus is so cute, I mean he's terrible and I'm exhausted all the time, but I'm completely gone on that little fella."

"I'm really happy for you Ron."

She hugged him then and it felt like old times, before they had ever had a relationship and were just best friends.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

"I'm sorry too," she said, releasing him.

"I just hope you can find someone too," he said. "Someone who can be there for you in all the ways I never could."

Her eyes unconsciously darted toward Draco; from up on stage, she could see his white blond hair like a beacon. He was in the distance talking to his Aunt Andromeda while his little cousin, Teddy, tried to climb him. Ron followed her gaze. He cocked a questioning eyebrow at her, "Mione...?", he began to ask, but was interrupted by Professor Slughorn who wanted to congratulate Ron on his speech. Ron shook the professor's hand, but looked past him at Hermione. In answer, she shrugged noncommittally and smiled before moving away through the crowd.

When she left the stage, it was harder to see Draco and every path toward him was blocked by well-wishers. She plastered her “polite smile” on her face and said all the right things, while inside she was aching to find Draco to make sure he was alright. She basically dragged him here, promised to be there for him in a potentially hostile situation, and then left him. She was the worst.

She saw Neville and Pansy talking to Professor Sprout, who hugged them both with tears in her eyes. Hermione didn’t think Pansy had done any Herbology since her OWLs. She was so distracted by the odd sight that she nearly ran into Chief Healer Laece, the Medical Director of St. Mungo’s and her, supposed, supervisor for the past rotation. Hermione had often seen her at the hospital; she was immediately recognizable by her short grey hair, stylish glasses, and lime green healer robes, but they had never actually spoken one-on-one. Hermione wondered if she had read any of the reports she had submitted about the Falcons this rotation. Sometimes she felt like the first person to ever take magical sports medicine seriously and she was only doing it as a one-off training rotation.

“Trainee Healer Granger,” the witch said in greeting.

“Ma’am,” replied Hermione politely.

“I’ve been reading your *incredibly thorough* reports for the past several months. And I’ve been very impressed by what you’ve managed in such a short time.”

The praise had Hermione standing straight, “Thank you.”

“I’ve been especially impressed with the potion you created to treat wizards and witches that have been overexposed to the Cruciatus Curse. I think you are correct that addressing the issue of magical residue could lead to even more widespread cures for magical overexposures. Ah, Lord Malfoy, glad to see you’re doing well.”

Draco had found her in the crowd and she watched as he raised his hand to the small of her back, then immediately dropped it and took a small step away from her.

“Thank you, yes. From all accounts I shouldn’t be here, but everyone at St. Mungo’s was exceptional. Although the real hero was Granger and her new treatment.”

“I agree, trainee Healer Granger’s Malediction Abating Liquid is remarkable. I worry about her wasting any more of her genius on your Falcons’ pitch.”

Hermione hadn’t decided on a name for it yet, but MAL was as good as anything else. Whatever Chief Healer Laece wanted to call the potion was fine by her.

“She doesn’t even like Quidditch, just imagine what she could accomplish if she was motivated.” Hermione playfully smacked Draco’s arm.

“Indeed,” continued the Chief Healer, smiling. “Hermione, I’ve been in contact with the hospital’s Board of Directors and the Ministry of Magic. We’re open to creating a new position for your next rotation where you could collaborate with the Department of Mysteries

to refine your treatment and research other new approaches to healing. If you think it's a good match, we might be able to turn it into a permanent placement."

Hermione's hallmark brain went completely blank. What an honour! This could be her way to make real change. Improve lives. Improve the Wizarding World. Hermione's excitement melded with a surprising pang of sadness at the thought of leaving the Falcons. Obviously, it was always a temporary rotation. The season was nearly over and she had to move on. It was all just so much, so fast.

"Thank you, I... that would be amazing. I'll think about it," she said and Chief Healer Laece nodded and drifted away into the crowd.

Hermione looked at Draco and they shared shocked smiles.

"Did that just happen?!"

"Breathe, Granger."

"I can't believe it."

"I can't believe she almost gave your potion the perfect name," his eyes alight with mischief.

"What?"

"Would you say that your final batch was," he paused for just a moment, a glint in his eyes, "Formulated for Optimized Yield?"

What was he on about? Hermione thought back on their conversation: Malediction Abating Liquid... Formulated for Optimized Yield. Oh for Godric's sake.

"Malfoy," she said, her eyes narrowing into a playful glare.

"Exactly," he said, entirely too pleased with himself.

"I'm not--"

Before she could finish, Professor McGonagall was there greeting them. Hermione had forgotten how frenzied this event had always been with everyone here together.

"It's good to see you under better circumstances Mr. Malfoy. And Miss Granger, always a pleasure." They both smiled and politely greeted their old teacher. Professor McGonagall had always been among their most formidable professors, even though she proved to be deeply perceptive and benevolent under her austere outer shell.

"I'm so pleased the two brightest students of your year eventually ended up together. You've always been so similar. Although I always thought Severus was too heavy-handed, repeatedly scheduling your houses together for Potions." She sniffed in disapproval and Hermione and Draco shared another disbelieving look.

“Miss Granger, I’m so glad Mr. Malfoy has finally gotten you on a broom. And Mr. Malfoy, you need to stop relying so heavily on your left hand. Good luck in the semi-finals this weekend.”

The Headmistress stiffly nodded to them both and then continued her rounds leaving them stunned in a respectful, if somewhat baffled, silence. Nothing, it seemed, got past Professor McGonagall.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, commenting, bookmarking, kudosing (is that a word?), and recommending this fic to your friends! I'm deeply honored by how much love this story has received. And... as a thank you to this amazing community, I've decided to write a surprise standalone epilogue!

If you've been waiting for Draco to come through on his promise to Hermione, you won't want to miss “Seeker on the Slopes”. To ensure you get an update when I release new content please [join my mailing list](#) or [subscribe to my username on AO3](#). *Joining my mailing list is the only way to ensure you're notified wherever I publish next.*

Art credits:

I'm so grateful to Gossamar26 for creating a beautiful Hogwarts Remembrance Day commemorative program available at <https://healthyishobsession.com>. We had a lot of fun imagining these events! And thank you Harrison Wood Hsiang for the broom sketch at the start of the chapter and on the mailing list.

Go Falcons!

-HealthyishObsession

Chapter 25: The Cornish Comet. May 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



Hermione

The Cornish Comet, in an uncharacteristic display of good manners, had decided to model itself after a well-worn pub. Chairs and tables dotted the periphery, and cocktail tables filled the middle of the space and the floors were only slightly stickier than in a real pub. And what was that smell? Hermione found herself shouting during her conversations to be heard over the cheers of “we won!” or “we’re going to the final”. The Falcons had demolished the Holyhead Harpies in the semi-finals and everyone was ecstatic on their trip home to Falmouth.

Cho seemed particularly happy, or perhaps relieved. Of course everyone expected a Seeker to be happy after they caught a Snitch, but Hermione was fairly certain that Cho only caught it because it had gotten tangled up in her robes. It had been another hard match for Cho. She still hadn’t fully recovered from that long match against the Bats. Hermione wondered if there was anything more she could do for her. At this point, probably not, her treatments wouldn’t be over for several months still and the exhaustion from the Bats match had been a major setback. If Cho couldn’t recover her strength soon, this might be their last win of the season. From the excited shouts echoing in the small space, at least the team seemed to be enjoying themselves tonight.

Everyone had wanted to join the Falcons’ party and from the crush in the Comet’s main room she saw Harry and Ginny talking to Neville and George. Blaise, Pucey, and Greg had started a game of exploding snap. Fred purposely drifted right through Luna and Parvati, his ghost falcon perched on his arm. Both girls shuddered and Luna was particularly delighted to inquire about his new familiar and attempted to stroke the ethereal raptor. She noticed Millie, Pansy, and Katie in the corner with Astoria Greengrass. Hermione felt her stomach drop, even if Draco said there was nothing between them, she still particularly didn’t like the idea

of Astoria being here. At a cocktail table nearby she heard a loud laugh and turned to see Cho talking to Viktor. Viktor was here?! She started to walk over when she heard Draco behind her whinging.

“Who are all these people?” said Draco. “I’m not paying for this.”

“Draco,” said Theo, “Relax, you’re such a curmudgeon.” The Comet must have sensed the crowd as well and shuddered. The room grew slightly to make room for everyone. “And I have plenty of drinks for everyone.” Theo floated multiple crates toward the pub bar.

“What is this?” asked Draco, grabbing a bottle out of one of the cases and brushing off wood wool to examine the label.

“Pinnock’s Giggle Water,” said Theo.

“Gigglewater? Has anyone drunk that since the 1920’s?” asked Draco.

“Yes, Gigglewater. We’ve all gone off Ogden’s and this is more fun anyway. It’s fast, it’s effective, and it burns right through your system, so no side effects for your team’s health. I am a Healer you know, although no one ever gives me any credit,” pouted Theo. “You’ll like it. The Muggles have this great saying ‘it’s 4:20 somewhere’.”

“Theo, that’s not what that -” started Hermione, but was cut-off by Theo popping the first cork and filling conjured shot glasses.

Hermione gave Draco what she hoped was a comforting smile and went to greet Viktor.

“Viktor, what are you doing here?” she said bracing herself for one of his bear hugs.

“Hermy-owe-ninny,” said Viktor, turning to embrace her. “Our good friend Drah-ko invited me. We do not have tournament like your League Cup and I am being interested in how you play it.”

Draco invited him? No. But she found Draco through the crowd and he shot her a conspiratorial wink. He really had invited Viktor... for her. She was filled with a rush of affection for her wizard and she knew she was smiling like a complete loon. She was so in love with him. Turning back to Viktor, she joined him and Cho. It was so good to see him again.

Everyone was getting louder and the murmur of the room was punctuated with loud laughs as the gigglewater made its way through the room. She watched over Viktor’s shoulder as Draco and Theo handed out more bottles and shots. She could barely focus on her conversation as she watched her cool and confident wizard get more and more adorably giggly. She thought she might float away on a cloud of happiness. Or perhaps that was the gigglewater talking. Had she said any of that out loud? Was she talking aloud right now? They all laughed and she barely even knew why anymore.

One of the cases was empty and Theo flipped it over and made Draco stand on it. Oh Godric, what were they up to now? Draco and Theo tried to get everyone’s attention, but it was no

use. George noticed and shot a firework into the bus (no wonder the Comet was such a wreck). After a chorus of laughter, they quieted enough to let Draco speak.

“I just wanted to say thanks for being here. I know we're all excited for the championship next week, but I have some important updates.” He flipped his hair back several times before he could get it to stay out of his eyes.

“The other semi-final match just finished and we'll be facing the Chudley Cannons next week at The Nest.” As Draco finished, a cheer went up. A home match could give them an unexpected advantage. Draco shushed them before long so he could continue. “But the best news is we have insider knowledge...” Draco shot Harry a look, “that the Cannons will probably need to find a new Seeker, since theirs was taken into Auror custody immediately following the match for undisclosed reasons.”

At this a real cheer went up. Hermione recalled from the Falcon's own struggles that finding a decent replacement Seeker during the season was difficult, but for the final? Unthinkable. She felt herself grinning, the Falcons just might win the League Cup. She caught Draco's eye across the room and he winked at her as he tried to flip his hair out of his eyes again.

He was so adorable and clearly getting ready to say something else. Hermione wondered if whatever he was about to say was about her or them. She wasn't sure how far gone he was, but found herself hoping he wanted to tell everyone about their relationship.

“We've also just been informed,” announced Draco, “that Oliver Wood has been selected as Keeper for the English National team for the Quidditch World Cup this summer!”

Everyone turned to cheer for Oliver. Hermione, although she was happy for Oliver, couldn't help but feel a dull pang after getting her hopes up.

Draco continued, “And while he's gone, we're going to be relying on Ginny as our acting captain.”

Everyone turned to Ginny now. Although she seemed pleased, she wasn't surprised. She must have already known. It was, however, clearly news to Harry who scooped her up and kissed her.

As the cheering died down, Millie stood up. “I'd like to say something too.” She drew a breath and looked down at someone near her for support. “I won't be playing next season,” she stopped to giggle, “because I'm pregnant,” and then pulled Astoria up and snogged her in front of everyone.

Hermione was completely gobsmacked. How could? What? She tried to recall what injuries Millie had sustained recently in an attempt at a professional thought-pattern, but it was no use. Instead she succumbed to a fit of giggles, well that explained why Draco was so certain he wasn't Astoria's type.

Oliver jumped up onto a seat, “Well, I'm with Theo,” he loudly proclaimed over the din.

“But neither of us are pregnant,” called Theo jumping on a chair of his own. Noticing Oliver’s empty glass, he brandished his wand and shouted, “*Expecto Prosecco*,” but all that happened was they erupted into giggles.

Hermione already thought everyone knew they were together, subtle wasn’t exactly part of Theo’s vocabulary, but was pleased it was officially out there now.

Not to be outdone, Pansy crossed the room to Neville and announced in a clipped way (even gone on gigglewater), “Neville and I are getting married this summer and you’re all invited.”

Her first thought was, this summer seemed fast. She watched as Neville gave Pansy a big goofy grin before sweeping her into a kiss as an uncharacteristically flirtatious giggle erupted out of her. Hermione wondered if it was that fast after all. How long had they been together, really? Everyone had questions and Pansy twisted in Neville’s arms to address them. “We’ve been together for a while, but now I don’t care who knows.” Neville bent to kiss her cheek as she continued. “I want you all to know, I’m so tired of secrecy, - and I want you all at our wedding.” She giggled again and nearly collapsed into Neville’s strong arms. Hermione had never seen Pansy so happy.

As the cheers and laughter quieted, Hermione eyed Draco. She wondered if he’d like to say anything about them. He had the perfect moment to do so; he was still standing on that overturned crate. He caught Hermione’s eye and perhaps at seeing her hopeful expression, his adorable grin faded. He swallowed and shook his head slightly. Instead he simply thanked everyone again and called for another round in honour of all their news before jumping off the crate and returned to tending bar with Theo.

After all that secrecy, no one cared. At least among friends. No one was upset about blood purity or interhouse relationships or Sacred Twenty-Eight rubbish. Hermione felt the stirrings of disappointment run through her that she tried to quash. She just couldn’t understand why Draco couldn’t be with her openly, no matter how noble his reasons might be. While they had agreed to secrecy in the beginning, it had run its course.

By now, it had been reported on by the press and was essentially an open secret. She’d even worn that green dress to the gala at his manor for him. The only person that thought it was a secret was Draco. He was scared, for reasons she knew were tied to his fear of endangering her, but it felt like he was being a coward for no good reason. She sighed. No matter, she loved him flaws and all. He was trying to do the right thing, even if he was a prat.

Ginny and Harry plopped a nearly full bottle of Pinnock’s onto Hermione’s cocktail table.

“You look entirely too serious, have some ‘Liquid Glee’,” said Ginny to Hermione.

“You look entirely too pleased with yourselves,” said Hermione suspiciously looking between them. Even for drinking gigglewater, they were far too giddy. “What are you two on about?”

“Oh, it’s nothing, ignore us” said Harry, shooting a meaningful glance at Ginny, who wasn’t taking the hint.

“We’ve just won 50 galleons from Pansy.”

Draco

Draco twisted his hands in the sheets and groaned as Hermione found a particularly deep knot in his back. They weren’t as high quality as the sheets on his bed at the manor, but they were much nicer than he’d expected to find on a mattress on the floor of a treehouse. Sometimes the Cornish Comet really came though. If it wasn’t for the smell, he’d say he’d even grown fond of the old bus. Tonight they had a charming space, in a rustic sort of way, with netting draped around the bed creating a safari version of their beds at Hogwarts. Hermione’s bluebell flames were sparking cheerily in their jars and it felt as though they were tucked away; the only ones in the whole world. Draco shivered as her practised hands worked down his spine. Salazar, that felt amazing. Being with a Healer certainly had its perks.

“I’m a bit sad that it’s all ending so soon,” she said softly, kneading his back. “The season will be over after the championship. I’ll need to start a new rotation.” She paused to take a deep breath. “We won’t be able to see each other as much anymore.”

He sat up with a start. “Stop it, My. We’re going to see each other all the time. You’ll always have me.” He should just grit his teeth and tell her he loved her. Was this why she was suddenly melancholy? Did she doubt his affection? His commitment? He was so in love with her, he just had to tell her.

He leaned in to kiss her, “Actually, I have a plan so we can keep seeing each other even more, if you want.”

“What is it?”

“In a minute,” he said evasively. “Your turn. Get undressed.”

“Do you know what you’re doing?” she said without much confidence, but pulled her clothes off and jumped down on the bed all the same.

“I’m a quick study. Do I need to remind you of my academic achievements?”

“Swot.”

“Hey, that’s my line.”

After arranging her hair out of the way, he began on her shoulders, trying to replicate the chaste motions she had used on him. He had to ask her what the lotion spell she used was. It was a variant of the lubrication spell they liked. Handy, that. He conjured the warm lotion into his palm and slowly worked it into her soft skin. His large hands spanned her slight frame and she moaned as he worked.

Years ago, he and Theo had found a book in Knockturn Alley on erotic massage. They sat in a hidden corner of the shop, terrified to be caught, but unable to stop pouring over the book.

He'd never had a chance to use it, but parts of it had seared themselves into his adolescent brain.

“My, the thing is, you won’t be missing anything with the Falcons, because I’m leaving too.”

“What? You’re not selling the team are you?” she asked, her voice slightly muffled by the crook of her arm and pillow.

“No, I’m keeping the team, but I’m not going to play an active role in the future. I’m not needed day to day. Honestly Hermione, I don’t know how to run a Quidditch team and I’ll never be good enough to actually play Seeker. Blaise and Pansy and Wood do everything anyway.”

“Right, so what’s your plan?”

“I need to grow-up. Take control. It’s been brilliant, but I can’t ride around on this barmy bus and sit in the stands for the rest of my life.”

He looked down at his steady hands as he rubbed the length of her lower back, then down over her bottom and he felt her shiver. He knew he needed to leave The Nest. It was time. He watched the light catch his signet rings and with a clear resolve announced, “I’ve decided to fill the Malfoy Wizengamot seat myself.”

“Draco-,” she said, trying to twist up to look at him, but he pressed against her to kiss the junction of her neck and shoulder so she couldn’t sit up.

“You’re supposed to be relaxing,” he whispered.

She huffed in annoyance, “This is the opposite of a relaxing conversation.”

“Hush, the Wizengamot only meets part time. They aren’t in session that often. Dumbledore was the Chief Warlock while teaching at Hogwarts, so I’ll still be able to run the family accounts and muck around with the Falcons on a lark, but Quidditch can’t be my whole focus anymore.”

He teased her then with a bit of less appropriate massaging, bordering on a caress, along her sides and especially along the sides of her breasts. Hermione moaned. He knew that she wanted him, but enjoyed drawing her out.

“Draco, I think that’s perfect. I know you’ll be great.”

“Maybe it’s your good influence rubbing off on me.” He truly believed now that he needed more in his life, to do actual good in the world. Winning at Quidditch was fun and it had helped him immeasurably, but he knew it was time. “Speaking of you rubbing off on me...”

She snorted at his terrible innuendo as he trailed kisses down her back to her waist. Then he nudged her over onto her back and trailed kisses across her stomach and then up to her throat. She reached for him, but he pushed her hands away.

“Tsk, Granger. I’m still working.”

He began to slowly knead her shoulders for a few moments, but it was a ruse. He conjured more warm lotion, vanilla scented this time, and set to work worshiping her breasts.

“Did you think it over, will you fill the Black Family Wizengamot seat?” She would technically be his proxy, but he would never tell her how to vote. Quite the opposite. His default would be to have her direct all his votes. But no, he needed to be her partner, her equal. They’d work through it together. As much as he wanted to avoid conflict with her, a part of him was excited for long nights spent pacing and debating the issues.

She moaned and he continued stroking her breasts, letting her silky soft skin glide past his fingers and flicking her hard nipples with his thumbs, over and over. She writhed on her back, bucking her hips, but he had no intention of touching her there. Not yet.

“It would be brilliant. I’m sure you’d be able to split time with your medical research position in the Department of Mysteries. You’d already be at the Ministry. If you want it, the seat is yours. It could be our chance to improve the Wizarding World, together.”

Although the power of coherent speech seemed to have left her momentarily, he knew she would say yes, it was a perfect plan for both of them. He was rather enjoying watching her squirm. He should do this with her more often. Now she was on her back, he could see her arousal. She was absolutely dripping, awaiting his touch, clenching on air and rubbing her thighs together. But he slowly continued his work, pretending to be oblivious to her increasing lust. She threaded her arms over his neck and pulled him down for a kiss, which he found he needed just as much as her to find a small release.

Taking pity on her (or maybe both of them), he cast a lubrication spell generously. His hand moved from her breasts downward, slowly applying the techniques he’d read about. His fingers circled, gliding, teasing.

“We could create a home in a discreet London townhouse near the Ministry with your horrible cat-inspired menace and then do all those projects you’re always on about, like saving the world and fighting injustice. Maybe you could find time for more personal hobbies too, like dragon taming.”

When he thought she couldn’t take it anymore, he slipped a finger into her. He immediately felt her fluttering around him and her whole body shuddered. He hadn’t realized she was so close, but that single contact sent her over the edge.

“Yes! Draco. Oh my God. Jesus Christ, yes,” she cried. He always loved when she said his name, but why was it she called out to Muggle deities? He decided, as always, to wait to ask her another time.

As she came down, he asked her again to be sure what the “yes” meant, “So you’ll do it?”

“Yes, of course. Yes, to all of it,” she replied, slightly more focused now as her orgasm retreated. He couldn’t have that though. He continued his ministrations to bring her just to the edge again and again, until she was begging for him to come inside her, pulling him with her hands and reaching out to him with her magic.

He wanted to keep teasing her a while longer, but his own need overruled his patience. The warmth between them, the intoxicating notes of vanilla and musk, it all undid him. He lined himself up and seated himself deeply within her. She wrapped her arms and legs and magic around him and it felt like coming home, home to her, Hermione, his. The most important thing he planned to do with the rest of his life was her, anything for her. He wanted to stay here, with her, inside of her, forever. He was overcome with a fierce swell of emotion.

“I love you,” he whispered, huskily as he snapped his hips in time with their breath. Connected to her in every way he knew.

“I love you too,” she moaned. He felt like he might burst with emotion as their silver and gold magic spiraled together. When she came again, he immediately followed, pushing his magic as deep as he could into hers.

He fell onto his side, careful not to crush her, as aftershocks trembled through them. He pulled her close and buried his face in her curls to breathe her in.

“I love you,” he said again, so she would know he meant it.

“I love you,” she said, but hesitated, then continued, “Do you remember that night we brought you to St. Mungo’s?”

Why would she bring that up now? “Not much, why?”

“The thing is, well, that night, I told you that I was in love with you and you said you loved me too. Then you blacked out from the pain, so I didn’t expect you to remember, but I wasn’t sure.”

“You did? I did?” he nuzzled her. “You little witch. And here I was working myself up to tell you that I’m madly in love with you.”

“I already know you are, dragon.”

He looked at her then. Her golden eyes met his and he knew he could spend the rest of his life looking into those eyes, trying to be worthy of her love.

She looked away from him, breaking their connection. “Draco, earlier tonight, at the party, why didn’t you tell everyone about us? They mostly already know or at least suspect. What are you still afraid of?”

“You know why. I don’t want to bring you down.”

“You’re wrong. I’m the one that is lucky to be with you. And not because you’re the...,” she got a wicked grin and he knew she was up to something. “... wealthiest, most handsome-ist, most powerful winner of the 2001 Most Charming Smile Award, with 10 NEWTs, and Lord of the...” Alright she asked for it, he rolled back on top of her, tickling and kissing her while she tried to wiggle away from him.

“Draco, wait, stop,” she exclaimed, out of breath, and he stopped. “Listen love, you’ve overcome so much. You aren’t the same person you used to be. When you realize you’re wrong (because you are clearly wrong about this) and you are ready to be with me openly, I’ll be waiting.”

Maybe she was right, maybe he was being a coward about this. She was probably right. She was always right. Fuck if it didn’t terrify him though.

“I’m in love with you,” she continued now with a mischievous grin. “And that’s never going to change, even if you are an overly dramatic, emotionally constipated baby dragon-”

“Don’t pull any punches now, tell me how you really feel.”

“-who lives with his mother-”

Oh, so back to this. He still had her pinned under him and went back to tickling and kissing her.

“-and is obsessed with his hair,” she said, nearly shouting and with absolute glee.

Draco caught both of her wrists with one of his hands while his other grabbed his wand from the bedside table. He’d have to think of a suitable punishment for his witch. He kissed her soundly, then used a basic sticking charm to keep her hands at the top of the bed. He wondered idly if they had gotten back to Falmouth yet or not. But no matter, he owned the cursed bus, they could stay as long as they liked.

Chapter End Notes

One chapter left! I can’t believe next week is the finals!!!

Don't forget after the finale, there's a little something extra... If you've been waiting for Draco to navigate the Muggle world, you'll need to read the epilogue one-shot, "Seeker on the Slopes"!

"Granger, I don't know what a hot dog or a pizza even is, much less how one might do that with their skis."

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Please visit healthyishobsession.com to see Gossamer26's vintage ad for Pinnock's Giggle Water plus you can join the mailing list, listen to the playlists, take Dramione quizzes, and see all the "extra" content we've created for you!

See you at the championship!
-HealthyishObsession

Art credits: Gossamer26 made a fabulous throwback ad for Pinnock's Giggle Water and the play-off bracket for this chapter.

Chapter 26: Falcons' Stadium. May 2001.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)



BRITISH & IRISH
LEAGUE CUP



THE 327TH

CHAMPIONSHIP



NOON

SATURDAY

THE NEST STADIUM

12 MAY 2001

20 GALLEONS PER TICKET | DOORS WILL OPEN
AT 10 AM | FIRST 2000 ATTENDEES WILL
RECEIVE A GHOST FALCON FIGURINE
COMPLIMENTS OF WEASLEY WIZARD WHEEZES
| 2 GALLEONS FROM EVERY TICKET WILL BE
DONATED TO THE YOUTH QUIDDITCH TRUST |
HEALTHYISHOBSESSION.COM



Daily Prophet: RULES SHAKE FINAL! Wizengamot Orders Immediate Quidditch Chaos!

By: Rita Skeeter

Well, well, well, my dear readers, this is it! The British and Irish Quidditch League season culminates today in a clash between the indomitable Chudley Cannons and the... Falmouth Falcons. While the Cannons have enjoyed a perfectly respectable season (until last week's disastrous drama with their Seeker, see page 5!), it's the Falcons, naturally, who are providing all the fodder for our cauldrons of gossip. Who, one might ask, truly expected this redemption arc? From the ashes of what can only be described as utter disarray at the season's start, they've not just rebuilt, but soared to heights few believed possible, even securing a place in the prestigious Phoenix Cup (for a truly scandalous timeline of the Falcons' improbable journey, see page 12!). They've clawed their way to today's home-field advantage through sheer, unadulterated grit – and, let's be honest, a healthy dose of dramatic flair. Just a few short months ago, the idea of witnessing the League Cup Final right here in Falmouth would have been met with derisive cackles.

A Shocking Legislative Coup

But today's match, my darlings, promises to be unexpected in more ways than one. In a move that sent veritable shockwaves through the Ministry late last night, the Wizengamot – in their infinite, and often baffling, wisdom – saw fit to pass the highly contentious new Quidditch safety bill, affectionately dubbed QUILL. The bill was submitted by the Department of Magical Games and Sports weeks ago and has been languishing. Astute readers will recall QUILL was meticulously crafted by Falmouth's very own Lord Draco Malfoy and trainee Healer, Hermione Granger! (Both, incidentally, are now awaiting their own investiture later this month, set to occupy the venerable ancestral seats of the Malfoy and Black families, respectively. One does wonder what that particular dynamic will bring to our esteemed Wizengamot.) Proponents have crowed about QUILL's "common sense" safety measures: basic padding, player substitutions, and a mandatory two-hour break for every ten hours of play. Opponents railed against its utter disregard for sacred Quidditch tradition and its openly Muggle influences. Yet, despite their valiant efforts, they simply couldn't sway the majority to vote against this... innovation.

Unprecedented Rules for an Unprecedented Final!

And now, for the real spectacle, dear readers! In a truly astonishing, some might say utterly unhinged, turn of events, the Wizengamot decreed that these "safety regulations" were so critically important they must be implemented... effective immediately! Yes, you read that correctly! After not moving on this for weeks! This means the new rules, these radical, tradition-shattering changes, will make their grand, unceremonious debut in today's League Cup championship match! Imagine the scene: the Chudley Cannons, accustomed to their rhythm, facing the Falmouth Falcons, who have clearly thrived on chaos all season, now under a completely alien set of regulations. There is absolutely no telling who might truly win today's match – the first of many, one fears, under these utterly unprecedented safety rules. It's truly a spectacle not to be missed, a grand experiment in Quidditch right before our very eyes!

Falmouth Falcons League Cup Final

2001 Roster

Oliver Wood: Keeper/Captain

Ginny Weasley: Chaser

Adrian Pucey: Chaser

Katie Bell: Chaser

Gregory Goyle: Beater

Millicent Bulstrode: Beater

Cho Chang: Seeker

Hermione

Butterflies, accidentally conjured by Goyle's nervous energy, fluttered erratically through the team room, adding to the complete chaos. Hermione had been there in the aftermath of the French Fiasco and this was much worse. Not only was the team playing a match today, which was normally a cause for tension, now they were playing with a whole set of new safety rules in the League Cup. Playing in the League Cup was a childhood dream come true for so many of them, but that meant the pressure was that much higher. Normally, the Falcons would be going through their pre-match routines, polishing brooms and clipping twigs, stretching and taping old injuries, but today everyone also needed new safety fittings, broom checks, and rule briefings.

Hermione stood to one side with Draco, Theo, and Blaise trying to gauge how the sudden enactment of QUILL might alter the play today, while Pansy tried in vain to vanish Goyle's butterflies before he accidentally conjured more. Unfortunately since the bill was passed last night, there is only so much they could do. They couldn't hire and train any extra players to add to their roster as subs. Luckily, Hermione and Pansy were able to transfigure some basic pads, which Pansy immediately began sketching for her "Witch on the Pitch" product line. That left Hermione to dig through storage to locate an old Keepers helmet. It only needed a few Scourgify charms to clean the caked on... substance. It would have to do for today.

What a mess. She had awoken that morning to an owl insistently pecking at the window of her flat before dawn. Draco whimpered as she slipped out of the cocoon of his arms, painfully hit her shin on one of her moving boxes, and had thrown open the window to read whatever news was so bloody important. Seeing that QUILL had passed "effective immediately", she hadn't even had time to celebrate. She'd handed the paper to a bewildered Draco and they had quickly dressed, then Flooed directly to The Nest. She'd been rushed off her feet ever since, along with most of the staff and team, to try to get everything ready in time.

Merlin, what had the Wizengamot been thinking? This was madness. Yes, of course, she wanted Quidditch to be safer, but this was not the launch she had envisioned. Perhaps they'd

made their case too well. She would need to keep this in mind so their future proposals would pass, but not cause a panic.

“Our matches have rarely gone past 10 hours, so the new mandatory breaks are likely moot,” continued Blaise, “but to be frank, Cho still hasn’t recovered since the long Bats match. A long match is a possibility, it just depends on the Cannons’ replacement Seeker, who still hasn’t been announced yet.” Draco looked over the top of his glasses to watch Cho appraisingly across the room and then turned to shoot a concerned look at Blaise.

“One thing at a time. What about the padded arm guards for Chasers? That’s mandatory now, did anyone do that?” asked Draco, flipping through the approved version of new safety rules. She noticed that he looked as impeccable as always and must have taken at least a few minutes to fix his signature hair. A peacock Patronus really would have suited him. She, on the other hand, had been running around like mad all morning in her athletic healer outfit, her curls were theoretically piled haphazardly on top of her head, but were mostly just falling everywhere.

“Pansy, Theo, and I have those covered, for today at least,” said Hermione.

“And we’ve warned everyone to avoid using ‘Finite’ if they want their gear to last through the match,” added Theo. “Because it’s mostly transfigured from bits of green leather, foam, and goose down we pulled out of a sofa.”

“Who’s sofa, Theo?”

“Don’t you have enough to worry about today?” Theo continued as Draco growled, “But in answer to your question, I recommend avoiding your office until you have time to do a *Reparo Maxima*.”

“This is ridiculous,” said Draco, exasperated, running a hand through his hair, dislodging several butterflies that had settled there.

“You fixed a vanishing cabinet. I’m sure you can fix a sofa,” said Theo.

“Theo, you’re not even supposed to be here,” said Blaise. “Get out, before Malfoy loses it.”

Hermione agreed with Draco, this was ridiculous. Perhaps they had gotten carried away with adding too many new regulations to their bill. In her defense, the Department of Magical Games and Sports and then the Wizengamot had both edited it since she had last seen it. She wasn’t solely to blame. Besides, it was the timing that was mad.

As Theo scampered out to the stands, Cho joined them, ready in her Seeker gear. Hermione couldn’t help noticing that Cho still looked sallow. “Hey, um, I just wanted to talk to you before the match. I want you to know that I’m so grateful that you took a chance on me this season. I sincerely appreciate everything you’ve all done for me.”

“Cho, we are the ones that were lucky to have you,” said Draco looking up from the list of new regulations and pocketing his reading glasses. “We’re here today because of you.”

“Thank you,” said Cho bashfully, “but, now that QUILL has passed, I’d like to ask to play as the Falcons’ alternate Seeker next season. If it’s alright with you, of course. I’d still like to be involved in Quidditch, I love Quidditch, and I think the new legislation will allow me to do that without compromising my health.” Hermione was proud of Cho for realizing her limits and drawing a boundary now that it was an option.

“We’ll be disappointed to see you go as Seeker,” said Blaise, “but we would be happy to keep you on as an alternate.”

“Thank you, truly. I know I’m not in top form today, but I’m going to do my best for the Falcons.”

She turned to go back to sit with the team, but Draco called her back.

“Cho, wait, I think you’d make a first-rate director for the Falcons new Muggle-born training camp. Could we talk more about the position sometime after the match? Now, obviously, isn’t the best time.”

“Yes, thank you, that would be brilliant,” said Cho with a spark Hermione hadn’t seen in weeks. Hermione was pleased to see the immediate ramifications of her safety legislation. Cho would make an excellent alternate Seeker. She still had plenty of good years of playing, if she had the opportunity to take care of herself.

The joy of it sent thrills down her spine. She was really doing it. After years of studying and fighting and hiding, she was finally doing it. She was making real positive change in the Wizarding World. Between her upcoming medical research at the Department of Mysteries and her work serving on the Wizengamot, she knew this was just the beginning. She had so many plans.

With her packing already underway, tomorrow she and Draco would meet with his property consultant to select a townhouse in London. On Monday, she would start her new rotation with the Department of Mysteries. The first thing they had discussed was a deep dive into her Cruciatu Curse treatment. Draco and Cho had already agreed to come in for testing, then she would work with her new colleagues to begin trying it on new patients. Neville’s parents were at the top of her list. Once that was finished, Hermione had already identified a whole host of other treatments she was itching to work on, but first she would need to be sworn into the Wizengamot at the end of the month. She hadn’t decided yet what her first legislative goals would be, but had narrowed it down to something relating either to house elves or codifying Muggle-born rights.

But one thing at a time, she still had a final match as the Falcons’ Healer.

“I know today hasn’t gone the way we all planned with the sudden roll-out of the new safety rules late last night,” said Wood, starting off his pre-match team talk. “None of us saw this coming,” he said, indicating the leather helmet that Hermione had unearthed early this morning. “Seriously though, no one thought we’d make the finals either, but here we are. After the match today, so many of us are going our separate ways: I’ll be in and out with the National Team, Millie is going to be out next season on leave, Cho is transitioning to other roles on the team, Hermione and Draco will be off saving the world at the Ministry. It’s the

end of an era, but we are all here today. We are here, now, one last time.” Wood paused to look at everyone and smiled when he saw Pansy and Ginny miming something at him.

He continued, “And I’d be remiss if I forgot to remind us all of how it started with one lifelong Falcons fan who was determined to rescue his favourite team. Draco, the Falmouth Falcons are indebted to you for making this wild ride possible. From the bottom of our hearts, we’d like to thank you.”

Draco’s pale skin made his blush all the more apparent and he looked a bit sheepish as everyone turned to him to applaud. It was clear he wasn’t expecting anything.

Ginny walked up to the front of the room with a large box, “It’s incredibly difficult to get you a gift since you can buy anything you want. Instead we got you something you couldn’t buy and you’ll never earn on the field, because, although it turns out you’re a good person, you’re not that good at Quidditch.”

“Ginny,” Oliver warned.

She grinned and then everyone was a bit breathless with anticipation as she pulled out a folded set of official Parkinson Designs grey and white Falcons robes with “Malfoy” written across the back. Draco was speechless. Obviously he hadn’t noticed when Hermione and Pansy had gone through his closet to determine his measurements. Ginny passed them to him and when he lifted the robes up, he could see the #7, the Seeker’s number, emblazoned on the front and back. Draco closed his eyes and held the bridge of his nose to stave off tears, but who was he kidding? Draco had always been a crier. His silver eyes glistened with unshed tears as Ginny hugged him, Oliver slapped him on the back, and soon the whole team was swarming around him to offer their thanks for the season.

“Alright, we’ve got a League Cup to win,” announced Oliver and led the team out onto the pitch, while Hermione fell into step with Pansy and Blaise to walk to the coaching box.

The stadium was packed and they had to push past the press to get to their seats. Hermione recognized Luna, Rita, Parvati, and Miles as they declined to comment on their way down toward the pitch. The box was incredibly full too, although she should have guessed as much since it was the championship match. Pansy slipped into a seat next to Neville. Hermione passed Viktor and Harry chatting near Theo and Astoria, but she was surprised to see Narcissa as well, sitting in a nicely transfigured chair. She was doubly surprised when the Malfoy matriarch smiled warmly at her. That seemed like a good sign. Narcissa had designed the Malfoy Manor’s Muggle library with her in mind and seemed to approve of her when they’d met in passing. Perhaps she should ask Draco to organize a tea for them to meet properly... before Draco sent her back to France. Besides, Hermione should thank Narcissa for making Draco attend all those dance lessons when he was younger.

She found her normal seat had been reserved for the team Healer and was adjacent to the seat reserved for the team owner. She snorted. Subtle. She took her seat and looked out at the sea of people in the stands going wild as the teams began to warm up. Quidditch really was quite exciting sometimes, maybe she didn’t mind it so much anymore, maybe she sort of liked it now that she understood it better.

Just as she started looking around, fearing Draco would miss the beginning of the match, he dropped into his seat next to her. He was wearing his new grey and white Falcons #7 robes with a big goofy grin. Adorable. She wished she could kiss him, but didn't think he would want that in front of all these people. He surprised her then by interlacing their fingers and bringing their hands up so he could kiss the back of her hand. The excitement in The Nest was reaching a fever pitch and Draco was vibrating with excitement next to her.

"Welcome witches and wizards to the 327th League Cup Championship," said George.

"The brooms are up, the balls have been released, and the final match of the 2001 Irish and British Quidditch League season has begun!" said Fred.

The crowd cheered as the match began.

"What I'm looking forward to today is watching these teams' Seekers battle it out," said George.

"The season began with Cormac McLaggen as the Falcons' Seeker, but he was sacked over allegations of an incident on the Isle of Skye."

"He was cleared of all charges, so we'll leave it at that. Let's just say, you don't cross a McLaggen lightly."

"Right-o Fred, anyway, he was added to the Cannons roster only moments before the match began and is here now to battle his replacement, the Falcons' Cho Chang."

"Millie, with a smashing hit toward the far post."

"Chang has had a record-breaking season while battling several health issues- Oi, watch it. Nice play by the Cannons that."

Hermione didn't know Cormac had been chosen as the Cannons replacement Seeker and moved her head to get a look at him. She could tell it was a surprise to Draco as well, but he looked delighted at the thought.

"Draco, aren't you upset that Cormac is playing?" asked Hermione.

"No," he replied with a smirk, "it's perfect. McLaggen is probably out for revenge or some nonsense, but he's a rubbish Seeker. Cho will flatten him. Blaise only hired McLaggen because we were desperate to find a Seeker, the Cannons must have been even more desperate than us to find someone this week. I don't know why the Cannons chose him."

"Maybe his uncle bought them all brooms," she quipped.

"Witch, my father bought those brooms *after* I made the team."

"Sure he did."

"Do you want to talk about second year then? The year you were infatuated with Gilderoy Lockhart?"

“I wasn’t-”

“You just happened to know his favourite color was lavender?”

“Lilac, actually. And what can I say? I have a thing for narcissistic blondes.”

He made such an adorable scowl that she nearly leaned over and kissed him, but caught herself at the last moment. This secret relationship business was exhausting. Instead she just knocked her shoulder into his and turned her attention back toward the match and the twins’ commentary.

“Yikes, watch out there Wood. Ten points to the Cannons.”

“No sign of the Snitch yet.”

“I’m also excited to watch these two Keepers play,” said Fred. “One of them is unmatched in the UK in terms of speed, focus, and all around play.

“And the other is our little brother,” finished George.

“And our sister, Ginny, is playing Chaser for the Falcons against him so this should be interesting,” added Fred.

“Sorry Mum, I know you’re listening, but we work for the Falcons.”

“And we wouldn’t support Ronnikins anyway.”

Hermione watched as Chasers fought for control of the Quaffle amidst the rain of Bludgers while the Seekers rode in solitary loops watching for the Golden Snitch from high above the action. Hermione felt she could better understand the subtle variations of the game and could identify many of the plays after watching so many matches and flying at night with Draco as her personal Quidditch tutor.

Early in any match, the players were still fresh, which meant that play was relentlessly fast. With the championship on the line, both teams were desperate to catch the Snitch to win 150 points and an instant victory - a healer’s nightmare. Hermione expected that the reckless intensity would continue at least until one team pulled more than 150 points ahead, making major injuries inevitable. She tried to settle in to watch the match and was surprised to notice that Draco still held her hand. Perhaps he hadn’t noticed either, he seemed singularly focused on the match.

The twins continued their commentary.

“Bell has the Quaffle, it looks good. Sorry Ron. Ten points to the Falcons!”

“Now today everyone is talking about the QUILL safety regulations passed by the Wizengamot last night and effective immediately. It has made for quite the scramble this morning and will likely come into play throughout the match today.”

“Wait, that’s Pucey with the-, ah, nevermind.”

“As most of you know, the Falcons’ own team healer and owner co-wrote the first draft of the life-saving legislation.”

“I wouldn’t have guessed it, but they make a surprisingly good team.”

“I think we must expect great things from their partnership.”

Draco squeezed her hand and shot her a smile. She was surprised he wasn’t bothered by the twins talking about them. In fact he looked sort of pleased. Huh.

Her moment with Draco was shattered as a gasp went up from the crowd.

“And the Snitch has been spotted,” said Fred.

“Could be a quick match,” answered George.

Cho and Cormac had spotted the Snitch and were racing down across the pitch coming from opposite directions. Cho pulled up slightly to slow as she reached her arm out toward the Snitch. Right then, Cormac slammed his broom into her sideways, knocking her off course into the stands. The crowd gasped as Cho slammed against a post and fell to the ground.

Fred and George yelled out over the stadium and the crowd joined: “Oi, that was a Snitch Clip!”, “Foul!”, “She had it!”

The whistle was blown, but it wouldn’t help Cho.

Shite.

Hermione ran out onto the field towards Cho’s limp form. Dropping to her knees next to an unconscious Cho, Hermione cast her diagnostic spell. Shattered ribs and arm from the Snitch Clip (a textbook foul, he had slammed right into her on purpose to stop her from getting the Snitch, that bastard), sprained knee from where she fell, but none of that worried her too much. It was her other readings that were a mess. Cho had been barely strong enough to play and the pain of this hit almost certainly would lead to a relapse of her condition. Hermione levitated her onto a conjured stretcher to bring her to the Medical Center.

As she jogged alongside the stretcher her thoughts began to spiral. She knew she would probably need to pull Cho from the match, but how could they play without a Seeker? The Falcons should have come up with a solution weeks ago, as soon as it was clear Cho was pushing herself too hard. Still, player welfare was Hermione’s job, not coaching. She’d just have to do her best to get Cho well enough to play the rest of the match or make the tough call to pull her out. Only a Seeker could end the match. Cho was their only Seeker. If Hermione pulled Cho out of the match, they would surely lose the championship.

Hermione had been mistaken, she really did hate Quidditch.

Draco

Fuck.

Draco threw open the door to the Medical Center, followed by Blaise and then half the coaching box: Pansy and Theo, even Potter and Longbottom.

Hermione briefly glanced up from her work, and a small smile, a look just for him flickered across her face before she focused back on Cho. Hermione had cast a complex web of intricate spells over her, their golden light still shimmering in the air. Salazar, she was brilliant. Cho took a deep breath and tried to sit up, but Hermione held her down and gave her a potion. At least she was awake. That had to be a good sign, right? Cho finished the potion, then gasped and curled on her side.

Fuck. It didn't take the Brightest Witch of Her Age to tell him that Cho couldn't get back in the air today. She was obviously barely hanging on and Hermione's treatments would need time to take effect. He knew, rationally, that Cho's long term health was more important than this match. But, fuck... Draco ran his hands through his hair in frustration, then took a deep steadying breath.

He slowed and walked up to the floating stretcher Cho was on and placed a hand gingerly on her shoulder, "I'm sorry," he told her, "we never should have let you play when you were already struggling."

"No, I'm sorry," said Cho with a disturbing wheeze, "I was so focused on the Snitch, I... I should have seen McLaggen coming,"

"Hey, it's okay, we gave it our best shot. There's always next season, yeah?"

"Next season? No, Draco, we can still win it," she said with growing conviction, that seemed to cost her what little strength she had.

"It's alright Cho, it's just a game. It doesn't really matter who wins," said Draco softly and he heard Hermione snort as she continued running diagnostics.

"No, Draco, we can still win the League Cup today because you can go in as Seeker," Cho said. "You're already in your kit."

"No," he said immediately. It was a preposterous suggestion. "I'm not a professional player, I'm absolute rubbish - you've told me yourself a hundred times, right after you beat me to the Snitch."

The new rules stated: "players may be substituted for other uniformed players waiting on the sideline", technically he was wearing a uniform. Of course he had dreamed of playing as the Seeker for the Falcons, but realistically, he knew he simply wasn't good enough. He still wasn't strong enough after Azkaban. He hadn't trained enough. He wasn't fast enough on his right - or left. He simply was not and would never be a professional player. It was a childish dream; any possibility of realizing it had been personally killed off by the Dark Lord himself.

"She's right," said Blaise. "We don't have anyone else; you've trained all season. You have to at least try."

"You might not be a top-tier player," added Theo, "but then, that never stopped McLaggen."

“Thanks for the vote of confidence,” Draco said wryly. Could he do it? This was madness. As he looked around the Medical Center, every face was turned toward him hopefully. They were all waiting for him to agree; Cho, Blaise, Pansy, Theo, Potter, Longbottom... They all believed he could at least give it a shot. He looked at Hermione last. The moment her eyes met his, he knew he would do it. She believed in him. She always did, especially when he didn't believe in himself.

“Go, you can do this,” she said, coming around Cho to place her hand on his arm.

“I love you, My,” he said, turning to meet her.

“I love you too.”

He pulled her close to him and kissed her boldly, without hesitation, right there in front of half of their friends. She was surprised for only a moment, then leaned into the kiss, going on her toes to wrap her arms around him and drag a hand through the back of his hair. Merlin, he loved her.

“I'm glad you're both in love and all,” said Blaise, “but now is not the time for this. We've got a match to win.”

“See you soon, Golden Girl,” he said to her.

“Good luck, dragon.”

Draco took a deep breath and called, “*Accio Supercell EF5*”. Thank Salazar he had purchased such an unnecessarily elite broom, he'd need every advantage he could get today. His broom flew into his hand and he was off, shooting directly from the Medical Center onto the pitch.

As the stadium opened up and he flew into view of the crowd, he remembered what a terrible idea this was. He was used to training with Cho in the mornings or flying solo at night with no one, except maybe Hermione, half watching. Now every seat was filled and the crowd was going wild. He swallowed and tried to focus. Surely he was better than McLaggen. He could do this.

Back out on the pitch now, he could hear the twins' commentary again.

“And back from the Medical Center, Cho Chang-,” Fred started, but was cut-off by George.

“Wait, that's not Chang. Merlin's saggy ballsack, look at that hair.”

“It's Draco bloody Malfoy.”

“We haven't seen him play since...er...?”

“I think his last appearance might have been, dunno, against the Hogwarts Hufflepuffs his fifth year?”

“Pretty big leap to go against the Chudey Cannons in the League Cup championship.”

“Hold on, we’ve just gotten word from Blaise Zabini, the Falcons’ Head of Quidditch: ‘The Falcons are using their first substitution under the new QUILL rules to replace #7 Cho Chang with Draco Malfoy as Seeker. Ms. Chang has sustained a serious injury, but is expected to make a full recovery.’”

“Blimey.”

“This should be interesting.”

The Nest was filled with the roar of the crowd, it was nothing like his meditative flights at night. Each glint of light caught his eye as a potential Snitch, the shifting mass of players below obscured his view, and there were thousands of eyes on him and all of them were waiting to pass judgement. Somewhere out in that mess, the Golden Snitch was hiding, just out of reach.

He chanced a look at the scoreboard: Falcons 70, Cannons 110. They were forty points down. As long as he caught the Snitch before the Cannons pulled ahead 150 points, they could win it. The scoreboard felt like a ticking clock. The Cannons were playing rougher than usual, Weasley picked today to become a wall of a Keeper, and he felt the Falcons turning desperate.

Draco flew a standard pattern high up, occasionally feinting toward a Snitch he didn’t see to trick McLaggen (pitifully easy) or dodge Bludgers (not as easy). Salazar. He hadn’t trained with Bludgers in ages. The sheer speed of them triggered a cold terror in his stomach he hadn’t felt since the war. The bloody Bludgers. It was only because Goyle and Millie were such an exceptionally strong team that he hadn’t been knocked out already.

In fact, Goyle had improved a lot since Draco had last played with him on the Slytherin team. He was incredible today, twirling his bat as he smashed another Bludger into the Quaffle, but that also made him a target.

Draco tried to focus exclusively on scanning for the Snitch. Come on, he thought. They had remembered to release a Snitch for this match hadn’t they? He had to focus. Nothing else mattered now. As captain, Wood was in charge on the pitch, not Draco. Snitch, Snitch, Snitch. But he was overwhelmed by an outburst from the crowd that was impossible to ignore - he had to look.

Goyle was... what in the name of Merlin was he on about? He was acting like... a frog? The whistle blew and Millie transfigured something into a fly to lure him down to Hermione. Another foul. Without the Beaters he was forced to drop lower into the match so he could hide from Bludgers behind the other players. It was a terrible way to find the Snitch and an excellent way to collide with someone. He didn’t belong on the pitch. This was going to end in disaster. He narrowly missed Katie.

“Sorry,” he called, but she was already gone. He clutched his broom tighter, his hands steady, and took a deep breath. Hermione believed he could do it and she was brilliant, so maybe there was still a chance.

The Cannons sensed blood in the water as the point gap widened to a 90 point lead. Millie was back in the air, so that gave Draco some protection, but they needed both Beaters. He climbed back to his vantage point. As he topped out he saw it, a flash of gold. He dove, but... shite, it was only the casual toss of a galleon. He continued the dive anyway out of spite for McLaggen. He flew right past Fred and George and heard their commentary more easily for a moment.

“The Cannons are looking brilliant.”

“Before the match I would have said the Falcons were the better team, but it’s just not coming together for them today.”

“Another ten points to the Cannons.”

“Oh shite, watch out Gin.”

Ginny had taken a Bludger to the leg. Her broom (and likely her leg) was shattered. He winced as she fell hard in the middle of the pitch and he saw Hermione running out to her. Hopefully it was a clean break that Hermione could easily fix. A new broom would see Ginny back up in a few minutes. Realizing he'd been distracted, he hurriedly scanned for the Snitch and clocked McLaggen's position. He hadn't seen anything either.

No matter what they seemed to try, the Cannons kept gaining on them. They were down by 130 points now, nearly out of Snitch range. He needed to find the Snitch now, while the 150 point bonus would still win it for them. He needed to get the Snitch not just for the team, but to prove... well to prove what exactly? That he could play Seeker? That Hermione's faith wasn't misplaced? No, that wasn't it, not really. It was about reclaiming control over his own life. So much had been stolen from him by his family, by the Dark Lord, by the Ministry, even admittedly, by his own choices...and he was almost there, he'd almost gotten it all back to a place he could live with; that he was proud of.

The twins and the crowd let out a whoop and he realized Goyle was back in the air, no longer trying to lick his own eyeballs.

Draco scanned the pitch, the stadium, the players, and was growing more desperate now. As he searched his eyes were, as always, drawn to Hermione. He couldn't help himself.

She was right there in the middle of the pitch, helping Ginny back up onto a new broom. And then he saw it. A small flash of gold. The Golden Snitch, it was there, fluttering beside her magnificent tangle of curls.

Hermione, utterly oblivious, waved a hand, swatting it away like an annoying gnat, her entire focus on Ginny. Of course, it would be Hermione that would lead him to victory, even if it was accidental. As soon as he spotted it, he plummeted, a wild breathless laugh bubbling up inside of him. His Golden Girl really was terrible at Quidditch.

The crowd, the press, the Cannons, even the Falcons all faded away into a blur of white noise, it was all unimportant.

Hermione shrieked as he dove toward her. He reached out with his right hand and felt his fingers grasp the Golden Snitch; its tiny wings beating against his palm. He'd done it. He'd actually done it. They had won: Falcons 220, Cannons 200.

Holding the Snitch aloft, he swooped down to land next to Hermione. He grabbed her around the waist with his free arm and kissed her, right there in the middle of the pitch.

The stadium exploded in celebration, but all Draco could see were her golden eyes. What a silver lining this whole season had been. His past would always be part of him, but it no longer defined him. He'd found his team, his family. He'd found himself. And against all odds, he'd found her. What he needed had never been about Quidditch at all. The only victory he needed was this; he'd found the life that he'd been seeking.

Three Years Later...

The Daily Prophet

Golden Snitch, Golden Girl: Does Draco Malfoy have the Midas touch?

Another victory for the Malfoys today with the passage of the Global Ordinance for Life-saving Distribution act or as it's commonly known, the GOLD Act. Their latest progressive legislation famously enables greater access to Healer Hermione Malfoy's newest life saving treatment. With yet another winning season ending for their Falcons, dear readers, we are left wondering what will this power couple do next? Although they have the Snitch firmly in their grasp, it seems their game has only just begun.



Theo Nott's Fit Quidditch 2001 BRITISH AND IRISH LEAGUE

FALMOUTH FALCONS

LoveSCHEDULE

December : Mysterious dance at the League Cup Commencement Gala
January

6, 10, 13 **Preseason**  Birmingham Badgers (Amateur)
Oxford Mammoths (Amateur) *L x 3*
Quiberon Quafflepunchers (France)

20 **Falmouth Falcons**  Wimbourne Wasps *L*
Hermione brainwaves training regimen AKA YOGA PANTS
Draco defends Hermione from Evil Flint

26 **Falmouth Falcons**  Appleby Arrows *L*
Surprise drinks at the Sipping Selkie

February *Hermione's athletic joggers melt Draco's brain*

3 **Falmouth Falcons**  Puddlemere United *W*

10 **Falmouth Falcons**  Pride of Portree *L*
Secret first date then Draco strikes a risque pose while firing McLaggen

17 **Falmouth Falcons**  Chudley Cannons *W*
Narcissa witnesses our messy medical miracle

24 **International Friendly**  Vratsa Vultures (Bulgaria) *W*

March *Sex marathon begins after magical International Cooperation Ball*

3 **Falmouth Falcons**  Montrose Magpies *W*
So many secret romantic dates!!!

9 **Falmouth Falcons**  Tutshill Tornados *W*

17 **Falmouth Falcons**  Kenmare Kestrels *W*

30 **Falmouth Falcons**  Caerphilly Catapults *W*

April *Brilliant Hermione invents life saving potion, lame Draco buys her a broom*

7 **Falmouth Falcons**  Wigtown Wanderers *W*
oblivious Draco goes to blood purist party and almost messes up everything

14 **Falmouth Falcons**  Holyhead Harpies *L*

21 **Falmouth Falcons**  Ballycastle Bats *W*

Championship Gala *After the longest game ever, Ollie and I went home and cuddled. But Ginny told me you HAD BROOM RIDING SEXY TIMES?!*
Evil Flint returns! **May - Semifinal/Final**
Draco saves Hermione!
We save Draco!
Love defeats trauma!

5 **Falmouth Falcons**  Holyhead Harpies *W*
Ogden's boycott! Gigglewater REIGNS!

12 **Falmouth Falcons**  Chudley Cannons *W*

This seemed like the perfect hen do present. Wait till you see what I got you as a wedding present!
Theo

The Wizengamot QUEEFS! Draco wins the Cup then announces your love to the world like the Drama queen he is!

How does my hair look?

"United we soar" into a Bludger



Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading my first fic! I cannot express how much it means to me that you've stayed for the whole journey. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I've enjoyed writing it. Thank you, thank you, thank you all for supporting me, leaving comments, creating art, and encouraging me through this entire process.

I'd like to specifically thank the members of our team:

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- **Beta Readers:** fan_affliction, JarlCarl, and BroomZoomies.
- **FanArtists:** PartyElephants, Harrison Wood Hsiang, and Gossamer26 (Goss also made all the art featured in Ch 26 plus the Daiy Prophet article which can be viewed on the website).
- **Tech Support for healthyishobsession.com** : “Mr. BroomZoomies” and fan_affliction.
- **Playlists:** Menjobleeko and Gossamer26.
- **Subscribers/Commenters:** Thank you all for supporting this fic as a WIP!

I'd also like to thank my husband, fan_affliction. He doesn't always understand my healthy(ish) obsession with Dramione, but he has unflaggingly supported this project and was my very first beta reader. If you noticed that my version of Draco is a brilliant partner but also a snarky little shit... you now know exactly where I got my inspiration.

Thank you so much for reading,
HealthyishObsession
healthyishobsession.com

Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction. I'm a muggle who does not particularly care for sports, has never flown on a broom, and has never done most of the things in this fic. Mum, this note is for you so you can stop blushing while recommending my fic to your friends!

What's Next?

While the Falcons' League Cup season is over, Draco still has a promise to keep. If you've been waiting for Draco to finally learn to ski, you won't want to miss [“Seeker on the Slopes.”](#)

If you liked the romance, found family, competent characters, and banter balanced by the emotional grit found in this story, you won't want to miss my next major project. To make sure you get the notification, please [join my mailing list](#) or [subscribe to my username on AO3](#). I'm considering different platforms for my upcoming release -

joining this mailing list is the only way to ensure you're notified when and where I publish next!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!