

The Meeting

A matter of balance

It was a dark and stormy night.

It actually was. A heavy rain squall had rolled up the coast the day before and had stalled out over the small Scottish town of Hogsmeade, much to the distress of the local citizenry.

A burst of thunder hid the small crack that the wizard's apparition caused. The downpour soaked through his cloak almost instantly. With a curse, the man pulled his cloak closed against the wind and made his way into the Hog's Head pub.

The seedy pub was as squalid as ever. Aberforth Dumbledore stood behind the bar, wiping a glass with a filthy rag. This Dumbledore was a tall, thin, grumpy-looking old man with a great deal of long grey hair, a long flowing beard and a pair of gold rimmed glasses over his blue eyes. As always the wizard was struck by the resemblance the bar keeper had to his famous brother.

A nod from the bar keeper told the wizard that his usual room was ready, and that his guest was already there, waiting for him. Shrugging out of his dripping cloak, he handed the garment along with his hat to the waiting elf and began his trek up the stairs to room 107.

At the door, he paused, his hand on the handle. The wizard took a deep breath and held it for a three count, and then exhaled softly, steeling himself for what was to come. Why was this so hard? Why was it always so hard? He opened the door and entered the room.

"Potter," he said with a small nod of recognition to the man sitting at the room's only table.

"Malfoy," his former rival nodded in return while turning two of the four glasses on the table over and picking up one of the two bottles of fire Whiskey. "Here we are again. How is your family?"

"They are well Potter," Draco answered, "and yours?"

"They are also quite well Malfoy," the dark haired wizard set to work opening the bottle. "Although I do have to admit that I was more than a little disturbed when your son visited my daughter over the Christmas hols. Honestly the thought of your son dating my daughter..." Harry responded with a glower.

"Oh, yes," Draco laughed as he took his seat across from his adversary. "I know I was thrilled beyond all belief when Scorpius introduced me to your Lily on Boxing Day."

"Scorpius," the dark haired man said shaking his head. "It's like you wanted him to be beaten up when he went to school."

"It is simply a family tradition," the blond pointed out, "and one only slightly sillier than your family and its penchant for naming your daughters for flowers."

"Point," Potter nodded as he dropped the bottle top onto the table in front of him and poured three fingers of an amber fluid into each of a pair of tumblers. He slid one of the glasses across the tabletop to Malfoy. "You know he wants people to call him 'Sam' don't you?"

Draco's face took on a look of pain. "Actually, no, I didn't know that, and I could have gone years without knowing that. That boy has more teen aged rebellion than our entire generation exhibited."

"True enough, but we were a pathetically conforming lot," Harry nodded. "I know I never questioned what was expected of me. Stupid of me I suppose."

"I never questioned my role either Potter, none of us did. Not Parkinson, not Bones, none of the Weasleys, not even Granger, and she was probably the smartest of us all."

Harry smiled, "I'm going to tell her you said that."

"Don't you dare, I have to deal with her every time she tries to take me to task for one of our political ploys."

Potter's smile got wider. "In all honesty, no one was more shocked than I was when she went to work for the DMLE. I'm constantly amazed she hasn't figured out our little plot. Maybe we should have brought her into our agreement back in the beginning."

That cause Malfoy to smile, "Please, that woman doesn't understand the entire concept of compromise. Even after everything you put her through; she still sees the world in shades of black and white. I can't make a move on the Wizengamot where she doesn't try to bring me up on charges."

"She's my best friend," Harry noted, "and she does the same thing with me." He paused for a moment and raised his glass for a sip. "I believe that it's your turn this year."

"This is the twenty fifth year we've done this," the blond man observed.

"Yeah."

Draco picked up his glass and tipped the contents into his mouth, savoring the burn as it flowed down his throat. "Our Great Grandparents fought each other Potter, our Grandparents fought, our fathers hated each other on sight, our mothers hated each other for their beliefs, for who their parents were," he summed up their shared family history, just as he had at their first meeting following the fall of Voldemort. "We were set against each other as children. I was raised to be a pampered prince, and you were raised as an abused urchin. Because of the way we were raised we fought, just as we were expected to fight because after all, that's what the Malfoys and Potters do."

"And did we ever live up to that expectation," Potter agreed.

"We both have sons now, you and I," Draco continued. "I don't want my son to fight your son just because we fought. I don't want either of our sons to be afraid, to wonder if he will ever see his parents again because of the whims of a mad man. I don't want our sons or any child to be hungry and cold and alone in the night like you were far too often. I don't want my son to hate someone because of who their parents are."

"And I don't want your wife hating mine for her beliefs," Harry interjected. "Nor vice-versa."

"We're a little late for that one as I'm sure you know Potter. We are in a position to try and change the rest of it, you and I," Draco recited recalling the words he had said at that first meeting half his lifetime before. "You have the power and I have the influence. Separately we would fail, but by working together, we could move mountains."

"No one would trust anything we do together," the man who won pointed out. "From me they will always be looking for the prank, from you they will always be looking for the double cross."

"That's why we will need to work together, without the world knowing what we are doing. I will oppose you in ways that will force people to your way of thinking," Draco suggested.

"And I will oppose you in ways that will push your people into supporting you," Harry concluded. "For this to work, we're going to have to do everything we can to avoid turning into our fathers."

"You aren't about to die Potter, and I can't see you blindly following any old man to your doom," Draco noted, "and I have no desire to follow a dark lord to emulate the broken bitter man my father has become."

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There was a pause while they reflected on the words they recited to each other, just as they had every year since that first meeting two years after Voldemort's fall.

"It always comes down to fathers for us doesn't it?" Harry sighed as he reached across the table to refill Draco's glass before repeating the action with his own.

"Our first meeting was colored by the demands of my father, and my general attitude toward you the whole time we were in school, came from my father. I was a good son, an idiot blindly following the man who ultimately put my mother and me at risk for our lives. We weren't free until you finished the Dark Lord... Voldemort, and even then I still didn't recognize the trap I was in," Draco said as he lifted his refilled glass to his lips.

"By the time we officially met I'd been pretty much prepped by Dumbledore's proxies to be anti-Slytherin... and then you went and insulted Ron Weasley... that sort of solidified the image of you being a royal ass I got in Madam Malkin's"

"I had no idea who you were then," Draco protested.

"It shouldn't have mattered," Harry pointed out

"But I..." the blond wizard hesitated before continuing. "You're right. Once we both grew up we decided to try and change the world because we had become fathers in our own right," Draco pointed out.

"Yeah," Harry shook his head. "I don't think I ever imagined that we would succeed."

"There is work yet to be done," Draco pointed out, "but I think we've made things better by being each other's arch enemy."

"The tax increase was insanely unpopular," Harry noted.

"But you convinced me that it was necessary," Draco nodded. "So it was passed."

"In exchange for certain... considerations for the pure blood elites," Harry agreed. "We're winning, aren't we?"

"I believe we are, yes," the blond man sat back in his chair, the glass cradled in his long elegant fingers. "We have a public meeting tomorrow, what indignity will you be visiting upon me this time?"

Harry smiled. "If I recall correctly, I have a hair color charm set to go off as you enter the Wizengamot chambers, a nice Weasley red."

"Ah," Draco nodded again. "One of the classics that never really gets old. Far better than

the Balding Hex from the October session. I shall have to go over my collection of death threats to find an appropriate reply."

"I would expect nothing less," Harry said lifting his drink in a salute.

Both men stiffened as the privacy wards they had each set independently had signaled each of them that someone was intruding on their meeting. As one, as if they had practiced a pair of wands appeared in their hands and were aimed at the door

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The door eased open and the two men relaxed.

"You might as well come in Granger," Draco called. "Unless you enjoy skulking in the hallways of course."

"I knew you were up to something Malfoy," the woman's distinctive voice announced from just around the door jam. "I saw you sneaking away and I traced you here, now I've found you and your conspirator."

"Hello Hermione," Harry called. "Come on in."

A very familiar face surrounded by a shock of bushy hair peered around the door frame wearing an expression of shock. "Harry?"

"Take a seat Granger," Draco gestured to an empty chair at the table. "Pour the lady a drink Potter."

Harry turned one of the spare glasses over and poured a more lady-like drink for his best friend. "Sit down Hermione."

"What's going on? Why are you here with Malfoy? You two hate each other, every time you're in the same room a fight almost breaks out."

"A fight *almost* breaks out," Draco said calmly as he gestured with his wand closing the door behind the startled woman. "Think about that Granger, back at school, did we ever *almost* do things to each other?"

Hermione blinked and sat down at the table.. "You two are working together?"

Draco smiled. "I told you she was the smartest one of us all."

"But that doesn't make any sense; you two oppose each other at every turn..." Hermione said, clearly confused.

Draco shook his head, "maybe I've been giving you too much credit Granger. Think now, what happens if I take a position in front of the Wizengamot that isn't particularly popular

among my coalition and Potter here stands up and opposes me?”

“That would drive them to support your position, but you two...”

“And when Draco opposes something I’m trying to do when the so called ‘Light families’ aren’t completely supportive of it?” Harry asked.

“That would drive the lights to support you, but...” Hermione blinked again, her brow furrowing into an expression Harry recognized from their school days as the sure sign Hermione was coming to understand. “How long have you two been doing this?”

“Twenty five years.” Harry answered.

“Since the beginning? But that means that...”

“That we are trying to make things better,” Draco answered. “I know you’ve never liked me Granger, and I’m more than willing to admit that I wasn’t particularly likable back in Hogwarts, but I don’t think very many of us were particularly impressive people back then. You were a bit of a know it all bossy bitch nearly constantly telling the purebloods just how wrong our society was if I recall.”

“I like to pretend we’ve grown up,” Harry suggested.

“So every time I’ve opposed what you were trying to do,” Hermione asked, “I’ve been interfering with what you’re trying to do?”

“Well, not as such,” Harry hesitated.

“Interfering?” Draco laughed, “Granger, if anything your opposition to my work on the Wizengamot is even more useful than Potter’s opposition, the vast majority of my coalition really, really hates you.”

Several seconds of silence filled the air as Hermione digested that thought. She lifted the drink and took a sip. “I knew they didn’t like me, but they *hate* me?”

Draco and Harry exchanged glances. Harry shrugged, he had always been fully aware that people in certain groups hated him on sight; he had after all been raised to understand hatred from his earliest memories.

I suppose they don’t really hate you personally Granger,” Malfoy said hesitantly wondering why he cared that the woman across from him was so upset. “They don’t know you well enough to hate you. They hate what you represent.”

The woman nodded. That much it seemed, she could understand. “So what happens now?”

“As I see it,” Harry said quietly from where he sat at her shoulder, “we have a choice.”

“We can oblivate you,” Malfoy suggested.

“No, we won’t be doing that,” Harry interrupted.

“I should hope not!” Hermione huffed.

“Neither of us are all that good at oblivation. Merlin only knows what we might end up removing while trying to get our little conspiracy out of your mind,” Harry pointed out. “I mean you might lose all the potions you ever learned. I would suggest that either you join us in our plot to control the world, or we quit.”

“We could always hire a professional Obliviator,” Draco pointed out.

“We could, sure,” Harry agreed, “but then we’d need to oblivate him, and we’re right back in the same boat. Then we’d end up needing to hire an Obliviator to deal with the first Obliviator, and then one to deal with him. It’s a vicious cycle.”

“The answer is obvious,” Draco drawled the way he had in school. “We hire a team of Oblivators and they end up in a loop of obliterating each other. That way we never have to pay them because they’ll always be obliterating the fact that they were hired out of their minds.”

A look of anger flashed across Hermione’s face. “You two are fucking with me.”

Harry smiled at his friend’s anger. “Of course we are. We are trying to make magical Britain a better place than we found when we came of age. We’ve done a lot of things in pursuit of that goal, but we haven’t and we wouldn’t do that.”

“It’s just that you are so easy to tweak,” Malfoy pointed out. “You always were, it’s just I wasn’t smart enough to enjoy it when we were in school. Potter and I are going to keep on doing what we’re doing, using the threat of the other to push forth our agenda.”

Hermione stood up from the table. “You’re both bastards, but you’ve given me a lot to think about. You aren’t going to get my rubber stamp on your little plots, if I find your positions to be wrong I will oppose you as strenuously as I ever have.”

“I could ask for nothing more,” Draco said with a nod.

“I’ve got to be going,” the woman said wondering if she had just been insulted. “It would probably defeat your purposes if I were to meet with you personally Malfoy, so I’ll communicate with you through Harry.”

“Is dinner tomorrow at my house still on?” Harry asked.

“Yes, and we’ll be having words Mr. Potter.” Hermione crossed to the door and paused. “And Malfoy now that I know how much you enjoy making jokes at my expense, if I find out that my Hugo’s relationship with Gillian Goyle is one of your jokes...”

“Gillian and your son?” a shocked Malfoy asked. “No, I wasn’t aware of that. It seems I need to be having words with my God Daughter.”

The bushy haired woman huffed and exited the room.

“Greg Goyle’s daughter is in a relationship with the son of a Muggleborn?” Harry asked shaking his head. “I never imagined something like that happening in a million years. I guess we really are making a difference.”

“It was news to me. Gillian is as brilliant as Greg was thick, and she is the apple of his eye,” Draco said shaking his head. “I’m sure he wasn’t thrilled with the idea which is probably why he’s never mentioned it to me, but he could never deny Gillian anything. He was so proud when she was sorted into Ravenclaw he about burst. As much as I hate to admit it, if Hugo Weasley is as smart as his reputation would lead one to believe then the two of them would be a good match.”

Harry sighed. “We’re getting old Malfoy.”

“Perhaps you are Potter, I on the other hand have more than a century of life expectancy ahead of me.”

Harry finished his drink and rose from the table. “I need to be going, until next year then?”

"Of course," Draco nodded. "We aren't our fathers, Potter,"

"No Malfoy, we aren't..." Harry hesitated. "As much as I wanted to hate him, your Scorpius is a good boy..."

"And though it pains me to admit it, your Lily is an angel," Draco tipped back his drink. "Merlin's beard Potter! We could end up as in-laws."

"Good night Malfoy," Harry said as he exited the room.

Draco waited until he was sure that Potter could no longer hear him. "Good night Harry."

The Meeting Union

“Hello Sam, what can I do for you?”

Sam’s mouth went dry and he started doubting the purpose he had come for. “I was wondering if you had a few minutes, Sir? To talk?”

The older man’s eyes crinkled a bit as he smiled. “I’m going over some records from the last session of the Wizengamot, and I’ll likely lose my chain of thought if I stop now, but if you can wait a few minutes, I’ll be right with you.”

Sam nodded and entered the room hesitantly. Why had he ever thought that this would be a good idea? Why had he insisted that he do this?

“Take a seat, Sam,” the man behind the desk said. “I’ll be with you in a minute.”

Sam sat in the chair directly in front of the older man, and waited while his host finished reading through the sheaf of parchment in front of him. He found himself concentrating on remembering the lessons in decorum his mother and father had spent his childhood trying to teach him. Sit quietly, feet and knees together. Hands folded in his lap. Facing forward, not gawking around the room like some sort of yokel. Moreover, most importantly, he was trying to ignore the pounding of his heart as he looked around at the decorations on the wall.

In any other house this would be a library, but in this one the walls were covered with photographs of family and friends, both animated and mundane, and with souvenirs from the owner’s days on the professional Quidditch circuit, including an ancient Firebolt mounted on the wall directly behind its owner.

The silence in the room, only broken only by the sound of his elder’s quill scratching out notes on a clean sheet of parchment seemed to be pushing him down into the cushions of his chair. Why was he doing this? This was not just any man. This was Harry Potter. The slayer of Voldemort, the avenging Boy Who Lived, the Man Who Conquered. What had he been thinking? He was about to make this man very angry.

Bad things happened to people who made Harry Potter angry. Everyone knew that.

Sam, perhaps, most of all.

"Alright Sam," Potter said, startling the younger man, "What can I do for you?"

"Mr. Potter, sir," Sam hesitated, trying to remember the words he had practiced for so long prior to coming into this room. "Lily and I... We..." This was ridiculous, Sam fumed at himself. Man up. "I would like your permission to ask Lily to marry me."

Potter blinked. Then without saying a word, the Slayer of Voldemort pulled open one of the drawers of his desk and reached inside.

Sam sat wondering what was happening as he watched as Potter pulled out a wooden ball, about half the size of a bludger and flung it at the door to his study with all of his might. The ball hit the door with a thunderous crash, which seemed to cause a pair of female yelps from the far side. Almost too quickly for Sam to follow, Potter's wand was in his hand and a privacy charm was set into place in the study.

"Now that we aren't being spied upon..." the older man said.

"We've been... Lily and I have been together almost 10 years, and I... I'm established in my career at the firm, sir," Sam continued. "At my last evaluation, it was hinted that a partnership offer might be forthcoming."

"I don't care about your job Sam," Potter said quietly. "Do you love her?"

"Yes sir," Sam answered honestly.

"Would you die for her?"

"Sir?" Sam asked.

"It's a simple question Sam, one many of my generation had to answer," the older man said. "Would you willingly give up your life for my Lily?"

"I... I... I don't know," he responded. "I would like to think so, but I don't know."

"An honest answer, anyway," Potter mused. "With any luck, you'll never have to find out. This is one of those situations where not knowing is better than knowing. Still, you two have been dating since her 5th year. I hope you know what you're letting yourself in for."

"Lily warned me it wasn't easy being associated with the Potters when I asked her out the first time. James made that very clear more than once. With all respect sir, it isn't easy being a Malfoy either."

"No, I suppose it isn't," Potter admitted. "Have you told your father?"

"Yes sir."

"How did Draco react to the news?"

"Well," Sam said quietly, "his reaction was not what I expected. He chastised me about committing so soon, without having 'sown my wild oats', but at the same time, he seemed... I don't know, pleased."

"I bet he was. Did you remind him that he was younger than you are when he and your mother got married?"

"He was?"

Potter grinned. "We both were."

"I don't understand, I expected him to... I don't know," the young man ran his hand through his hair in confusion. "Argue against marrying Lily, but he seemed..."

"I understand Sam, I really do, but we old folks aren't quite as oblivious as you youngsters seem to believe. You have my permission Sam, not that you needed it," Potter grinned. "I think we both know that if I had said no, my loving daughter would have told me to go to hell."

"She didn't want me to ask you," Sam admitted. "It was only after I insisted that she started telling me how much you'd like it."

"That girl..." Harry said with a shake of his head. "Well, she's your problem now." Again, the older man flicked his wand at the door. "Are you going to tell Lily and her mother, or do you want me to?"

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"Six hundred fifty," Draco intoned, "six hundred sixty,"

"You're counting it," Harry noted for the sixth time.

Draco looked up from the stacks of coins he was arranging on the table between them. "Of course I'm counting it, what do you take me for? Now stop trying to distract me. Six hundred seventy..."

"Do you honestly think Harry would cheat you?" Ron asked, his arms crossed over his chest. "Not everyone is a lying snake you know."

"Shut it Weasley. Six hundred eighty, don't be ridiculous, I trust Potter with my son, of course I don't think he would cheat me," the blond said reaching into the money bag for another ten galleons. "Six hundred ninety, I think that watching me count it out is killing him, and I think that you're amazed anyone can count over ten without taking their boots off. Those two thoughts are making me so very happy. Seven Hundred."

"I was counting on your son to not rush into marriage until he made partner, which happens next month by the way." Harry complained as he watched the stacks of coins on the tabletop multiply.

"Seven hundred twenty, and I was counting on your daughter to have Scorpius wrapped around her little finger. Seven hundred thirty." Malfoy grinned. "Quite obviously, she does. I win."

"I cannot believe you two," Hermione huffed. "Betting on your children."

"Seven hundred fifty. That is betting and winning, Granger. Get your terms right. Seven hundred sixty."

"You two know that this wedding is going to ruin your little scam don't you?" She laughed.

"What are you on about Hermione?" Harry asked. "Everyone knows that in-laws don't get along."

"Seven hundred eighty, he's right Granger, if anything our feud will reach even greater heights as I am forced to deal with the shame of our association. Seven hundred ninety."

"Oh, by the way Draco, your robes are going to change to Gryffindor colors when you dance with Lily," Harry winked.

"At least," Draco sighed, "you're leaving my hair alone. Eight hundred twenty."

"That's because he didn't listen to me," Ron pointed out.

"Look at them," Hermione said watching the bride and groom turning on the dance floor.

"Beautiful," Draco noted as he lost count.

"Yeah," Harry agreed.

"What?" Ron asked, clearly confused.

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"Did you have to pick on Mr. Malfoy?" Lily Potter asked as she shared a dance with her father.

"Have to? No. Want to? Yes. Did I enjoy it? You bet. Did you have to call him 'dad' in front of me?" Harry responded while awash in the memories of his little girl 'dancing' with him by standing on his feet as he moved her around her bedroom to music from the wireless. That could not really have been twenty years ago, could it? Surely, it was just yesterday.

"You changed his robes to Gryffindor colors Daddy, and that was just mean. Everyone knows how much his time in Slytherin house meant to him. It was odd though, for all of his shouting about it, he didn't really seem to be surprised."

"That's Malfoy for you," Harry laughed. "Inscrutable to the end."

"Mum is going to kill you for causing a scene, and Mother Malfoy will be dealing with Dad."

Harry winced at 'Dad', but asked 'Mother Malfoy'?"

Lily was not fooled for a moment. "That's what she wants me to call her. I may call Sam's father 'Dad', but only you will be my Daddy."

"Does that mean you'll be forgiving your brothers?"

"Fat chance," Lily pronounced with a shake of her head, "after what those two fatheads tried to do to Sam at his bachelor party? They're lucky I left their bits attached."

Harry shook his head, Lily had always had a vicious streak toward her brothers, not that they didn't usually deserve what they got. "Well, watching them try to dance is amusing unto itself," he said nodding toward Lily's two older brothers and their partners.

"So," Lily said after she glided through a spin, "What was your bet Mr. Malfoy about?"

"I've got no idea what you mean," Harry lied.

"Daddy, please," she said. "I've seen enough of the money bags from your accounts to recognize one. Sam's dad gave me two thousand galleons bags, one with your account manager's mark on it. The only way he could have gotten a bag with the Potter account manager's mark is for you to have given it to him. He doesn't have anything you'd want to buy from him, so the only way you would be paying him is if you lost a bet."

"You," Harry sighed, "have far too much of your Auntie Hermione in you."

"Don't try to distract me with compliments," she said. "Did you bet him that Sam wouldn't show up?"

"I will have you know, darling daughter," Harry said in an indignant tone. "I bet on Sam. I thought he would hold off on the marriage until after he made partner at his firm. Draco bet on you getting what you wanted with no concern about Sam's position."

"Oh," Lily said, biting back on her indignation. "Mr. Malfoy likes me?"

"Does he like you?" Harry laughed. "Love, he adores you... almost as much as he loves reminding me that you're a Malfoy now."

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"What are you doing drinking that cheap swill?" Draco demanded of his son while removing the bottle of butterbeer from his son's hand and replacing it with a glass filled with an amber liquid. "All of this is on Potter's galleon, try this."

"Thank you, Father," Sam responded as he sipped the new beverage.

Draco savored the single malt for several seconds before examining the glass intensely. "Damn

Potter and his Muggle drinks," he sighed, "and damn me for liking them so much."

"Father..." Sam began, searching for the words. "Why do you pretend to hate the Potters so much?"

"Pretend?" Draco sputtered.

"I'm not blind Father, I can see how you two are together, insulting each other, hexing each other, both of you trying very, very hard to not start laughing."

"Scorpius," Draco said, putting his left hand on his son's shoulder. "You and I are as unlike as any two men are ever likely to be while still being family. I never once during his life questioned my father, and you question me almost daily."

Sam was wondering what he could possibly say to that, when he felt one of his father's rune based privacy fields bloom around them.

"Scorpius, we need to talk," Draco said, turning to face the room while leaning against the bar, his drink in hand. "And since I've put it off as long as I have, now is as good a time as any."

"Father?"

"You and I have one very important thing in common my son, that being the fact that both of us married much better than our wives. Lily is a treasure; never do anything that could cause her to leave you. I made that mistake, a long time ago, but your mother forgave me. I doubt Harry Potter's daughter would be as magnanimous."

"Father?" Sam asked, appalled at the things he imagined that his father might have done.

"Oh, your mother made me pay, never doubt that," Draco said with a smile at the memory. "Oh, she made me pay."

"Father, I have no intention to..."

"No one ever does Scorpius, no one ever does. Just try to be a better husband than I was," Draco sipped his drink. "But you don't want to know about my failings, you want to know about my dealings with Scarhead. My relationship with Potter is... complicated."

Again, Sam had no idea what to say, so he waited.

"Potter and I met in Madam Malkin's a month before we started first year. Neither knew who the other was of course, but we both made an impression on each other. He appeared to me to be a lover of half breeds and Merlin knows what other inferiors, and I presented myself as an arrogant fool," The blond man smiled. "Looking back, it's amazing how accurate those first impressions were."

"He has never said a thing to me about..."

"No, he wouldn't have, not Potter." Again, his father smiled, as Sam tried to make sense of what he was being told. "That meeting set the tone for our relationship at Hogwarts. He was sorted into Gryffindor, I into Slytherin, of course. And we fought, Merlin, how we fought. Sixth year I surprised him on the train, broke his nose and left him in a body bind under his invisibility cloak, later that year, he almost killed me when he used a spell he didn't understand in a fight that I started."

"He didn't understand?" Sam asked. "How is it possible to cast a spell you don't understand?"

"You just have to have an insane level of power," Draco laughed. "Scarhead always had an amazing amount of magic at his disposal. That's one of the things that allowed him to survive the Dark Lord. After it was over, after the Dark Lord was finally dead and gone, we were both out of school and leading lives that didn't bring us together... and then you were born."

"Me?" Sam echoed, wondering what he could possibly have to do with this story.

"Yes, you," Draco laughed. "I held you that first day, and promised your mother that I would move heaven and earth to keep you safe. That was when I remembered hearing that Potter's second child was due to be born at any time, and I knew things had to change."

"Things had to change, I didn't want you fighting with Potter's children, I needed to change," Draco took another sip. "So I approached Potter. He didn't want to fight anymore either, so we agreed to have an agreement."

"You're cooperating!" Sam breathed. Suddenly it was all so clear, the comments his father had made about Harry Potter, the suggestions Harry had made about his father.

"We are," Draco said. "I oppose him, he opposes me, and we each energize the other's backers. And now, we are family, which will make opposing each other even easier."

"Merlin," Sam breathed. "That's the most Slytherin thing I've ever heard. I'm not surprised that you could have thought of it Father, but how did Mr. Potter ever get into Gryffindor?"

"A question I've asked myself more often than I care to admit," his father confided. "Scorpius, I more than approve of your marriage to Lily and I want you to know that I'm in no rush to be a grandfather, but please, do your father one favor, never call Potter 'Dad' in front of me... please."

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"Our fathers are so weird," Lily sighed as she laid her head on her new husband's shoulder.

"All fathers are weird," Gillian Goyle suggested. "You've met mine."

"Oh, please, Gillian," Hugo said. "Your dad is the most straight forward man I've ever met. He doesn't like the idea of me dating you because I'm not good enough for you. He thinks the fact that I agree with him is hilarious. That, and we all know he flexes his arms and cracks his knuckles better than anyone we know."

"You have no idea what he says about you when you're not around," Gillian sniffed. "Which, admittedly, isn't all that often."

"And you have no idea what my father says about you when you're not around," Hugo laughed. "Or how much my mother yells at him for what he said, and how she then takes me aside and asks if I'm sure about you after Dad goes to bed in a snit, or the noises they make while they make up by trying to make another Weasley."

His three friends all looked at him in horror. After a few moments Hugo noticed. "What? You know all those stories about the virility of Weasley men? They're all true... and Weasley women are thankful." He nudged his girlfriend of eleven years, "You're welcome."

Gillian blinked twice, and then demonstrated her heritage by hauling back and slugging Hugo in the arm.

"Oh, Merlin," Sam laughed. "Would you two just get a room?"

"Don't give them any ideas," Lily said. "They'll take our room."

"Now there's an idea..." Hugo said rubbing his arm. "We've never defiled a wedding suite."

"And we aren't going to tonight," Gillian pronounced. "You'll have to wait for ours."

"Ours?" Hugo choked.

"That shut him up," Lily laughed as she reached up to caress the back of her husband's neck. "Such a lovely day," she sighed.

"Nothing like our wedding, eh Sam?" Gillian giggled.

"Your wedding?" Lily asked.

"We were six," Sam said, glaring at his oldest friend. "Trouble there, she wanted to get married, and from what I heard, there would be cake, so I was all for it. No one said anything about kissing. Father and Uncle Greg laughed at me for hours."

"I know I would have joined them," Hugo snarked.

"I never did get that cake."

Lily reached out and captured Hugo's untouched slice of wedding cake and pushed it in front of her new husband. "Well then, you can have Hugo's. He'll have to wait for their wedding for that too."

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Alone in the hall, the two rivals sat at a table across from each other, a bottle and a pair of glasses

between them.

"Well," Draco said, pouring each of them a drink. "We've done it."

"The kids are happy, our reputations are secure, and our wives are out for our blood," Harry said raising his glass in a toast. "Fear our power."

"I've already received a dozen letters of consolation from my faction," Draco said with a grin. "The gist of them is 'Kids today, what are you going to do?' On the plus side, I've also gotten several interesting suggestions for moving Lily to 'the correct world view'."

Harry snorted, "Good luck with that. I've never managed to mold that girl's world view on any topic since she was four years old and she discovered she had opinions."

"I suspected as much," Draco smiled over his drink. "I have to hand it to you Potter, it was a beautiful wedding."

"Ah," Harry shrugged, "Nothing to do with me, really. I just followed the three commandments of the Father of the Bride."

"Three commandments?" Draco asked.

"Shut up, show up, and pay up," Harry explained. "Big of you to give your winnings to the kids."

"She told you?" Draco asked uncomfortably.

"You should have transferred your winnings to one of your money bags. Lily spotted my Account Manager's mark on one of the bags."

"Hmm," Draco murmured. "What did you tell her?"

"She brought up the subject by asking me what we were betting about."

"Ouch," Draco laughed. "What did you tell her?"

"The truth. The only thing that surprised her is that I bet on Scorpius."

"We'll probably hear about that as well," Draco noted as he stood from the table and extended his hand. "Well, I guess we're family now."

"He are," Harry agreed as he stood hand grasped the other's hand. "I wonder, if I had taken your hand back on the express that first time, would things have been any different?"

"Probably not," Draco shook his head. "We were both pathetically stupid back then."

"True enough. Holidays are coming up, should we plan on a family get together?"

Draco thought for a moment before nodding. "If for no other reason than to see your wife and mine in the same room, at the same time, why not? Good night Harry,"

Harry nodded and smiled at the thought of the possibilities of a Christmas with the Potter and Malfoy families in the same house. "Good night Draco."

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