

# **The Meeting A matter of balance**

By

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**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 obliviate 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 Obliviators 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."**