

It's almost Christmas now

a drarry christmas.. developement

Von Ryuuzaki

Kapitel 17: December, 17th

Surprisingly for a Sunday morning, Harry wasn't the only one of his house to get an early start. He went down to breakfast at a little later than half past nine, but was joined at the Gryffindor table by Hermione, Ron, Neville and Luna, who they had met in the entrance hall, approximately half an hour later.

As they ate a rich breakfast consisting of oatmeal, eggs, bacon, ham-sandwiches, buttered toast and other things, their conversation turned to the soon upcoming holidays.

Luna was telling them about the trip to the Alps she had planned with her dad, to look for some ludicrous magical creature or other.

"And what do these Rubblynuffs do exactly?" Ron asked with a grin, clearly not believing in their existence, but still very interested in the explanation of their peculiar friend and she enthusiastically launched into it.

"They are the reason for the muggles' belief that Santa's sleigh is pulled by flying reindeers."

Ron and Neville exchanged a look that clearly said: 'Who's Santa?'

Luna continued as if she hadn't noticed the look or didn't think it was important.

"They look similar to reindeers, but there are actually many differences. The antlers have a differing shape, they can survive by eating snow only and they can jump extremely high, which probably gave the impression of flying. And they are incredibly shy. As soon as they sense a human or dangerous animal close by, they'll jump away."

"Won't it be difficult to get a look at them when they're so shy?" Harry asked after swallowing his bacon. Luna nodded, but didn't lose her enthusiasm.

"Certainly. But Rubblynuffs lose their antlers every three years and grow new ones. The antlers have very strong health properties. If you're lucky to find the lost antlers within ten days after they'd been shed, you can powder and make tea from them to improve you health. Some even say it can support healing chronic diseases."

Neville looked impressed, Ron still a little sceptical, while Harry wouldn't count the

possibility of the Rubbynuffs existence outright out. Luna had been right about other mystical things before.

"What happens when you don't find the antlers within ten day?" asked Hermione.

"Then they start to resemble branches and lose the health qualities."

The other girl nodded in understanding and then turned to Neville.

"What are you plans for the holidays, Neville?"

The blond toyed around with the rest of his oatmeal. "Well I would've loved to join Luna and her dad, but my gran doesn't want me to be away over Christmas, at least not this year, so I'm staying home. What about you guys?"

"I'm staying with Ron at his parents' house." Hermione replied immediately with a happy smile. "I'll only have dinner at the 25th with my parents..."

She didn't need to mention that her relationship to her parents was delicate at best at the moment. Erasing their memories had opened a rift of distrust towards their daughter, even though they understood Hermione's reasons. But the Gryffindor girl was emotionally strong and positive it will get better with time.

"Harry is going to stay at Ron's too, right Harry?"

"Er..." Startled, since his thoughts had drifted off, Harry needed a moment to catch up with the conversation, but then he nodded, maybe a little too much.

"Yes, of course. I am." Where else could he go? Staying alone at Hogwarts or Grimmauld didn't sound very appealing. Not to say that Molly Weasley would have his head if he declined her insistent invitation.

"You know..." Luna spoke up again, looking dreamily across the room to the Slytherin table. "It would be perfect if Gryffindors would be sitting with Slytherins together."

Everyone of her friends stared at her with a gobsmacked expression, both because of the abrupt change in topic and the absurdity of the mere *suggestion*. The war might have been over, but the relationship between Slytherin and the other houses was still rather tense at times, especially between the snakes and the lions.

"Think about it." Luna encouraged them. "Gryffindors wear red in their uniform, right? And Slytherins green. Red and green make the perfect traditional Christmas colours!"

The girl looked rather happy with her proposition, while the others slowly awoke from their short stupor and started to discuss the merits of getting rid of house tables.

Harry didn't join in. He'd followed Luna's line of vision, but of course the person he wanted to see there hadn't shown up. His heart though was beating a little more enthusiastic than usual from Luna's idea. Images of him and a certain blond taking meals together conjured a tingling feeling in his stomach region. The thought was quite nice and maybe not so impossible anymore, Harry contemplated. He found they

were getting along rather well as of late and was actually looking forward to the tutoring, even if Malfoy would probably be purposefully difficult about it. Looking back at the table Harry was reminded of the plan he made a few days ago and that he didn't have a chance to execute so far. Maybe today was the day.

"Hungry, mate?" asked Ron five minutes later with a bemused half-grin, after Harry had enlarged his plate and filled it with scrambled eggs, bacon and ham-sandwiches. Harry grinned back.

"Could be later. Better pack it now as a precaution." And with that he pointed his wand at the plate and it was wrapped in a cardboard lunch box, then he shrunk the whole package and pocketed it. Ron's eyes lid up.

"Brilliant idea, mate!" He started to fill is plate anew, but Hermione swatted his hand away.

"Ronald, you don't need it!" The women said sternly and unrelenting in face of her boyfriend's protesting expression.

"But for Harry it's alright? Come on, how is that fair?" Ron's whining caused his friends to chuckle and himself to break out into a sheepish grin.

Harry's amusement though turned into shock when he caught sight of the time on the watch he'd gotten from Mrs.Weasley for his seventeenth birthday. He had only a couple of minutes left to not be late for his date with Malfoy. Tutoring date. Not *date* date of course.

Springing up all of a sudden he received some alarmed looks from his friends.

"Uhm... gotta go. See you later guys!"

"Where-?"

"What are-?"

But before anyone could finish their questions Harry was already sprinting through the doors of the Great Hall.

Harry had more than his fair share of running in his life and his body was rather used to the exertion, but running up several flights of stairs in barely five minutes left him sweating and wheezing like a chain smoker as he stumbled towards the stairs to the owlery. Malfoy wasn't there yet (Harry mentally crossed his fingers that the Slytherin hasn't just left after not seeing him. The ravenette managed to only be one minute late).

He leaned against the wall of the corridor for a few seconds, trying to catch his breath, but then decided he preferred leaning forward, bracing his hands on his knees.

"Getting old Potter? You used to be in better shape."

At the sound of the mocking voice Harry's body snapped up and he whirled around to stare at the blond man standing on one of the first steps to the owlery.

"I... didn't hear you coming..." said the Gryffindor, his heart still beating madly from the run, and frowned at the other who just smirked.

"I wouldn't think so. Then again, hardly anything could be heard over your obnoxiously loud breathing."

Harry reflexively held his breath and thought he saw the blond's lips twitch at the corners. He couldn't hold it in for long though before his lungs started screaming for oxygen and he released the air in a rush, picking up the normal rhythm again.

"As entertaining as this is Potter, let's get started on what we came here for before it'll take all day. The sooner we're done, the better." Malfoy crossed his arms over his chest.

Harry tried to suppress the sudden pinch in his chest that felt very similar to disappointment.

"Erm, okay. Basically we just need a room."

There was a dangerous glimmer in the silver eyes that, combined with the smirk curling his lips, made Malfoy look positively wicked. In a very alluring way. Harry's stomach jumped.

"Already wanting to get a room with me, Potter? Never thought you to be so brash."

Harry's eyes went round and he just knew his face was flaming red.

"A room for *practise*, Malfoy!"

"Of course, Potter... *practise*."

Merlin help him, but when Malfoy pronounced the word it sounded all kinds of wrong and right at the same time. When Harry thought his heart had been racing before from the run he clearly didn't know the correct definition, because now it was hammering so hard that he had all reasons to get concerned about his health. Not to mention his clenching stomach and the pleasant pull in his loins.

Harry abruptly turned away from the blond, feeling panicked. He didn't understand his reactions to the blond. Or maybe he did, but he didn't want to believe it, because honestly, what kind of twisted joke of the universe was that now??

"Let's just find a bloody empty classroom. Can't be so difficult in this castle on a Sunday." Harry said with a tight voice and just stalked off, hoping the blond would follow.

He felt embarrassed and confused and maybe a little bit angry at himself, but he didn't want the blond to change his mind about spending time with him. The sound of footsteps that mingled with his own reassured him that the other man was following. Randomly pulling at doors seemed to prove rather successful (and helped quench his anger a little) and so they quickly found a suitable unused classroom for their plans.

Malfoy entered behind him and closed the door and after a deep breath Harry had calmed enough to face the blond again without a blushing face. Malfoy looked indifferent.

"So..." Harry began and, suddenly doubting if he wanted to spend a prolonged period of time with Malfoy alone in a classroom, proceeded to get to the point.

"You know all about the theory of the Patronus Charm and since you're such a smartass I doubt you don't understand it. You're trouble lies with the practical part so we'll just... shit." Harry's eyes widened when he suddenly remembered something. Malfoy, who had looked bored through his speech, raised an elegant eyebrow.

"Do you... do we need a professor for supervision? You know, because of your... constraints."

Malfoy had narrowed his eyes first but now rolled them in obvious annoyance.

"No, Potter. In case you have the habit of going temporarily blind or stupid I'd like to remind you that you've seen me perform magic without a professor nearby to keep me from cursing every other student." He huffed, before adding a less insulting explanation.

"As long as I'm on the grounds of Hogwarts it counts as 'supervised'." The expression on his face clearly told Harry how dense the blond found this regulation and the Gryffindor silently agreed.

"Right... okay. Then we can start I think. Do you want to describe where you have problems with the spell?"

Malfoy sighed. "No Potter. I don't. As I have told you before, I have no problems with that spell."

Harry just returned the bored look now. "Well, since you're the only one in our class unable to cast a proper Patronus you've got to have problems with it somehow. If it's not the spell, then what?"

The Slytherin crossed his arms over his chest again and looked rather defiant.

"Do you really not know Potter?"

Malfoy gave him a look and Harry understood that the blond couldn't admit it, but wanted for Harry to find out himself.

"Well the most common problem in conjuring a corporal Patronus, if there's not other reason, is the lack of a strong enough happy memory."

The room was suddenly so silent after he closed his mouth again that he almost heard his own blood rushing through his ears. Malfoy didn't meet his eyes, but looked stiffly to some point over Harry's left shoulder, obviously trying not to blink but being forced to by his stinging eyes anyway.

The Gryffindor let out a silent sigh, looked around and then walked to a table, sat down on a chair next to it and pushed the other chair standing there back with his

foot.

"Come on Malfoy, sit down."

He didn't look at the blond but felt his heavy stare and could see from the corners of his eyes that he eyed the chair distrustfully, as if Harry had jinxed it.

"No. I prefer to stand."

Now the ravenette turned his head and his emerald eyes met with Malfoy's silver ones.

"Stop being difficult."

The blond shot him a glare, but begrudgingly walked closer and gracefully sat down, without unfolding his arms once.

Under the scrutinizing gaze of the Slytherin Harry got out the shrunken plate, put it on the table and restored the original size with a flick of his wand. Malfoy snorted.

"Didn't have time for breakfast Potter?"

"Oh I had plenty." Replied Harry calmly as he studied the blond carefully. "This is for you."

Malfoy's head snapped up. "...What?!"

They Gryffindor bit the inside of his cheek shortly before the next words rushed out of his mouth.

"I haven't seen you in the Great Hall during meal times lately and you look all tired and haggard. For this spell you need all the strength you can get."

He pushed the plate slightly towards Malfoy to emphasize his statement. The other man just stared at him with exasperated disbelief all over his face.

"... what are you Potter? My house-elf?! Is that why you've been stalking me this time? Tell me, why do you always think you have the right to interfere??"

The last question didn't sit well with the man who lived twice, probably because of the truth that rang in it.

"I... haven't been stalking you." He said lamely as a response, before more burst out of him.

"It's just... if you don't take care of yourself, somebody else has too! You haven't been eating at least for two weeks and you can't survive without eating Malfoy! You're not a Rubbynuff!"

Harry's voice got louder as his worry and anger got the better of him and he didn't pause to explain to the momentarily confused looking blond about Rubbynuffs.

"I don't want you to get sick! I-I worry about you!"

Malfoy gaped while Harry stared at him with wide concerned eyes, his cheeks

coloured with a red hue. The following silence stretched and Harry couldn't hold the shocked gaze of his former rival anymore and looked down. Suddenly Malfoy let out a short hollow laugh that made Harry flinch.

"Sure Potter... nice joke."

Harry snapped his eyes up again, with all the confusion, worry and the urge to make the other man *believe* written all over them and the blond leaned back with a sharp intake of breath.

"It's not a bloody joke Malfoy! I would never be joking about this! I know what it's like to be an outcast, believe me and I want to help you!"

The blond's face scrunched up for a moment and then it was his turn to break the eye contact and look down.

"You can't save everyone, Potter."

The words sounded so incredibly defeated, as if Malfoy had completely given up on himself that Harry couldn't breathe for moment. He wanted to hit something, yell at the blond or maybe shake him, but instead he swallowed his frustration and stared at the lean man intently.

"Come on Malfoy, I'm trying to offer you a hand here..."

That got his attention. Malfoy looked up with a look of epiphany in his silver eyes.

"What?"

"Uhm... I know I can't help you if y-"

"Do it."

Now Harry looked confused. "Do what?"

"Offer me a hand." The Slytherin suddenly gave him such an expectant, almost hopeful look that Harry started to feel self-conscious.

He slowly lifted his right arm and stretched the hand out towards Malfoy with the silent question if that is what he wanted.

Malfoy though just looked at the hand in awe. After ten seconds of nothing else happening Harry started to feel awkward, but didn't pull the hand back just yet. He watched the expression's on the blond's face change and tried to decipher what they meant. Disbelief, hurt, arrogance, contemplation... he couldn't be sure and the other barely settled for one of them.

And then, after what felt like an eternity (his arm felt rather heavy by now) the blond unfolded his arms and closed a warm hand around Harry's. The saviour of the wizarding world gasped.

"Took you long enough, Scarhead."

The hesitant warm pressure on his hand prompted Harry's heart to beat faster once more and he squeezed back gently.

"I know."

They shared a short smile, before letting go of each other's hands. Harry was stunned by the fact that this was the first time in a little over seven years that he's seen Malfoy genuinely smile and decided he wanted to see more of it. Malfoy looked very handsome with an honest smile.

The blond cleared his throat. "Just to clear something up; I'm not trying to starve myself, I'm taking nutrition potions. You can stop being... worried."

Harry wasn't sure if he imagined the light pink on the blond's cheeks, but this information didn't cease his worry by much. "But those aren't suited for long term use, are they?"

The other man gave him a teasing smirk that set something loose in Harry's stomach. "Finally paid attention in class Potter? Didn't think I'd live to see the day. Anyway, it won't kill me to take them for the last year in this hellhole and it helps avoiding the idiots during meal times. I appreciate some peace and quiet."

The ravenette frowned. "It might not kill you, but probably weaken you a great amount. You're body needs to process food to not shut down the organs and you're already very thin. If you don't want to deal with anyone else you could sit with me now."

That elicited a pretty loud snort from the Slytherin. "Sit at the Gryffindor table?? Never thought you had a sense of humour Potter. Why don't *you* sit at the Slytherin table?"

"You know I might do that." Harry said with a serious tone. "Luna suggested mixing Gryffindors and Slytherins would make great Christmas decoration."

Malfoy laughed out loud. An honest, joyful laugh and Harry's lips spread into a wide grin. The fluttering in his stomach now an accepted attendant symptom whenever he liked something about the other man.

"Spare me Potter, please. I really don't need more of a commotion."

Despite the words, that was the happiest Harry had seen the blond in weeks. Or maybe month.

"Petty." He grinned and was nearly sure this time to see a blush on Malfoy's face. Somehow he felt quite satisfied.

"But I'm not letting you off." He added and transfigured a piece of chalk on the table next to him into a fork, picked it up and put it on the plate. "Eat up."

"You're insane Potter." Malfoy scoffed, but without malice.

"Debatably." Harry grinned. "Come on, I'll even heat it up for you."

And swinging his wand he did just that, warming up the eggs and bacon again which started to smell mouth-wateringly. Malfoy shook his head.

"I've already taken the potion today."

"Good. And now you will eat this also." Harry fanned his hand so the smell of the food hit Malfoy directly in the face. He saw the blond bite his lip and knew he was on the way to win.

The Slytherin sighed theatrically.

"Will you stop bothering me if I eat some?"

"Yes." The ravenette replied immediately, but mentally added *for now*.

With a big show of exasperation Malfoy picked up the fork, stabbed some scrambled eggs with it and put them in his mouth. He closed his eyes as he chewed and once again Harry couldn't suppress a grin.

"You've missed that, didn't you?"

The silver was revealed again, accompanied by a glare for Harry.

"Shut up Potter." The glaring blond said out of habit after swallowing his mouthful and started to dig in for real.

After he finished the bacon, most of the eggs and a sandwich, the blond leaned back, feeling stuffed.

"Alright Potter... I might accept you as my personal house-elf..."

Harry playfully shoved him in the shoulder, earning another harmless glare.

"Forget it you git. You can come with me to the Great Hall from now on. Or maybe-" He added after Malfoy gave him a look. "to the kitchens if you prefer the 'peace and quiet'. Totally can relate to that though. And the real house-elves are very accommodating. Deal?"

"... I'll think about it." The last time Malfoy had said this it ended with a 'yes' so Harry felt positive about it. With that the topic dropped and they turned to their original purpose.

Since their practise was limited to the amounts of charms the Slytherin was allowed to use, Harry made sure to talk the blond through happy memories or thoughts at first. Even if it meant to be subjected to comments like 'Potter falling off his broom' 'Potter

getting detention' 'Potter being declared mad by the ministry'. He had the sure feeling Malfoy didn't mean it and just wanted to tease him and Harry just liked it too much that the blond was comfortable enough around him for that to stop it. Eventually the blond had settled on a memory, but refused to tell Harry what it was. The ravenette didn't care, as long as it worked for Malfoy.

After two hours of concentrating and teasing, Malfoy produced an incorporeal, misty Patronus, though it was a pretty thick mist.

They called it quits for today, but Harry felt confident that it wouldn't take much longer for the other man to master the spell.

By now lunch time started and Harry tried to persuade the blond to come eat with him, but he declined.

"Not today Potter. Besides, I'm still stuffed from that breakfast you forced me to eat."

"Oh, that reminds me." Harry pointed his wand at the plate where eggs and several sandwiches still were piled up and boxed it up again, this time without shrinking.

"At least take this with you then for later." Not accepting argument, he pressed the box into Malfoy's chest who reluctantly took it.

With nothing else to do they were ready to leave, but Harry didn't want to end their time together yet. He remembered the book he'd bought before.

"I've gotten a copy of 'Gertie Keddle's Diaries'. You know, the one who wrote about her neighbours playing a game that would later develop into quidditch. Would you like to borrow it sometime?"

Malfoy had looked confused at first and then mildly interested. "If you're willing to lend it..."

Harry nodded, despite not having read it himself yet and promising Ron to lend it to him too, he was willing to give it to the blond immediately if it just meant they would talk a little longer. But Malfoy had nodded in acceptance as well and was already walking to the door with the intent to get back to the Slytherin dorms. Harry thought furiously to keep him from leaving.

"Malfoy?"

The Slytherin turned back to him; hand on the door handle and raising a questioning eyebrow.

"Why do you not fly anymore?"

Harry held his breath after the question. He wanted him to stay but the desire to know also was burning inside him. In the back of his mind he wondered if Hermione felt like that all the time.

His green eyes were practically glued to Malfoy's lips when the blond opened his mouth.

"... see you in class Potter."

And just like that he was gone.