

## Ever Ever After

More mornings than not, I wake up, look around me, and wonder how I ended up where I am. After all, “happily ever after” is for Beedle stories, not real life. And yet, I have a gorgeous fiancée who loves me, a wonderful mum and the next best thing to a dad (he’d hex me to Uzbekistan and back if I actually called him that, but we get along), friends who’re always ready for one more insane adventure... everything I secretly always wanted and thought I’d never have.

So how did it happen? How does the son of a pureblood house, who spent his childhood getting his own way about everything, then discovered on his seventeenth birthday that he couldn’t do what was expected of him, end up with his happy ending and all his dreams come true?

Simple. I made a wish.

The true explanation is a bit more complicated than that, of course. It involves nonverbal magic done by a dying wizard, a wizard I’d been ineptly attempting to murder for a year, a wizard who was not only powerful but truly great of heart and soul. Despite everything that had passed between us, Albus Dumbledore looked at me and saw not the weak and broken boy I was but the strong, proud man I wished I could have been, and he wished it too. And in the last moments of his life, he laid a spell on me to help it happen.

How that spell worked is related in greater detail in the following scrolls. Suffice it here to say that it first acted on the worst night of my life, sending me to a place where it was acceptable to have emotions other than greed, hauteur, and glee at another’s downfall. I thought at first that I had dreamed this place up, and for that reason I allowed myself to enjoy it wholeheartedly and without fear. I read aloud from plays, I danced with little girls, I sang dirty songs and played pranks on house-elves, because in a world I had invented, who would ever know what I did? For the first time in my life, I was honestly happy, and I started to think that maybe I wasn’t such a bad person to be after all.

Of course, I hadn’t told anyone about this. Who would have believed it? But the day my father forbade me to do the one thing which had allowed me access to my new world, I could almost believe he knew, and disapproved (as I’m sure he would have if he really had known). For my part, I was equal parts terrified and despairing at the thought of never going back. Real or not, the world I’d found held my heart, and that made it more mine than the world of my birth had ever been.

When I found a way back despite what my father had done, I felt ready to fly without a broom, but that same night, I learned the one secret that had been kept from me to that point. My “dream” world was real, every bit as real as the world I’d come from, and the implications of *that* nearly made my head spin around. I decided that very night that if I possibly could, I was going to leave my old life behind and start a new one, one where no one had any preconceived notions about me because of my name or my face.

With magic, with an awful lot of help, and with what I still believe was direct wish-fulfilling intervention from a higher power on a few occasions, I’ve managed to do just that. I even fell in love along the way, and to my everlasting astonishment, it was reciprocated. We’ve tentatively set the date for next month; I can hardly wait.

I have a feeling our children, whenever we have them, will want to hear the story of our first kiss a lot. Not that it’s terribly surprising, once you know the circumstances, that I promised her I wouldn’t do anything inappropriate. No, it’s her response that really makes the conversation special: “Not even if I want you to?”

Like I said. Happily ever, ever after.

What follows is the story that goes with that ending. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed living it.

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The preceding text is taken from a short scroll found among the personal effects of Draco Malfoy after his mysterious disappearance at the Battle of Hogwarts. Prominently labeled “Read me first,” this scroll rested atop a large box of much longer scrolls, which appeared to comprise a journal illustrated with colored pencil drawings.

The contents of these scrolls are now being made available to the general public, as was apparently Mr. Malfoy’s wish as written in his will (which was to be enacted immediately upon his disappearance under exactly such conditions as prevailed around it). The *Daily Prophet*, on learning of their existence, dubbed them “the Malfoy Papers,” and it is under this title that they are being published.

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