

Deliverance the Malfoy Way

by karelia

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He who has gone, so we but cherish his memory, abides with us, more potent, nay, more present than the living man.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Disclaimer: If you think I own it, you're probably an alien visiting this planet, in which case I can't help but admire your command of the English language.

As the three Malfoys sat huddled together in the Great Hall, a distance away from those who'd been on the side of Light all along, Narcissa turned to Lucius. "Severus... We should ensure he receives a decent burial; it's the least we can do."

Lucius met her eyes and nodded slowly. "Yes... Yes." He turned away to stare in the distance. "He saved Draco's soul." It was barely a whisper, and Narcissa had to bend her head closer to hear him.

Her husband looked even more dejected now. Narcissa knew he'd been having second thoughts about his allegiance with the Dark Lord for many months, years even. She herself had absolutely no doubt her decision to follow Voldemort had been the greatest mistake she'd ever made. The last uncertainty had vanished with her sister's demise.

Narcissa lightly touched Lucius's arm. "Love... I know how you're feeling." She tried to convey her own feelings silently to her husband of some twenty years.

"Cissy... I don't know... Over those past months, the past year, Severus has come...came...to mean a great deal to me. I knew, somewhere deep down, he was following the Light. And now he's gone. Dead." He shuddered and took a deep breath.

Narcissa nodded. "Yes, I know, my love. We owe him our lives...well, our sanity at least...don't we?" She looked attentively at her husband.

His eyes met hers. "Cissy?"

She couldn't help a small smile forming around her lips. He knew her so well. "Luce?" She looked away.

"You have an idea," he whispered and looked at her keenly for a moment; then he smiled the way he only ever smiled at his wife and cupped her face with his hands.

"Why, yes, love. I do." The smile now reached her eyes. "Meet me in the Shrieking Shack in about an hour." Not waiting for Lucius's reply, she stood up, nodded at her two men, and headed for the front door.

Narcissa had to walk slowly; her body protested the renewed exertion after such short a break. She knew she needed sleep, but the task she'd set herself couldn't wait.

When she reached the edge of the Forbidden Forest, she grabbed her wand. Better be prepared, she thought, although there probably was no danger around, not this soon after a fierce battle.

Once more feeling somewhat smug at the speed of her mind and the uncanny ability to use a wand in the most unobtrusive manner, Narcissa continued slowly, but with utmost determination, through the forest until she reached the clearing where she'd fooled Riddle a mere few hours ago about Potter's state...and stopped in her tracks.

There, before her, sat a girl on the moss, her arms wrapped tightly around her knees, her body shaking and voice rending the air with heart-breaking sobs. Narcissa recognised the girl by her bushy hair. *It's Potter's Mud...no, must stop thinking of her as such...Muggle-born friend. What is she doing here?*

Deciding this moment was as good a time to consciously change her outdated, arrogant pureblood attitude, Narcissa carefully sat down next to the girl. She gently patted her shoulder and left her arm to rest lightly on her. "There, there, Miss... Hermione. The battle is over, and the side of Light rightly claims victory."

The girl's sobs halted abruptly, and she looked up. "Mrs Malfoy?" Her voice held disbelief.

Narcissa shrugged. "I'm a mother, you know? When someone the age of my son cries so hard, there must be some good reason."

Hermione nodded gravely. "... I came here to find the stone. *I know* this must be the place where Harry dropped it. But I can't find it." She started to sob again.

Narcissa was intrigued by the girl's answer. Whom did she cry over, and whom did she want to be revived? Narcissa was certain the girl's boyfriend, the youngest Weasley, had survived without many scratches; Draco had mentioned his bitterness over owing a life debt to a Weasel.

Narcissa patted her shoulder again in a soothing manner. "What do you need the Resurrection Stone for? I assume it's what you're seeking?" She could humour a Gryffindor with directness if needed.

The girl looked up again. "Professor Snape is dead," she whispered. "He didn't deserve to die. He deserves a happy life after giving so many years away." She looked intently at the older witch.

Narcissa drew in a sharp breath. The girl really was as clever as rumour had it. For a Gryffindor to conclude such about Severus was quite a feat. She thought fast now. An additional brain wouldn't be amiss in the task ahead of her.

Between sobs, the girl continued. "I brought blood-replenishing potion, antivenin, and dittany. I even found a half-full vial of Felix Felicis in Slughorn's storeroom. But none of it will help without the damn stone..."

The girl did have brains. Narcissa hesitated for a moment before carefully speaking. "Hermione, if I told you I can find the stone, would you help me revive Severus?" She let action follow her words immediately by casting a silent spell to retrieve the Resurrection Stone, on which she'd had the sense to place a tracking charm in the midst of the chaos earlier. It promptly complied and flew into her outstretched, open palm, landing with a soft thud.

The girl suddenly expressed a disbelieving hope, which Narcissa found almost contagious. Then it hit her. She'd recognise those symptoms anywhere, had diagnosed a great number of witches and wizards over the years. Nearly unable to hide a grin, she said conversationally, "Why, you like him! Who would have guessed? Of course, it makes perfect sense. I can't imagine your brain to ever find satisfaction with a Weasley, no disrespect."

Hermione blushed furiously and looked away.

Narcissa waited, thoughts racing through her mind and an idea forming slowly. Severus deserved happiness when he returned to the living. She knew he'd been in love with a Mud...*Muggleborn*...for most of his life, so her status was no obstacle to him. Her brain would stimulate him. Narcissa could just see those two sitting in front of the fireplace, having passionate debates over some potion ingredient or magical theory. She nodded imperceptibly. Yes, he *could* find happiness with the girl if he wasn't too stubborn.

"I won't tell, in case you worry. In fact..." she stopped for a moment to gauge the girl's reaction, "I can help you. Severus has been a good friend for many years to both me and Lucius. I know him well."

Hermione cast another look of disbelief in her direction. Without saying a word, the young witch rummaged in her bag, retrieved a small vial, and held it out to Narcissa.

Something tugged at Narcissa's heart when she realised what the girl had offered. She felt a warmth wash over her just like the time she'd realised Lucius loved her as much as she loved him, just like the first time she'd held Draco in her arms. Very carefully, she opened the vial and took a tiny sip. "There. If you leave just a little bit for Severus. He'll need it as much as we do." She offered an uncertain smile and handed it back to the younger witch.

Hermione nodded and equally carefully took a sip. Then she held the vial against the light and nodded.

A single event can awaken within us a stranger totally unknown to us. To live is to be slowly born.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

When Lucius entered the Shrieking Shack an hour after Narcissa had left the Great Hall, the strangest scene unfolded in front of him. He stopped at the entrance, silently observing the event.

Severus, evidently alive, was sitting propped up against the wall next to Potter's sidekick, the brain of the Golden Trio, as his friend had so often referred to Granger. Narcissa sat opposite the two, and all looked uncharacteristically happy; even Severus was lacking his usual sneer. *Is this what resurrection does to a man?* Lucius couldn't help wondering.

"Do tell, Miss Granger, what this last potion you forced on me was," Severus said to the young witch on his side.

She blushed, and Lucius was unable to suppress a grin. Ah. So this was where the Mudbl...Muggle-born...was coming from. The thought of a student...ex-student...having a crush on Severus of all people was highly amusing. Well, Weasley didn't deserve her in any case. "Felix Felicis. I raided Slughorn's stores before I went looking for the stone."

"Why did you decide to use the stone on me of all people?" Severus asked, his curiosity evident. He looked from the girl to Narcissa, waiting for an answer. Lucius noticed a smile spreading on his wife's face and wondered what she was plotting, even more so when she furtively looked at him without giving away his presence.

Then, Narcissa nodded at Hermione. "There's your cue, Hermione. He knows why/ want him alive."

The girl took a deep breath. "Because you didn't deserve to die, sir. You've spent the last I don't know how many years in serving others for our cause. You deserve a fairytale ending of living happily ever after."

It showed up more like a grimace than a smile on his face, but Lucius had no doubt it was heartfelt. Judging by Granger's reaction, she knew exactly how to take it. She beamed at him.

Lucius cleared his throat and stepped into the room. He knelt down in front of Severus and embraced him. "Welcome back, my friend." A lump formed in his throat, and he was unable to say more.

"Thanks, old man. You have one hell of a wife, but you know it, right?" Severus, too, cleared his throat.

Lucius laughed. "Naturally."

The two men stood up, Severus a little shakily. Hermione lightly touched his arm. "I... I wish you happiness, sir." She turned to leave.

"Hermione."

The world stopped spinning. Narcissa and Lucius were forgotten.

"Sir?"

"Severus, Hermione. Not sir." He looked at her evenly. When she gaped at him, his expression turned almost boyish, taking decades off his age. "Sir is ever such a common name."

"Severus," she whispered. Then, taking in his last words, she laughed. "Indeed. And you're anything but."

"Indeed." Now his smile was wry. "Hermione... Would you do me the honour of walking back to the castle with me?" He cleared his throat again. "Or maybe... elsewhere. I don't really care."

She shivered slightly and smiled. "I'll walk to the end of the world with you if you desire." She readily took his outstretched hand, and the two left in the direction of the castle.

Lucius looked at Narcissa and smiled. "Well done, wife. Well done."

A/N: The prompt was my idea because notsosaintly insisted I come up with one, but sunny33 is the originator of the challenge.

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