

Tea Party at the Manor

by karelia

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: Only visiting ETs would believe I own it.

Narcissa floated down the large stone steps in a manner befitting a Malfoy, if at a somewhat reluctant pace, clad in navy-blue silk robes and a combination of Black and Malfoy heirlooms adorning her neck and wrists.

She noticed, upon descending, a juvenile pale blue peacock fanning his train and thought of it as a positive sign, but when his older brother fanned his spectacular pure white train, she knew it was going to be an exceptionally lucky afternoon.

Already, the flock of India Blue peafowl had produced eighteen whites this year, the highest number since her marriage to Lucius had combined the elite of the Black fowl with that of the Malfoy birds. She knew the development of a detection spell to find the dominant gene for whites to emerge contributed to the success. She was also aware that Fate always played a rather large role in producing white birds when one had several peacocks of various shades running with the flock.

During the three years of the Dark Lord's last reign, there hadn't been a single white. Yet, the day after Severus had been pronounced healthy...the near-fatal bite nothing more than a foul, but rapidly fading memory...three pure whites had hatched, all of them cocks, as turned out sometime later. So far, no spell had been devised to make sexing chicks possible; the Malfoys had to wait for the fowl to mature just like Muggle breeders had to wait.

Narcissa put the thought of peafowl aside and focussed her attention on the annual tea party. She stretched her neck to glance over the sea of witches and wizards mingling about on the grounds of the manor until she caught sight of her husband's blond mane. Severus, as usual, was right beside him, providing a stark visual contrast with his ethereal white skin and dark hair. *Ah, good.*

She made her way through the crowd in measured steps, occasionally stopping to exchange a few words, but mostly just nodding a greeting in passing. Even those deemed worthy of visiting the manor knew better than to expect Narcissa to acknowledge anyone beyond a curt nod. Any except Severus, but the visitors were not aware. He was known to be her husband's best friend, and it was perfectly sufficient for the crowds to think that was the reason.

Narcissa had reached the edge of the rose garden where Lucius and Severus were standing deep in conversation, Severus's long fingers absentmindedly...yet elegantly...shredding a rose petal. Glancing, observing, she noted the men were not touching. *Yes, my dears, do keep up appearances...*

Lucius had never kept his sexuality secret from her, but to the entire wizarding world, the Malfoys were considered happily married. It was the truth, and his affair with Severus was nobody's business. She'd accepted it, and there had never in all those years been a single stab of jealousy towards Severus.

It was simple curiosity that had started her interest. *Maybe it's approaching that side of one's forties...* she'd pondered idly one morning after Lucius had kissed her good-bye on his way out to visit his lover. She'd thought back to the previous night, to their tender, exhilarating lovemaking, and then allowed her thoughts to stray into unknown territory.

"Darling." Narcissa placed a dainty kiss on her husband's lips and turned to greet his friend. "Severus, what a delight to see you. You look well."

Severus took her hand and bent his head, stopping short of kissing it. "Narcissa. You look beautiful as always. How are you?"

He always told her she looked beautiful, and maybe it was her imagination that there seemed to be a new, appreciative, undercurrent in his voice when he'd said it just now. She offered her most dazzling smile. "Thank you. I'm doing well."

"Darling, are you having a good time?" Lucius asked her.

She rolled her eyes good-naturedly at him. "Of course not, but what doesn't one do in the name of the redemption game? Thankfully, the majority of guests don't expect me to actually talk to them."

Severus chuckled. "You managed to evade the Minister's wife?"

"Naturally." She shook her head, effectively moving her hair back over her shoulders. "It doesn't take much, you know. She hardly manages to put a three-word sentence together and thinks if I smile at her I like her. Just a typical Essex girl."

Lucius looked at his time piece. "They should be leaving soon. It's gone six." Then his attention turned to his wife. "Did you mention making dinner, love?"

"I did. I figured after excessive amounts of tea and cucumber sandwiches, we might be ready for some real food." She smiled, first at her husband and then at Severus. "Please do stay for dinner, Severus."

"I would love to," he murmured and bowed slightly.

She smiled and, once she turned away, allowed herself an inward grin. *Yes!*

Honouring her husband's ancestors, the French dinner she'd prepared with barely any magic, which was now being served by house-elves, was elaborate and accompanied by Riesling d'Alsace for the starters and Cahors for the main course. The choice of wines might have been considered plebe by the nouveau-riche, but Narcissa knew which wines best matched the dish, a tradition of the culinary world of France: one served the wine that went best with the meal, not the trend of the day, and never Californian.

He loved the coquilles St Jacques as much as Lucius, Narcissa noticed with well hidden glee. "Best. Coquilles. St Jacques. Ever," he pronounced in a perfect French accent slowly and deliberately, casting an admiring look her way.

He devoured the buttery chicken fillet covered in a herb crust and appeared to love the white asparagus tips in a balsamic vinaigrette. "You are killing me, Narcissa." Not that he sounded as if he'd mind that kind of death.

He very obviously appreciated the Boeuf Stroganoff, considering his blissful expression.

What nearly threw her was his enjoyment of the mousse au chocolat; it was more hedonistic than any man should ever be allowed where chocolate was involved. *He must be the female part in his relationship with Lucius*, she thought momentarily and had to suppress a grin.

The platter of cheese that followed the mousse offered no fewer than twelve different kinds of cheeses, all made from raw milk, all from small French dairies where quality was a top priority. Roquefort didn't really belong on it, but Narcissa didn't give a damn; it was her favourite cheese after all. And not only hers, as she was pleased to note.

Lucius handed her a glass of port. "Wash your palate so I can kiss you."

Narcissa pouted. "Severus had Roquefort, too."

"If I wish to kiss him, I'll ask him to do the same. Or would you rather kiss him?"

"Well... if you put it like that." She looked enquiringly at Severus, pretending to ignore her husband entirely.

Severus appeared stunned. "You... you... you can't be serious."

"Oh, I was, but if you don't swing that way, I'm all right with that, too, my lovely," Narcissa said lightly in an attempt to diffuse the sudden tension.

Lucius grinned. "Oh, trust me, he does."

Severus looked mortally embarrassed. "I... I don't know what to say."

"Want me to say it for you?" Lucius enquired and didn't wait for his lover's answer. "Cissy," he said, turning to his wife, "I know that Severus fantasises about you... and it didn't take Legilimens to figure it out."

Narcissa turned her head towards Severus and then moved to stand in front of him. "How about we try, Severus?" Her voice shook slightly despite the courage Lucius's word had instilled in her.

He looked shocked now. "Let me get this correct: you wish to kiss me?"

"I do. Have been for a while. But only with your absolute consent, Severus. Your puppet days are over." The last words were a mere whisper.

Finally, it seemed to sink into him that she wanted him. He bent his head and captured her mouth. Lips met, and then a tongue entered through a half-opened mouth. He was as good a kisser as Lucius, she couldn't help noticing. Of course, it didn't surprise her. After all, he'd had a couple of decades of experience kissing her husband.

They broke apart when Lucius cleared his throat. "Uh, maybe we should take this to the bedroom?" He looked enquiringly at his wife.

Narcissa nodded. "If Severus agrees..."

He nodded. "Yes..."

Narcissa floated down the large stone steps in a manner befitting a Malfoy, purposefully and all grand dame, clad in forest green silk robes and a combination of Black and Malfoy heirlooms adorning her neck and wrists and a miniature potion phial stud in her right ear.

Several white peacocks at the bottom of the stone staircase displayed their trains, some very young, others older and all highly impressive. Many heads turned as the peacocks put on their display, seemingly just for the lady of the manor. She smiled politely, patted a couple of cocks in passing, and wandered through the crowd, nodding

a greeting at the one or other guest and all the while heading resolutely towards the rose garden.

When she found her prey, she placed a dainty kiss on her husband's lips, then looked from him to his partner. "Are you ready to celebrate?"

Severus lowered his head to her hand, stopping short of a kiss. "Always, my dear. Always."

Lucius chuckled. "Indeed."

A/N: SW69 voiced a request for a Cissy ficlet involving Lucius and Severus. Her prompt was: tea, tension, garden

Thanks to blue_paris for giving it a quick look-over.