

# Love Denied

*by sunny33*

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## *Chapter 1 of 1*

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Disclaimer: The characters and settings are not mine. They belong to JKR.

Hermione sighed and stared into the opulent mirror gracing a room rich in velvet and tapestries, all of which were left unappreciated in her current state of depression. Her reflection told a tale of sorrow, frustration, and despair. How had her life come to this? All the promises of achievement and happiness touted by the press after the many victory celebrations had fallen by the wayside, lost and forgotten in the wake of the Ministry's misbegotten Marriage Law Contract.

When Lucius Malfoy had decided he would replace his departed and unlamented wife with a Muggle-born bride under the Marriage Law provisions, no-one had anticipated his choice of Hermione Granger, least of all the young witch herself. She was unable to extricate herself from the airtight legislation. All her pure-blood peers had already paired up in the frenzy of marriages after the war, and she had been compelled to accept the petition Lucius had made or leave the wizarding world forever. Even Draco had been sympathetic, but having already petitioned for Hannah Abbott, much to the Hufflepuff's delight, his hands were tied.

The wedding should have been a young girl's dream, with a dress of rarest spider silk, rings crafted by goblins, and a ceremony rich in tradition and magical symbolism. The feast had been sumptuous; the guests entranced by the array of exotic dishes and fine wines presented by the Malfoy house-elves. The bride alone had been unaffected by the display of wealth and cultural finesse.

Hermione had been well aware her marriage was in name only; she was a trophy to grace Lucius's arm and provide him with an entry back into social favour. The marriage contract had contained a clause of non-disclosure – in effect, a wizarding vow not to reveal details of their relationship. He had made no declarations of love, or even fondness, and she submitted to his nightly sexual advances with resignation borne from duty rather than any passion. He kept her in luxurious rooms and exquisite clothes, and his skill in the bedroom even ensured she was physically satisfied, but that did not prevent the tears which flowed even as her traitorous body climaxed.

Despite all the material possessions with which Lucius Malfoy had bestowed upon his new wife, he withheld the one thing she needed. Affection. Lucius was as cold and unbending as the very stone of his manor. Never did he smile at her unless others were present; not once did he touch her except in her bed, which he left as soon he had gained completion. He avoided conversation and left her to her own devices except at meals and social occasions.

Hermione was desperately lonely. Her friends, assuming she was busy leading the life of a wealthy socialite, had stopped visiting, and the house-elves provided their service but never their company. Trying to speak with Lucius about her feelings had left her sobbing alone in the library time after time. And yet she tried, for in those brief moments when his guard was down as he approached climax she could see something in the silver-grey depths of his eyes. Something unexpected. But as soon as his breathing had returned to normal, the icy mask slammed shut on her hopes and dreams.

Against all odds, Hermione had fallen for her husband.

She knew her love was unreturned. She could barely believe her heart had betrayed her in the same way her body had every night of their marriage. But she could not control the lift in her spirits when he came to her door or the tightness in her chest as he left. Dinner parties found her hypnotised by the sound of his voice as he conversed

with their guests, and Ministry events found her at his side, defying any other woman to approach.

But two years had passed. Hope had burned out into a dark depression. Love had turned to hate; both passionate emotions. Loss of weight and lack of sleep had left Hermione Malfoy gaunt and strained. Finally, she had found, in a small, grubby shop in Knockturn Alley, the vehicle for her escape from a life she could no longer tolerate.

Three tiny drops and she would be free.

As she sat there, gathering the courage to swallow the potion, she heard that precious voice.

"You would so willingly take your own life?" he asked from across the room, sadness dulling his tones.

"Just so long as it aids me in ridding myself of you," she replied, bitter in her resolution.

She did not see his expression, unguarded for the first time.

She did not hear his protest as she tipped the vial to her lips.

She did not see Lucius Malfoy come undone as the wife he had come to love died in his arms.

No-one would have believed the aristocratic wizard had been terrified to reveal his devotion lest his wife reject him.

Lucius never remarried.

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A/N: Saturday Night drabble prompt from Twilexis: Write something based on this.

"You would so willingly take your own life?"

"Just so long as it aids me in ridding myself of you."

Thank you to janus for the beta.