

Balance of Power

by Keppiehed

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Warnings: slash, language, sexual content

Prompt: Severus Snape, Lucius Malfoy, "The Dark Lord's Return."

A/N: This was written as a gift for the lovely and gracious Celta_diabolica for winning a round at DeathEaterDrabs. I apologize profusely for the delay, and I do hope that this meets your expectations. Thank you so much for being so delightful to work with!

It wasn't often that Severus found himself discomfited; now was one of those rare times. He cleared his throat in an effort to dispel the tension. "I thought you'd prefer to hear it directly from me. I can assure you that the boy will recover."

Lucius hadn't turned around yet...not a good sign. "He shouldn't have to *recover*, Severus. What, exactly, was the purpose of your oath, may I ask, if Draco was so grievously harmed?"

Severus flinched from the venom in Lucius' tone. Despite his hatred for the Dark Arts and for Voldemort, in particular, he had never held a grudge against the Malfoy family. In fact, Lucius had always been his closest friend at school, and it was through that association that he had become Draco's godfather. He didn't relish being the bearer of the tidings that Draco lay in the hospital wing, injured and in all probability scarred for life by a spell that he'd created. "I was there to provide assistance..."

Lucius swung around, his meticulously coiffed hair flaring with him. "I don't think you clasped hands with my *wife* and promised to provide *assistance*. Did you, Severus?" The heat of his temper contrasted with his ice-cold demeanor, which he kept in place even now. Lucius didn't raise his voice or wrinkle his brow in rage; his furor was betrayed by subtler means, and Severus had known him long enough not to be lulled by the illusion of restraint. Lucius was at his deadliest when he was still: like a snake, he poised right before the strike. A true Slytherin.

"What would you have me do, Lucius? Follow the boy at every turn?" Severus affected nonchalance. "I was doing nearly that already. People were beginning to get suspicious. Slughorn, at the very least, had some concerns about why I was always present. And Draco is a young man who can take care of himself."

"Evidently not," Lucius countered, his eyes glittering with malice. "You are obfuscating the fact that you took a vow which you did not fulfill. Do you deny it?" Lucius took a step closer.

A stab of irritation prickled Severus. "I do. If you are charging me with neglect of duty, then indeed, I take issue. It was a duel between boys! In the bathroom, for Merlin's sake. What would you have me do? Follow them into the very stall to make sure he doesn't injure himself while taking a shit?"

Lucius' intake of breath hissed through his teeth. "Don't you *dare* be so vulgar with me. You want to trade crudities? Why don't I point out that appearances would hardly have stopped you from following me into a stall back in our school days."

The inference was a punch to the gut. It was Severus' turn to be taken aback. He squared his shoulders. "I only stayed away to spare your precious reputation. You always liked the darker side of things, even back then. You just never wanted to pay the price. Some things never change." Severus forced himself to return Lucius' haughty stare. Things had never been so out in the open between them. It had only ever been hints and feelings, brushes and glances.

Lucius gaze darkened, but from lust or anger, Severus couldn't tell. Before he knew what was happening, Lucius was lunging across the room, graceful even in his manhandling. Severus was able to admire his form before they both hit the wall on the far side of the room, and Severus' head hit with a resounding crack.

Lucius was breathing hard, and Severus reveled in the sensation that he had waited so long for: the feeling of being pressed against his friend from chest to thigh. He hadn't dared wish for it to happen, but here he was, and it was better than he ever could have hoped for. Lucius' fit form was crushed to his, an answering hardness swelling against his thigh. They were so close that their very breaths were intermingled. All Severus need do was to lean the slightest bit forward, and they would be locked in a kiss that would set them both on fire. Yet he waited. Waited to be dominated by the only man who could do it.

The flame in Lucius' eyes showed his eagerness, and he leaned in closer, enough so that Severus could hear the little hitch in his throat that belied his calm exterior. It was all Severus could do not to rut against the other man; he was so hard he was aching. But he remained stock-still and waited.

"When the Dark Lord returns to Malfoy Manor, we shall see where your loyalties lie," Lucius whispered, the breath ghosting over Severus' ear.

The words were a shock, like a cold *Aguamenti* over his head. "What?"

Lucius pulled away slightly, the start of a feral grin on his lips. He kept Severus pinned with his hips. "You heard me. I question your loyalty, Severus. It all seems too tidy, and a spy in our midst couldn't be tolerated. You aren't a spy, are you, Severus?" Lucius brought a long finger up and traced Severus' lips with them. "Are you working against us?"

A groan escaped him, against his will. "No." This was all going so wrong, so terribly out of control. This wasn't the way he'd planned it to be!

"Bellatrix thinks you are." Lucius tipped his chin up and pinned him, dark gaze to light. "I hadn't thought so until now." He leaned in and kissed Severus full on the lips.

It was exquisite. It was everything Severus had ever dared to dream and more. Lucius was everything sex was meant for, all poured into one body, and he had harnessed that power with ease. He directed all of his skill into his seduction of Severus' mouth, demanding that he answer the onslaught and be part of the passion. Severus could barely keep up. His head was whirling, and it was all he could do not to come in his pants. Severus was grinding against Lucius' leg, desperate for more friction, anything to help him get off. Just when he could stand it no longer, he realized Lucius had ended the kiss.

"Don't fuck with my son, do you understand me?" Lucius leveled a gaze at him. "I don't care which side you're on, but you protect him. With your life. Do we have a deal?"

Severus bit his lip and nodded. "It isn't your son I want to fuck with."

"What?" Lucius had been half-turned, almost ready to release Severus, but those words...the most direct admission of what had been simmering between them since their early years...served as a brand to him, and he reared back.

"You heard me." Severus said it quietly, savoring the shift in the balance of power. Lucius had always dealt in things unsaid, but he didn't know how to handle truth. Severus was the master of that ... and he reveled in it now. Severus took the infrequent opportunity of Lucius' shock to grab the other man by the fancy lapels on his dress robes. Lucius didn't put up a fight as he normally might have, as Severus had the advantage of surprise, and before he knew it, their lips were once again pressed together.

Determined to make the most of what he knew would be a limited time, Severus slashed his mouth against Lucius', trying for some of the sensuality that the other man had effortlessly created. He must have done something right, because after only the briefest pause, Lucius was kissing back with a ferocity that shocked them both, and Severus could do nothing except fight back...and fight it was. Tongues battled, teeth scraped. There was nothing soft between them as need broke free and exploded. Severus was dimly aware of hands tangled in his hair, pulling at him. He'd never felt so ... wanted, and the thought that Lucius was the one doing this to him was enough to make him come undone right now. He would shame himself; he couldn't last. "Please," he groaned, his voice a rasp of need.

It was in that pause that they heard the steady *click, click* that could only be stilettoes on inlaid marble. Only one person wore shoes that would carry with such purpose throughout the halls of the manse. Regret flooded Severus like a poison from his own storeroom.

"Please," Lucius groaned in turn, only this plea was far different. He was already pulling away.

Severus nodded, unable to look his lover in the eye. "But of course." It took every bit of pride that he retained for him to stiffen his spine as if it were nothing to him.

"Please understand, she is my..." Lucius didn't have time to finish before the door opened and in stepped one of the most beautiful witches that the wizarding world had ever produced. Narcissa was exquisite; no one with eyes could deny it. Certainly not Severus. Not even when his heart was breaking.

"Lucius!" She walked with the fluid grace innate to the Malfoy line, even one married to it. "I have been wondering where you are. We have matters to discuss. In private. Severus." She nodded her greeting to Severus.

"Darling, I shall be a few moments more with our guest..." Lucius inclined his head. The awkwardness in the room was palpable.

"Lucius, you know I would not contradict you in front of guests except for the direst of emergencies. I have news just now from Hogwarts. It's about Draco," Narcissa's voice wavered as she tried to hide her concern in front of Severus and failed.

"I am aware of the circumstances concerning our son. I shall be a moment longer," Lucius said.

"Wha ... ?" Narcissa narrowed her eyes as she realized that she was being dismissed. She looked between the two men, frown deepening, as she finally became aware of the thickening tension.

Severus breathed, trying to get the air past the lump of disappointment lodged in his chest. "It is I who should go." He managed not to let his voice crack. He was quite pleased that he sounded normal, but then he'd had practice enough at covering his emotions. "I thank you for your audience, Lucius, and I apologize that you found my services lacking. I shall, of course, devote myself entirely to Draco's recovery and subsequent protection. Narcissa." Severus nodded at Lucius' wife and swept out of the room, trying not to think of the eyes that must be on him. He left Lucius and his wife behind in their beautiful mansion, in a world he would never belong.

As Severus made his way back to Hogwarts, he resolved to keep his promise. He clenched his fists. He may not be fond of Draco, but he was a man of honor, if nothing else...even if no one could see it in him. He would protect his friend's son with his own life and he would live with the cold comfort of the good deed, because Lucius was as distant from him as the stars, and Severus was only ever watching, wishing and left in the darkness on his own.