

Alibi

by diabolica

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First, Second, Third

Chapter 1 of 1

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The first time, she expected him to turn her away.

If pressed, Narcissa could not have explained how she wound up there, in a part of the country she never should have deigned to visit: rotted and forgotten, blighted by Muggle industry, dark with their smoke, disorder and resignation. How he could stand to live amongst them was a matter the two of them had never discussed. She had no intention of asking.

In any case, now that he'd made the Vow, she had no excuse. Except the fact that he'd made the Vow was all the excuse she needed.

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The second time, she woke in the middle of the night. Unable to breathe, with her heart pounding. In an unfamiliar bed. She was perfectly sober and thus terrified. Beside her, he stirred but did not wake until she knocked something off the bedside table, fumbling for her clothing in the dark. As he sat up, a candle flared in the room's far corner, nearly blinding her.

'I have to go,' she said.

Narcissa had no illusions that Severus, for whom everyone was a scroll of parchment laid carelessly in open view, did not know what she was really thinking.

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Human beings are biologically driven to seek companionship, Narcissa told herself, to huddle with others of their own kind round a fire, actual or metaphorical—for safety, for protection from outside threats, for entertainment, for information exchange. For comfort. Assuming a lack of companionship in one's immediate circle—say, a paucity of support from one's sister, the absence of one's husband—it would not be unreasonable or inexplicable for a woman to look to a close friend, for example, to fill the void.

The third time, and every time thereafter, she promised herself that there would be no next time.