

A Mature Form of Disdain

by rosewood

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Chapter 1 of 1

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As he made his way through the foyer towards the elegant drawing room, the Potions master couldn't help but feel the bittersweet pang of nostalgia that swept through his chest. His many forays to Malfoy Manor were peppered with equal amounts of reverie, regret and disdain. It would be folly to think that the turn of events that would mark the evening should be any different. If anything, they would signify the closing of an era of foolhardy Pureblood deceit and arrogance.

Severus allowed himself to be ushered into the exquisitely decorated drawing room where he was soon ensconced in a comfortable chair.

"Severus, how good of you to join us, old man," Lucius said with a degree of forced warmth.

"It's always a pleasure to be amongst *friends*," Severus replied with a slight edge.

Narcissa lightly cleared her throat in an effort to ease the tension between the two men.

"I believe *friendly* conversation is best had over tea," she suggested.

"Perhaps, my dear, but *robust* discourse is best served with a stronger spirit," Severus replied while steadily holding Lucius' gaze. "But I digress and shall leave the decision to you."

Severus turned his head and caught her eye. A pained expression momentarily crossed her face before it was quickly replaced with a neutral countenance. He slightly nodded his head in response to the unasked question that floated between them.

"Lucius, you've been an extremely busy man as of late," Severus said. "It makes one wonder what kind of subterfuge you might be concocting."

Lucius chuckled at the insinuation.

"You know me all too well," Lucius replied as he accepted a glass of Scotch from his wife. "As a matter of fact, I am considering a way to regain our Master's favor."

"It won't work," Severus bluntly stated as he swirled the amber liquid in his glass.

"Don't speak of matters to which you are not privy." A hardened look flickered in Lucius's eyes before taking on a wary expression. He then took a long sip from his glass. "One does what is necessary in order to survive."

"So your vaulted scheme to kill me is simply a matter of self-preservation?"

Lucius stilled at the accusation before consuming another draught. "It seems that we've come to an impasse," he murmured.

"It would appear so," Severus replied. "Surely, you didn't expect me to just kindly extend my neck while one of your henchmen wields a sword."

"No, if it were only that simple," Lucius said nonchalantly. "It was only an idea, Severus. Nothing has been set in motion."

"Ah, but that's where you're mistaken, *old friend*," Severus replied. "Regrettably, there happens to be a conflict of interest where my life, despicable as it may seem, is concerned. To assume otherwise is folly."

"Surely we can move beyond this... misunderstanding," Lucius said as he subconsciously tugged at his collar. A look of comprehension slowly dawned upon him as he looked at the drink in his hand before he turned towards Narcissa.

"Why?"

"Consider it a form of self-preservation, my love," Narcissa quietly explained. "Severus is the only person who can guarantee our child's safety in all this madness. To forfeit his life is to forfeit Draco's, and that is a matter I refuse to contemplate."

Lucius dropped his glass and gasped feebly at his chest in a vain attempt to catch his breath.

"You have always hated me, Severus," he gasped. "You've envied me for my wealth, my social status... my wife."

"Hate is so sophomoric," Severus replied. "I prefer the term *loathe*... it's a more mature form of disdain."

As Lucius drew a last shaky breath, the mighty reign of Malfoy came to a pitiful end.