

Defintion of a Princess

by seinde

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Ash

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Because being rich does not automatically make for a happy childhood.

"Cissy!"

The curtains open with a screech.

"No..."

I turn my face away from the burning morning light. It isn't nice to wake people up early on the weekend, but Bella has never been particularly nice. She nearly broke Andromeda's nose not two months ago when my other sister brought that *filthy* Muggle boy into our noble house. I would have too, if I were less of a lady. It's good that she's left.

"Get up, Cissy!" she hisses at me.

I bury myself under the sheet.

"Go away. It's too early," I mumble back.

Bella jumps into the bed and shakes me roughly. I can almost see the smirk on her face as she shrieks, "Get up! That man is coming! Father wants you to be up and dressed in an hour. He's even picked out a gown for you."

"Me?"

I throw back the covers suddenly. Bella is holding a blue gown. *The* blue gown, our mother's gown. She bounces off the bed and twirls with the dress, holding its flared skirt open to display jewels sewn into taffeta. The sun's rays gleam off the precious stones and silvery blue silk. Bella's long black hair falls over the dress bodice as she holds it up to her face. She won't say anything, but I can tell she wishes it were for her. She would be beautiful in it. I feel proud that father has chosen it for me. He always tells me that, of his daughters, I am the only one who resembles mother; I am his favorite.

"Now get up! We don't want you to be late!"

My sister throws the gown down on the bed and pulls me up by the hand. She drags me across the floor and out of my bedroom. I go with her willingly, but I can't stop staring at the blue dress. It had been mother's favorite, the one she wore to greet important wizards. Andromeda and Bellatrix were each given something of hers, but he has saved her most precious dress for me. I feel pleased that father has finally decided I've grown up enough to wear it.

I could barely keep up with Bella's pace as she runs down the stairs. She giggles madly when I almost fall on the last step. Stamping her feet on the ground, she pushes me into the bath chamber and shuts the door loudly, nearly smashing my fingers. Sometimes I really hate her.

The water is scalding hot when I take off my nightgown and step in...I must remember to tell father that the new house-elf he purchased still needed a few pointers.

Once I finish my bath and dress myself in my slip, I go back upstairs to my room. Bella is already waiting for me. She is sitting at my vanity, flicking her wand. I frown at her and yell for her leave my things alone.

"Don't be that way, Cissy," she protests as she waves her wand to dry my hair. Ever since her graduation, she's been flaunting her wandwork at every occasion. I'm sure she does it just to annoy me since she knows I'm not allowed to use magic over the summer yet. My hair falls down from its knot to my shoulders, and Bella presses down on them, signalling me to sit in front of the vanity.

"Shall I put the dress on before or after you braid my hair?" I ask.

She taps her chin thoughtfully and glances at the gown through heavy-lidded eyes.

"After...we wouldn't want to wrinkle it," she finally replies.

Using her wand, she parts my hair just above my left brow. Then she puts the crooked ebony wand aside on the stand and places her fingers on my scalp. My hair is my pride and joy. I don't have to have expensive things, but I must have my hair. Unlike the rest of my family, it is the color of autumn flax, just like mother. My sisters inherited her beautiful grey eyes, but I have her hair. Gently placing her hands under my chin, Bella tilts my head back. I look up at her, and she smiles down at me.

"Don't pull too tight," I say just as she separates the first locks.

She smirks playfully and yanks on some strands.

"Ouch!" My hand flies up to slap her away.

"Just for laughs, Cissy, don't scowl. It's unbecoming."

I make a face at her but let her continue braiding my hair. She tucks the straight locks one under another, beginning at the crown. I remember Andromeda teaching me to braid when I was much younger. Unlike Bella, she was very kind when I misplaced a lock. Andie's hands were much nimbler than mine; her braids always turned out far prettier. As a girl, I'd always thought she was very talented and beautiful. I shouldn't think of Andie now. She's not our sister anymore, not since she turned out to be a traitor. If mother were alive, she'd probably have died from embarrassment.

"Do you know who is coming?"

Bella tugs too hard on my hair and I cringe. She only rolls her eyes at me.

"I heard that it's a gentleman from a very old family."

"Why has father called me to join him?"

"Perhaps he needs your charm in a business matter," she answers curtly. I know she is lying. There's a cruel glint in her eye.

I stare at her in the mirror and stiffen my back. "Why doesn't he ask you then? You're much older."

My sister looks down at me with lashy eyes and twists her lips. She pins one of the braids down and continues on the second half. I know she is hiding something.

"Bella, just tell me!"

"Well, you know how charming he finds me," she says with a sneer.

This was true. Father did not care much for Bella, said she took after shrilly Aunt Walburga. I always liked my aunt though; ever since I was very young, she'd give me jewelry whenever we visited. Her last gift was a stunning emerald pendant in the shape of a teardrop. Aunt Walburga told me in confidence that she'd been disappointed at only having sons. My father most likely would have said the opposite.

But I must agree with her. Knowing first hand how disagreeable Sirius is, I'd be disappointed too if I were his mother.

"Do you think this man will be handsome?" I ask.

"I should think so, baby sister," Bella remarks. "He's rich."

She has it so easy, being with Rodolphus. Father approves of him. There's a boy I see at school, but I dare not speak to him, or tell anyone of my heart. He's a Ravenclaw, you see, and father would never look at me again if I were to bring him home. I have it on good authority that his family has no money. It shouldn't matter because we have enough money, but I suppose it's only right that one should add to their wealth instead of diminishing it.

Bella pins the second braid into place and begins to pull the rest of my hair into a chignon. She uses her wand to tack the hair with little pins. When she is done, she reaches for a clip. I stop her and give her a comb instead. The comb was my mother's as well and is adorned with tiny everlasting jasmine flowers.

"Now let's put some rouge on you so you don't look thirteen." She bends down to look through my drawers.

"But I *am* thirteen," I interject.

I dig out a vial of red powder from the top drawer and hand it to her. She sweeps it onto the apples of my cheeks and makes a fish face, wanting me to imitate her. I suck my cheeks in, and she dabs the red in the hollows as well.

"Move aside," she mutters.

I slide down on my bench, and she lowers herself beside me. Bella moves to pick up a brush and ink to line my eyes. In this moment, I wished that Andie was still our sister. She'd be able to do a much better job. Bella always wears too much make up.

"Close your eyes," she commands.

I feel the cool touch of the ink as it is being drawn on my lash line. It feels like crying inside out.

"Now look up."

I turn my eyes up but protest, "I don't want any on the bottom."

"Well, you're getting some. Now shut up, you'll make me ruin it."

After what seems like an eternity, she finishes poking the little brush at my eyes. Next, she glides a bright red lipstick over my lips. I press my lips together obediently, and she blots the shine out of them.

"Looking almost fifteen, if I may say so. Now let's get your dress on."

I look in the mirror and feel relieved that I don't look gloomy or cheap. I don't say it aloud, but it happens quite frequently to her. The lipstick is far more red than I'd have chosen. But it does not look garish so I hold my tongue.

Tentatively, I walk over to the outstretched gown and step into it as Bella holds the shoulders. She pulls the neck close and has me hold it while she buttons the endless placket on my back. The gown feels heavy and hangs on me. The neck is too open and shows the straps of my slip clearly.

"It's too big," I say.

Bella takes her wand and swishes it at the waist. The gown instantly shrinks around me and wraps itself to me tightly. Although less heavy, it still feels uncomfortable. Her charm is not perfect, and the dress pinches me painfully at places. Mother was a bit taller than I am now.

"Can you let it out a bit? I'll wear a belt."

She shakes her head with an insulted look. "That won't do. Father says he wants every flower in the vase, but no more."

I slouch and wince as the hooks poke at my back through the fabric.

"But it hurts!" I whine.

"You look presentable," she returns and pulls me in front of the mirror.

I stare at myself in the mirror. I do not look myself. A slim girl masquerading as a woman with cold blue eyes stares back at me. She didn't look particularly happy. I wonder if mother would be proud to see me look like this in her dress. With shaky hands, I put on my best shoes.

Bella looks up at the clock and promptly ushers me out of the room. It is exactly nine in the morning. The dress drags behind me as I walk. She leaves me at the staircase and motions for me to descend by myself. I look up at her, terrified. My sister tosses her long black hair over her shoulder and smirks as if she were secretly laughing at a great joke.

I clutch at the banister as I take steps down toward the parlor. The paintings all smile at me kindly as I pass them. My heart pounds nervously for I don't know anything about father's business. What if I behave badly?

When I reach the bottom of the stairs, I breathe a long sigh before walking toward the parlor. My shoes clack loudly on the wooden floor as I step. Once I reach the parlor, I stop at the doorway and wait for father. He turns around and beckons me with his big, square hands.

"This is my daughter, Narcissa," he announces as I walk over to stand behind his armchair. I give him a quick kiss on the cheek when I reach him.

Across from him, sitting in the opposite chair is a young man with sharp, angular features. He has light brown hair, which is perfectly parted across his large forehead. I don't much care for his olive complexion, but the darkness of his skin makes his grey eyes stand out like lights. I suppose you can call him handsome. His navy robes are certainly very well tailored.

The man smiles and put down his cup. He reminds me of a second year in my house, Ellsworth Selwyn. However, he has none of the devilish aura Ellsworth does.

"Darling, this is Lane Selwyn," my father says he points to the man. So they were related.

"Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Selwyn," I whisper demurely as I move forward to shake his hand. Ladies are supposed to be quiet.

"Please, Lane."

Mr. Selwyn's grip is very strong and his hand warm.

I sit close to my father's chair on the couch, folding my legs under me as Andie taught me to do. If it were Bella, she'd have been leaning back and showing her feet, no doubt. Perhaps that is why father has chosen me instead.

"Beautiful isn't she? Just like her mother," my father praises.

I smile again and turn my eyes down. Without looking, I could feel Mr. Selwyn's cold, steel eyes on me.

Father turns to me and says, "Narcissa, you have just met your future husband."

My eyes jerk up to see Mr. Selwyn. He suddenly seems far less ideal. I begin to notice the little lines around his eyes, the strands of grey hair hiding by his ears. He is far too old! How could I marry someone like him? I know that father is only looking out for me, but he never asked me at all! How was it that he felt it not pertinent to consult me? It is wrong!

I can feel my heart sinking under the weight of my dress. Everything feels blue and like ocean water drowning me. I don't want him! My father and Mr. Selwyn are discussing details of my betrothal, but I can't hear any of the words they are saying. I can't breathe.

They are laughing now. I cast my gaze at my father and see that he is smiling and happy. I try my best to play the part, but I cannot overcome the horrible feeling inside me. Suddenly, I am aware of the greedy undertone of Mr. Selwyn's glances toward me. It is the way that I see men look at Bella sometimes. It is revolting.

"Father..." I say quietly.

He continues his conversation. I must have spoken too softly.

"Father..." I repeat, louder this time.

Again he ignores me.

"Father, *please*..." I say urgently.

His face suddenly slackens and turns to me, irritated. "What is it?"

"It's just that...I don't want to marry him."

My father's eyes blaze and he shoots out of his seat. He is livid as he slams down his cup, brown tea splashing all over the glass tabletop. His hand quivers as he points toward the stairs. I feel rotten at having angered him, but I simply cannot marry that man.

"Please don't make me," I plead to him. "It'll kill me!"

"Go to your room, you petulant child!" he shouts.

I quickly scurry away, picking up my mother's dress skirt so as to not step on the precious fabric. I pass Bella standing at the foot of the stairs. She takes one look at me and laughs mercilessly. I run up the stairs so she will not see me cry.

To be a good daughter is a terrible burden.