

Persuasion

by linlawless

Is a relationship between former enemies advisable? Is it even possible? A sequel to "A Fool-Proof Plan"

A One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

Is a relationship between former enemies advisable? Is it even possible? A sequel to "A Fool-Proof Plan"

A/N: This was intended to be a lighthearted follow-up to my previous story, *A Fool-Proof Plan*. However, after a couple of false starts, it went in a different direction than I expected. Many thanks to TeaOli for making me think differently and more deeply about Lucius and about this pairing. Also, thanks to gingertart for helping me with some book titles. And finally, thanks to the wonderful karelia for the beta read and Proulxes for the Britpick. I admit I tinkered a bit after I got it back, so any mistakes are mine.

Hurrying into the Leaky Cauldron twenty minutes late, Hermione could only hope that she hadn't missed the surprise. Draco and Ginny were due back from their honeymoon this evening, and many of their friends and family had decided to welcome them home with an informal party.

Fortunately, it appeared that the newlyweds weren't here yet. Glancing around, wondering who was present, Hermione was startled and not even a little bit pleased to feel her heart skip a beat when, in the corner of her eye, she caught sight of broad shoulders and long blond hair. *Lucius is here*, she thought, surprised. *Why is he here? He doesn't even support their marriage. He doesn't even like her.*

Even as she had the thought, she couldn't quite quell the feeling of pleasure, of anticipation, that she felt when she saw him. *That was just a one-off*, she told herself sternly. *You are not starting an affair with Lucius. It was just because you were trapped with him in that stupid cabin. You are not attracted to him. You do not like him. You are not going to sleep with him again.*

Even as she scolded herself mentally, she realised that the fact that she felt she had to suggested she wasn't quite being honest with herself. It probably didn't matter, however, because certainly Lucius wouldn't be interested in sleeping with her again, even if she were interested in sleeping with him. Which she wasn't.

Really.

Definitely not.

It was really good, though, a little voice in her head reminded her traitorously. Images flashed through her mind: Lucius, naked, his blond hair tickling her thighs as he used his mouth very skilfully for her pleasure; Lucius with his head thrown back in apparent ecstasy as she returned the favour...

Hermione ruthlessly cut off the thought, feeling herself flush, as Harry greeted her. "Hermione! There you are! We were starting to wonder if you got caught up at work again."

"Hi, Harry. No, I would never miss this." She looked at him appraisingly. "I'm a little surprised to see you here, though."

"Well," Harry said seriously, "it's my own fault, isn't it? If I hadn't been so slow to commit, maybe she'd be coming home from a honeymoon with me." He smiled ruefully as the happy couple walked in. "Anyway, she seems happy, doesn't she?"

They joined a chorus of "surprise!" before Hermione answered quietly, "Yes, Harry, she does. She is."

"Yeah. She is," Harry said with a little sigh.

"Well, if it isn't the delectable Miss Granger." The silky voice at her ear was so soft that, fortunately, Harry couldn't possibly have heard. Hermione felt a delicious tingle shoot through her entire body before landing, unsurprisingly, at her groin, as Lucius continued, "And how are you, my dear?"

"Malfoy, what do you want?" Harry's tone was just this side of civil.

"Harry!" Hermione glared at him, even though part of her was grateful for the distraction from the arousal humming through her. "Be nice! Lucius hasn't done anything to you."

"Not this week, maybe." Harry glared at Lucius. "But give him time."

"Really, Mr Potter, this is a party." Lucius managed to look wounded before he turned to smile at Hermione. "I just wondered if Miss Granger would like a drink."

"Why do you care if Hermione wants a drink or not?"

"I'd love one," Hermione heard herself say. *Why did I just say that? Haven't I just decided not to...?*

"Excellent," Lucius said, interrupting her thoughts. "This way." And just like that, Hermione found herself steered toward the bar. She cast a quick, half-apologetic smile over her shoulder at Harry, hoping he wouldn't cause trouble.

"What will you have?" Lucius asked smoothly. "Wine? Beer? Something stronger?"

"Wine would be lovely," Hermione answered. "Perhaps a Cabernet?"

"Excellent," Lucius said again. He placed the order for both of them, and when the drinks arrived, he offered a toast. "To the happy couple."

Hermione clinked glasses with him, but couldn't resist asking, "When did you change your tune?"

"They're married now. At this point, it would be best if they stayed that way. At least for a while."

"Ah, so you're just biding your time, then?"

"I didn't say that." His smile was inscrutable, as usual.

"Please don't try to split them up, Lucius. I'd hate to have to hurt you."

His smile deepened, somehow becoming overtly sensual. "I can think of much more interesting ways to occupy ourselves than worrying about my son's marriage."

"Lucius...," Hermione began.

"Oh, look, they're coming this way. Smile!" he instructed before turning to greet his son. "Draco! I hope you had a good trip!"

Hermione managed to stop gaping at Lucius in time to greet Ginny with a hug. "You look wonderful, Gin! You clearly enjoyed yourself."

The next several minutes passed in pleasant discussion of the newlyweds' trip to Spain. *Yes, the weather was good; yes, the food was fabulous; no, we didn't do very much exploring in the Muggle areas; yes, we very much want to go back sometime...* All the while, Ginny was looking curiously back and forth between Hermione and Lucius while Draco's expression switched rapidly from speculative, to concerned, to thoughtful, and back again. Just as Hermione was about to let out a belligerent, "What?", Draco and Ginny moved on to greet their other friends.

Taking a deep breath and releasing it, Hermione resolved to be forthright. "Lucius," she began again as soon as they were alone, "we are not becoming involved with each other."

"Of course we're not," Lucius said. "That would be a recipe for disaster, don't you think?"

"Yes, it would," Hermione agreed emphatically, ignoring the little voice in her head that whispered, *who says?!*

"Excellent. We're agreed, then. No involvement." He paused. "Of course, that doesn't mean we couldn't behave in a courteous...even *friendly*...fashion when we chance to run in to one another at events such as this. Does it?"

"No, of course not. I see no reason why we couldn't be friendly acquaintances. But no more," she added when he smiled, seemingly delighted.

"Excellent." Hermione was starting to wish Lucius would stop saying that word. Why was everything suddenly 'excellent'? "Here, another toast," he offered. "To 'friendly acquaintances!'"

Clinking her glass with his, Hermione wondered why she didn't feel pleased.

To Hermione's very great chagrin, she found herself spending most of the evening in Lucius's company. After that first glass of wine, she decided she ought to mingle...and said as much to Lucius. He smiled, looking perfectly content with the notion. "Of course, my dear. We definitely ought to mingle. But perhaps you'd like a little something from the buffet first?"

"Oh... All right," Hermione heard herself reply. And then he was escorting her to the side table, where an assortment of hors d'oeuvres was laid out in a pleasing array. And *then*, when her plate was full and she was just about to excuse herself to go and sit with Harry, Lucius stopped her in her tracks with a single question.

"Did I mention I had acquired a copy of Bogworthy's authoritative work?"

Hermione gasped. "*Magical Vegetables and the Wizarding Diet through the Ages*? But I thought that had gone out of print a hundred years ago?"

"Oh, it did. But all my acquaintances know I'm always on the lookout for rare books, and one of them happened upon it at an obscure bookshop somewhere in rural Ireland recently, so..." Giving her an inquiring look, he asked nonchalantly, "You wouldn't care to come to the manor and take a look sometime, would you?"

The next time Hermione tried to make good her escape, she admitted, if only to herself, that she wasn't *entirely* sure she wanted to. She said, "I feel like I'm monopolising you, Lucius. Perhaps some of your friends who would like to talk with you won't come near because they don't like me."

He chuckled. "If that's holding them back, then they're idiots and I have no time for or interest in talking to them. Let's dance."

And before she could say yea or nay to that, she was being expertly twirled around the small dance floor that someone had magically cleared for the purpose.

The third time, Hermione couldn't even say she *sort of* wanted to leave his company. However, she *did* need the loo, so she said, "If you'll excuse me, Lucius, I need to powder my nose."

His response surprised and, if she were honest, delighted her. "Do hurry back. I wanted to ask you if you've read Furstin Pyewhacket's new book? And whether you find it accurate?"

Hermione had plenty to say about *A Beginners Guide to Muggle Literature: Part I, Magic for the Non-Magical Being* so she did, indeed hurry back. The lively discussion that ensued was certainly worth pushing aside a few small misgivings, she decided.

"I suppose the party is over," Lucius said, glancing around nearly two hours later. He hoped he had made some progress this evening. After their delicious week together before and after the wedding, he had assumed they would go their separate ways.

And they had.

But then he had spent an inordinate amount of time thinking about her. And when he'd realised that other witches...even those generally accepted as the most beautiful, the most alluring...paled in comparison, he had concluded that he would have to lure her back for more.

Hence the purchase of books he would otherwise never have sought out...and he had read them, too!...just so that he would be able to keep her locked in conversation long enough to charm her.

Fortunately, she looked disappointed that the evening was coming to a close. "I suppose we should..."

"Yes," Lucius agreed. "May I escort you home?"

"N-no, I don't think that's a good idea," Hermione said, but she didn't sound sure; he thought perhaps she was hoping to be convinced. He decided one more small nudge would do it.

With a minute flick of his wand and a non-verbal "*Lapsare!*", the waitress who was passing by stumbled slightly, and one of the drinks on her tray sloshed over its rim, splashing onto Hermione's dress. "Oh, no! I'm so sorry, Ms Granger! Let me just get something for..."

Lucius cut in smoothly. "No need. I'm sure it was an accident." Turning to Hermione, he said, "Narcissa left something at the manor when she left that she swore took out any stain. If you'll allow it, we can have that taken care of in no time."

"Well... er... All right, I suppose that makes sense..." Hermione replied. "But then I'll really have to Apparate straight home. I have a busy day tomorrow."

Lucius stretched languidly as he came gradually awake. There were definite... advantages... to having decided to accept his son's marriage, he decided as his hand encountered a familiar, delightfully feminine form. He allowed his hand to linger, stroking gently, until said feminine form began to stir.

Suddenly, Hermione shot up in bed...giving Lucius an enticing view of her naked breasts before she yanked the covers up to her chin. She turned shocked eyes to his and gasped. "Lucius! What the hell...?"

"That's not a very polite good morning, Hermione."

Her glare only deepened. "What do you expect when I wake up *here*... with *you*?"

He frowned. What was so bad about waking up with him? And as *here* happened to be his very luxurious bedroom at Malfoy Manor, he didn't quite see the problem with that, either. "A kiss good morning?" he asked optimistically.

She actually growled. "We are *not* becoming involved with each other, Lucius! This cannot happen! I don't trust you!"

"I don't see what one has to do with the other," Lucius replied smoothly, trying not to take offense at being dismissed as a potential *involvement* so offhandedly.

Hermione stared at him in apparent shock for a moment. Oddly, his comment seemed to have calmed her marginally. "You mean..." She paused, seemed to regroup. "You don't seem upset about this..." she said finally.

"Why should I be upset to wake up with a beautiful woman naked in my bed? Especially as I went to all the trouble of persuading her to be there in the first place?"

"You... *persuaded* me? On purpose?!"

"Why are you so surprised? I thought my attraction to you was rather obvious at the wedding...and in the days leading up to it."

"But..." she began. Again, she paused, seemed to regroup, and started again. "That was just because we were healthy adults who were trapped together and bored." Lucius didn't respond right away. She added hesitantly, "Wasn't it?"

How to answer that... "Perhaps initially," he said. "But I can assure you that there are plenty of 'healthy adults' who I could be trapped with for a century or more and they would *never* wind up naked in bed with me." When she looked doubtful, he added, "Off the top of my head: Dolores Umbridge. Sibyll Trelawney. Amelia Bones. Madam Malkin. Lavender Brown. Pansy Parkinson. Millie Bulstrode. Molly Weasley. *Ginny* Weasley... I mean Malfoy." He watched her reaction carefully...she had seemed about to bristle until he corrected himself, but that brought one more to mind. "*Narcissa Black Malfoy Krum.*"

She finally reacted to that one. "You don't seriously expect me to believe that you and Narcissa wouldn't have fallen back into old habits, do you?"

"She humiliated me."

"Ah." She paused, seemed to be deciding whether to say anything more. He waited, and sure enough, she added, "She didn't, you know."

"Of course she did! She left me for a Quidditch player half her age!"

"Which has to be more humiliating for her than for you, don't you think?"

Lucius doubted it, but he had already learnt there was no point arguing with Hermione once she had her mind set. He changed the subject. "Anyway, even if the 'trapped healthy adults' theory worked initially...which I assure you it doesn't...it definitely doesn't explain what happened *after* the wedding. Or were you forgetting that?"

"I rather thought *you* would want to."

Lucius frowned. "Why should *I* want to? That weekend is one of my fondest memories."

"But I'm a..." She abruptly cut herself off. "Never mind. I have to go."

"You're a... what?" Lucius asked, realising suddenly why she seemed so surprised.

"Never mind, I said." She started to rise, then flushed that delightful shade of pink he remembered so fondly. She looked stymied for a moment, then said, "*Accio* Lucius's robe."

The silk garment flew from the bathroom, and she shrugged into it. Thinking it a shame to cover all that loveliness, Lucius said, "I no longer hold most of the wrong-headed views of my youth, you know."

She looked at him, a hint of sadness lurking in her eyes. "People don't really change their views, I've found. And anyway, I hate to tell you, but six years ago does not qualify as your youth."

Choosing to ignore that simply because he knew the larger point was far more important, he said, "My views ~~have~~ changed, though."

She looked sceptical. "Why? Because the old views are no longer politically expedient?"

"No." Lucius hated even thinking about this, but it had suddenly become very important to him that she understand his transformation. Yes, he would always be ambitious, always a bit of a plotter and a manipulator...how else was he to entertain himself?...but his beliefs made him fundamentally different now. "Because I had a lot of time to think when I was awaiting trial, and again when Narcissa left, and even more when Draco started ignoring me in favour of his new relationship."

Hermione snorted disbelievingly. "You plotted to interfere with their wedding!"

"Yes, but that was because I didn't really think Weasleys and Malfoys would ever get along. I was trying...rather ineffectively and apparently misguidedly...to protect my son."

"You were *trying* to make him form a more politically advantageous alliance."

"She's a war hero from a family of war heroes," Lucius pointed out. "Other than *you*, there *is* no 'more politically advantageous alliance'."

"Is *that* what this is about?" Hermione clambered out of bed, almost tripping over his too-large robe in her haste to leave.

"*No*, it's not!" Lucius said, realising how that must have sounded to a woman who was already suspicious of his motives. "It's about a lot of things, but not that!" She ignored him, continued searching the room for some article or other of her clothing. He got out of bed himself, uncaring that with her wearing his robe, he was naked. "Hermione, would you please *listen* to me? It's not about that. It's about... I *like* you, damn it!"

At that, she stopped and looked at him. "How can you possibly *like* me, Lucius? I am everything you despise! I'm a Mudblood who proves by her very existence that the ideology you spent most of your life fighting for is shite! And where is my bra, damn it?"

He cringed. "Don't use that word." Feeling suddenly uncomfortable, he Summoned his most comfortable pair of pyjama trousers.

"What word? Shite?" He shook his head slightly. "Mudblood? You've used that word a thousand times, Lucius, so don't pretend it bothers you now."

As he tightened the drawstring on the trousers, he said, "It reminds me of every mistake I ever made in my life, so don't tell me it doesn't bother me. You have no idea what that word does to me."

"Why? Because you chose the wrong side? If Voldemort had won, you'd still be using it. I'd be enslaved at best, tortured or dead at worst, and you would be *happy* about it."

"I wouldn't," Lucius denied. "At the Final Battle, I finally realised that the two most powerful wizards there...three, if you count Severus...were half-bloods. Not purebloods. *Half-bloods!* One of whom had been using my blind prejudices, and those of a lot of people like me, to control us all. If that didn't hold up to close inspection, then what *else* was I wrong about?" Seeing her arrested expression, he added more quietly, "I had to come to terms with the fact that everything I had been taught, everything I had believed, for my entire life... was *wrong*. And that's what I thought about while I was waiting for my trial, and it was possibly...probably...why Narcissa left me. She wasn't ready to face her own mistakes, and I couldn't stop talking about how wrong we had been."

He fell silent, letting her digest that. When she spoke, her question surprised him. "You think Professor Snape was a stronger wizard than you are?"

"You don't?"

"I don't know. I never really thought about it before. But even if it's true, I wouldn't have expected you to admit it."

"Contrary to popular belief, I *can* sometimes see what's obvious. Look at the facts: he survived as a spy in the company of one of the most powerful Legilimens ever. To do that, he had to have been a stronger Occlumens than you or I could even imagine. *I* barely survived, and I *wasn't* a spy. And he could *fly* without a *broom!*"

Hermione smiled slightly at that. "You men, always impressed by sport." Her demeanour grew serious again. "I don't know whether I can believe you, Lucius. And it scares me that I *want* to believe you. I can't reconcile any of this with the man who let me be tortured in his drawing room."

"I did some awful things in my life, Hermione. I don't deny that. Even in the context of my beliefs at the time, I shudder to think of some of them. And in some ways, I'm still the man who did all that...though I'd like to think I've learned from the worst of my mistakes."

"But as recently as a month ago, you were still plotting and scheming to get things to go your way. How can I believe you've learned anything in the face of that?"

He shrugged. "I can't answer that. My personality hasn't changed, and it probably won't. But the things I plot about are different, and the lengths that I'm willing to go aren't as extreme. There was a time when anyone Draco planned to marry without my approval would have disappeared permanently."

"You say that as calmly as if you were commenting on the weather!"

"For the record, I never even considered harming her. I just wanted her to go away, but I never thought of making it permanent."

"But how do I *know* that?"

"You don't. And I know you still don't trust me. You've said it often enough."

"Did you expect me to?"

"No. You're too clever for that. I'm not really trustworthy, am I?"

"No."

Lucius sighed. How to win her over...? Only time would tell whether she would ever really give him a chance... What he *really* needed was time with her; then she could see for herself how he was the same...and how he was *different*...compared to the man he used to be.

At last he said, "But I still really *like* you. I'm attracted to you. And I want to spend time with you. If you'll let me, that is. You could trust me enough for that, couldn't you? Just a little bit? You seem to like me well enough when you let yourself."

She didn't comment on his assertion that she liked him, too. But she didn't refuse, either. "I don't know, Lucius. I just don't know. What will people say?"

"Some will say I'm using you to rehabilitate my reputation and regain power. Others will think I'm having a mid-life crisis or trying to get back at Narcissa. And they'll all say you've totally lost your senses." He paused. "But, really, who cares what they think? You and I will know the truth. Eventually, the people who matter to us will see the truth." He paused, letting that sink in before repeating, "And why should we care what the rest of them think?"

Hermione chewed on her lower lip as she thought about that. Lucius felt the now-familiar pull of attraction flare up. He was glad the pyjama trousers were loose as well as concealing. She distracted him by asking, "If I agreed to this, could we keep it between us for a while?"

Frowning, working hard not to take offence at the implication that being seen with him would somehow embarrass her...though, if he were honest, he knew it would and maybe even *should*...Lucius said, "I don't want to behave as though we have anything to hide. I'm not ashamed of anything that might happen between us... But maybe you are..." he acknowledged, bringing the issue out in the open in hopes that she would deny it.

She didn't. *One step at a time*, he reminded himself. *She has to be willing to spend time with me if I'm going to convince her we could have more*..As graciously as he could manage, trying not to let her see the twinge of hurt, he conceded, "All right, I can live with that...for a while, anyway. But not forever."

He was relieved when she agreed, "No, not forever. And it's not that I'm ashamed... It's more that publicity will add pressure. We have enough to overcome already, with our history being what it is; we shouldn't court more stress than is absolutely necessary until we know ourselves. All right?"

"All right. Does this mean you'll stay for breakfast?" *And lunch? And dinner?* Those questions could wait a while, he reminded himself again. And maybe he was wrong...maybe this *wasn't* the first faint stirrings of love, so best not to mention tomorrow quite yet.

First, he needed a really good scheme to win her trust...

"Yes, I'll stay for breakfast. *Just* breakfast," she said; he assumed his expression must have given away his hope for more. "And only because I'm too hungry to wait until I get home."

Smiling, but without letting his smug satisfaction show, he said, "Of course, my dear. If you change your mind, you need only say so." He gestured toward a small table near the window. "Come, my dear: sit with me. This is my favourite spot for breakfast. Isn't the view spectacular?"

As she took the chair he pulled out for her, Lucius leaned down and nibbled the spot on her neck he had discovered a month ago...the one that unflinchingly made her shiver. "Lucius..." she said, but it didn't sound like a protest.

"Hm...?" He moved to suck on her earlobe. His hand slid into the opening of her *bis*...robe and began to play with her breasts.

"Lucius..." she said again, this time on a sigh. Seemingly without conscious awareness, her legs parted, giving him a glimpse of the heaven that awaited him... assuming she could be thoroughly persuaded...

Sliding his lips along her jaw, bending to tease at her core with the fingers of his free hand, he asked, "Do you want me to stop?"

At last, she turned and captured his lips with hers. "Not if you value your life."

He smiled against her lips, sliding his arm under her knees to lift her. Returning to the bed they had so recently left, he tugged the belt of his robe open and let his eyes wander over her exposed form. As he let his trousers fall to the floor and kicked them away, he replied, "Oh, I do... Let me show you..."

Settling himself over her and kissing her in earnest, he decided winning Hermione's heart would require all the Slytherin cunning he could muster.

Fortunately, he knew she would be worth every bit of the effort the task would require.