

Revenge is Always Sweet

by devsgma

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Thing is... Lucius Malfoy is the one in a better position to be a benefactor (since we know he's rich) and with very good reasons to want to remain anonymous.

So what would happen if Lucius was the "Daddy Long-Legs" instead of Snape? Not a romantic interest, but simply someone whom Hermione has to depend on."

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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AN: As always, I offer my undying admiration for my wonderful beta, Lariope.

The rear office of the newly formed Rehabilitation Department was dismal, drab and quite plain in its ordinariness. The desk that dominated the room was scuffed, dingy and looked as though it had been hastily put back together after being destroyed at least once. The drawers, when opened, howled their protests at being used. Several stacks of papers on its uneven surface teetered occasionally and would have tipped if Edgar Fleaburn, the caseworker assigned to this particular office, hadn't placed a Stabilizing Spell on the small towers. This definitely wasn't the type of room in which one would expect to find the slickly sophisticated Lucius Malfoy spending his alternate Tuesday afternoons, but spend them there he did. Some Tuesday afternoons went by more quickly than others, but this one threatened to drag into the early evening.

Mister Fleaburn shook his head and handed back the bank draft Malfoy had given him. "It's all well and good to donate a hundred thousand Galleons to the general fund for widows and orphans...and I hope you do...but it's too easy. It doesn't qualify."

Lucius Malfoy's brows rose slightly. "Tell me you don't expect me to pick up a shovel and rebuild some hovel?"

Fleaburn shrugged and pulled a sheet of parchment out of one of his towers before turning it around for the other wizard to see. "There are a sizeable number of homes that need repair, and none of them are hovels."

"There *has* to be something else," Lucius insisted before his eyes narrowed. "Is everyone else on *probation* being required to do this, or am I the only one being pressured into doing *manual* labor?"

Fleaburn hadn't been picked for his position...or as Lucius' caseworker...because he was a soft-hearted or weak wizard. He'd held his own during the battle with Voldemort's forces, and when the time came to deal with those former Death Eaters that were still alive and not being sent to Azkaban, he was one of the first to endorse and oversee the Rehabilitation Department. His standards were strict, ethical, and entirely unbendable.

"You knew the terms when you signed the agreement for rehabilitation, Mister Malfoy. Everyone who is in the program signed the *exact* same form. Do you wish to reconsider and choose the alternative at this time?" Edgar asked with just a touch of frost in his tone. "If so, I will gladly summon an Auror who will be more than happy to escort you to Azkaban."

"If you would be so kind as to explain exactly what *does* qualify, I'm sure that last step will be totally unnecessary," Lucius replied with an equal hint of ice.

"You were given the standards at our last meeting; have you misplaced them?" Edgar asked while pulling yet another sheet of parchment from a different pile. "Take this, *study* your options, and be ready to start implementation by our next meeting or it will be our last."

"Is that a threat, Mister Fleaburn?" Lucius asked in a silky tone.

"No, it's more in the manner of a promise," Edgar replied with a small smile. "One that won't be broken."

"Aren't you done with that rehabilitation nonsense yet?" Narcissa asked as she placed a napkin on her lap. "Not that one," she told the elf starting to serve her a portion of baked chicken. Pointing toward a different, browner piece she said, "That one." Turning her attention back to her husband she complained, "You always come back from those meetings in such a foul mood."

"That *nonsense*, as you call it, is keeping me out of Azkaban, my dear. Would you rather I were there?" Lucius asked as he speared a piece of asparagus from his dinner plate.

Narcissa rolled her eyes toward the ceiling before she sighed and then said, "Don't be ridiculous, darling. Wasn't the hundred thousand enough? Do they want more?"

"It didn't *qualify*," he growled after taking a sip of wine.

"Didn't qualify? Since when does an exorbitant amount of money not *qualify*?" she asked in genuine amazement.

"It's this new batch of Ministry workers they've hired. They have *ethics*," Lucius advised in a disgusted tone.

Narcissa hid her smile behind a delicate hand before she said, "You needn't make it sound like a contagious disease."

"It makes it decidedly difficult to do any sort of business with them." Lucius sent her a frown. "You may have hidden your smile, but the laughter was evident in your tones. It isn't amusing."

Narcissa, concern now evident on her face, tilted her head and asked, "You're worried?" When Lucius gave her a curt nod, she smiled softly, lifted her glass of wine to take a small sip, and then said, "I'm not worried, you see, because I have a great deal of belief in my husband. He will manage to rise above all the bureaucratic nonsense they put in his way and win out."

Lucius gave a brief snort before applying himself to his dinner. "I'd love to *win out* over whoever dreamed up the idea of putting perfectly respectable wizards on a Muggle program to begin with," he muttered between bites. "It's demeaning and completely uncalled for."

"Actually," Narcissa said with a faint frown on her face, "if the gossip in the beauty salon is accurate, it was Hermione Granger who first proposed it. From what I understand, she was quite foolish and discussed the idea with Sub-Minister Mindenhall who, of course, presented it as his own work and grabbed all the accolades."

Lucius rolled his eyes before his upper lip lifted in a brief snarl. "I should have known. Where else would such an absurd idea come from, other than a Muggle-born. I'll accolade Mindenhall in my own fashion," he added with a smirk.

"Do be careful, darling," Narcissa crooned as she sliced into her chicken. "It wouldn't do to have your probation extended over a misunderstanding."

"There is that," he muttered darkly.

Working on rebuilding Wizarding homes wasn't as bad as Lucius thought it was going to be. The lottery to assign the homes had landed him in the countryside, and the house he was currently working on was in such a state of disrepair that the occupants had opted to stay with relatives until it was habitable. From what he gathered, they were an extremely elderly pair that weren't able to manage the repairs on their own. This, in Lucius' opinion, made it an absolutely brilliant location, as there was no one around to witness his disgrace at being forced to do *manual* labor, even though his wand hand was the only part of his body that was actually doing anything. As he strengthened beams and straightened sagging walls and ceilings, he debated how to get revenge on Mindenhall and Granger. Nothing obvious or anything that could be traced back to him, of course, but it would be done one way or another.

As the months passed, and the list of houses repaired by him grew, Lucius found himself looking forward to the challenge of fixing what he and his brethren had attempted to destroy. He would never openly admit anything to anyone, but it was quite rewarding in its own way. Spectators no longer bothered him, and when an occasional whisper of awe at his wand work reached his ears, he permitted himself a small smirk. It amused him to implement improvements in the original structures and to wonder in idle moments if the occupants even had the intelligence to notice.

Mindenhall's disgrace had been all too easy to arrange. His habit of using subtle charms and spells to ensure his winning while gambling in the Muggle world had been brought to the attention of the Aurors by a thoroughly shocked wizard named William LeGrande, who had recently taken up the sport. The ten thousand galleons LeGrande had been paid to detect and report this illegal use of magic was, in Lucius' opinion, well spent. There would be no rehabilitation for Mindenhall; he would have to serve out the sentence imposed upon him by the Wizengamot, and there would be no cushy job as Sub-Minister waiting for him upon his exit.

Granger's comeuppance was proving to be much more difficult. The girl was entirely too much of a goody-two-shoes, and there was no dirt to be found *anywhere*. There had been a small glimmer of daylight when Lucius discovered that the Weasley whelp to whom she'd been engaged was cheating on her with another witch named Brown. Lucius had been discreetly arranging for a public disclosure in the hopes that Weasley or Brown would be wounded in one form or another, which would have sent Granger to Azkaban along with Mindenhall, but the humiliation factor would have satisfied him just as well. His intricate plans had to be trashed when Granger found out early and threw the bastard over in a much more private setting. He was further disgruntled that there wasn't even a scratch to be found on either of her betrayers. After that, much to Malfoy's disgust, it was even more difficult to find anyone with anything negative to say about the witch, as public sympathy was all on her side.

Narcissa's bright chatter at dinner one evening gave him a lead for a different sort of revenge. The beauty shop gossip was circulating the rumor that Granger was making payments to Gringotts for her portion of the damage done during the great dragon escape. According to information later dug out by Lucius' informants, she'd refused Potter's generous offer to pay her share, as he had with Weasley, and had insisted that she would be responsible for her own debts.

To Lucius' way of thinking, done correctly, this could drive a wedge between Potter and Granger. It wouldn't be as severe a wedge as the one that currently existed between Weasley and Granger, but it would do. Potter would deny everything, and Granger would be convinced that he was lying to her. It would break her Gryffindor heart and light a fire under her silly pride at the same time. The witch would be without her two closest friends, once again adrift in the magical world without her staunchest allies. It would do very nicely, indeed.

"What exactly have you been doing, Mister Malfoy?" Edgar Fleaburn asked with narrowed eyes while looking through the other man's file.

Lucius frowned and attempted to read upside down. The file was briskly closed and set to the side before he could ascertain anything more than his assigned number. "Other than what you've tasked me to do, nothing," he replied smoothly while wondering if LeGrande had sold him out, but then he realized it really didn't matter. Nothing Lucius had done had been illegal. He'd actually assisted the Aurors in bringing a law-breaker to justice, nothing more.

"I find that difficult to believe," the other man said flatly.

"And why is that?" Lucius asked with an arched brow.

"Your file," Fleaburn hissed while his right index finger pounded on the same, "is full of commendations from the grateful citizens who own the homes you've worked on. Many of them cite improvements that weren't ordered, weren't authorized, and were *entirely* unnecessary in the opinion of the Rebuilding Committee."

"Are the owners upset by these *improvements*?"

"You know damned well they aren't," Fleaburn growled as he rose from his desk and glared down at the other man.

"Did any of them go over the budget allowed for the repairs?"

"No," Fleaburn admitted grudgingly while sitting down. "That's not the *point*, damn it!"

"I have successfully repaired every ramshackle residence I've been assigned. The homeowners are apparently pleased with the results, *and* they've all been within the pitiful budgets allowed," Lucius said while ticking off the points on his fingers. "I'm afraid I'm being rather obtuse today, Mister Fleaburn, so I'm afraid you're going to have to spell out this *point* you're trying to make."

"You didn't follow the plans the Rebuilding Committee set up. In some cases you've totally disregarded them."

"Is that all?" Lucius said with a huff. "Those so-called plans were idiotic and there's nothing in my rehabilitation contract that stated I had to blindly follow them."

"The least you could have done would have been to send revised plans over to them. The head of the committee, Hergenrader, was furious that his people were looking like idiots when they didn't know what had been done on these properties," Fleaburn stated.

"Again, nothing in my rehabilitation contract requires that, now does it? Why should I endeavor to help idiots look less like what they are?" Lucius asked with a bored look on his face.

Fleaburn ran a hand over his face and sighed. "Look, Mister Malfoy, if you're smart, you won't tick Hergenrader off any more than you already have. He could assign any number of pig sties, chicken coops, or equally disgusting places to you. You've only got two more months of probation left. Don't make it miserable for yourself."

"You're assuming, quite incorrectly, that it isn't already," Lucius said with a smirk. "I do appreciate your concern, but it's unnecessary. If Mister Hergenrader does choose to express his displeasure in such a manner, I would find myself forced to contact the press. According to you, I'm doing an exemplary job fulfilling the terms of my probation. I'm sure the public would find it puzzling that I would be punished for doing more than I am required, don't you?"

Fleaburn blinked once before nodding his head. "I'll pass your message along."

Lucius rose and straightened his sleeves. "Unless there's something else you wish to discuss, I'll bid you good day."

"No, nothing else," Fleaburn replied with a shooing motion of his hand. "I'll see you in two weeks, same time."

"I don't know *what* I'll do with my time once our delightful Tuesday afternoons come to an end," Lucius advised in a dry tone as he exited Fleaburn's office.

Fleaburn pulled out a bottle of Muggle antacids, chewed down two, and muttered, "I'm going to celebrate for three solid months, myself."

Lucius and Narcissa had their own private celebration when he was finally off of probation, and while it wasn't the social event of the season, it was quite satisfying. Life went on much as usual in the Wizarding world until about three weeks later.

It all started with one little letter from Gringotts to Hermione Granger. It informed her that the debt charged against her had been paid in full, and all payments she had made toward it were refunded and deposited in her vault. A furious Granger had immediately paid a visit to #12 Grimmauld Place, and it wasn't long before Potter, and a slightly calmer Granger, had traveled to Gringotts. The conversation between Potter, Granger, and the goblins had not gone well.

Lucius read the reports with a decidedly wicked smile on his face before he tossed them all into the fire that burned briskly in his study. He had made sure that the *Daily Prophet* had anonymously received all the juicy details of the spectacular fight Granger and Potter had had after the goblins had refused to divulge who had paid up. What made it particularly satisfying was that they also refused to eliminate anyone, namely Potter. His fortune was large, but the Malfoy one was far greater, and if the goblins wished to keep it within their magical vaults, they would cooperate until the end of days.

Lucius rose from the chair in front of the fire to obtain one of his favorite cigars and a snifter of an excellent brandy. He stepped outside in order to light the cigar and frowned when he realized he felt a vague dissatisfaction. It was all well and good to have gotten his revenge on the two individuals who had the audacity to place wizards on probation, but it would have felt better to be able to brag a bit about it. Narcissa was a good wife, but he never told her *anything* he didn't want making the rounds of the beauty shop circuit. Someday he might let his magnanimous gesture on Granger's behalf be known in order to lord it over her head, but for now...until the rift between her and Potter was as deep as the ocean...he would be her anonymous benefactor.

THE END