

The Price of Glory

by phoenix

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 6

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A/N: I recommend you read the first episode the Glory Trilogy [To Regain Glory](#), before reading this one, though it is not strictly necessary.

Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy

Hermione's Tale

Chapter 1

Hermione stared at the teacup on the table in front of her. She was surprised that Ginny had not really said anything. She was aware that her distress was visible, but that was the great thing about Ginny, she knew when not to say anything. Sipping at her tea, Hermione thought back to what had just happened and tried to decide how best to explain it all to Ginny.

Hermione sat in shock as Draco admitted that his stepmother was his secret lover.

"Go on," Lucius growled when Draco paused too long.

She couldn't believe there could still be more.

"Father," Draco implored.

"Do it!"

Draco took a deep breath. "We planned it so that she would get pregnant with my child."

She couldn't control the sharp intake of breath, and unconsciously, she began to rub her swollen belly, knowing that her husband was not the father of her child, either. But at least her pregnancy was not the result of wilful treachery, was it?

Lucius sat next to her and took her hand in his. He spoke gently. "In order to prevent...embarrassment and discredit to the family, I had my solicitor scour wizarding law, and he found an ancient law. Draco has agreed to abide by its terms."

She was curious, but she was also afraid to ask what it might be. "What law?"

Lucius continued, "It was known as the *Uxoria Cauponari*. In essence, two men related by blood, who are in arranged marriages, can trade wives."

She pulled away, horrified by what she had just been told. "That's...that's...*barbaric!* You can't just trade women like commodities." She stormed out of the room. She had to get away from the two of them.

"Hermione!" Draco called and started to follow her.

She refused to acknowledge him and kept walking.

"Stay here, you foolish boy," ordered Lucius.

"I'm not a boy!" replied Draco petulantly.

The argument faded into the distance as she walked down the hall. She had to get out of the house, but the full force of what she had just been told came crashing around her, and she could feel an emotional breakdown coming. Turning into the dining room, she took a seat, buried her head in her arms and started crying uncontrollably.

Lucius' voice from the hallway asked cautiously, "Hermione?"

"Go away!" she shouted back at him. The last thing she wanted was to hear more of his manipulating words.

He wasn't about to be deterred, crossed the room to her, and placed his hand on her shoulder. "It was the best option," he said softly.

She slapped his hand away. "Go away, you monster. I'm not your property."

"I never said that you were." When she turned her back on him, he moved to her other side and knelt next to her. He reached for her hair. "It was for the best."

Once again she shoved him away. "So you and Draco just decided to swap wives? How could you possibly think that wouldn't hurt me?" She was in near hysterics. She should have expected something like this; after all, he was a Malfoy. Even though she had thought Draco had changed, his recent actions had proven that had all been an act. Malfoys did not change.

"Please, darling, you need to calm down. For the baby," he urged gently.

"The baby! I don't even know if I want this baby anymore, now that I know what a despicable monster the father is. I do know that I don't want to be part of this family anymore." She tried to get up, but he had her pinned to the chair.

In a calming voice, he replied, "I know you don't mean that. You're understandably upset. I know this whole situation is shocking. If I may be permitted to explain? Please, just listen. Please."

After staring into his eyes for several seconds, she finally replied, "Fine." It would be fascinating to hear what lies he would tell her. She was angry with herself for having believed that Draco had actually loved her. Lucius had given her the proof that was not the case, that their marriage had been nothing more than a convenience.

He explained to her the thought process that led to his decision to invoke the *Uxoria Cauponari*. "I just wanted to spare you the pain of having to go through a divorce and the uncertainty that would follow. This way, there will be no disgrace or ugly stigma attached to you. It was the best course of action. I wanted to ensure the two of you were taken care of." He placed his hand on her belly.

She removed his hand. "Oh, yes. All you care about is your precious heir. And you mentioned that this law is only used for 'arranged marriages'. Did you arrange my marriage to Draco?" When he did not reply, she continued coldly, "I have been used for the last time. This this... How could you do something like this? I am not property! Now, kindly get your hands off me and let me leave."

"Hermione, please, take a few moments..."

She shoved him away. He disgusted her with his air of superiority. "I will not take a few moments. I want to be away from here. Away from you. You could have at least had the common courtesy to consult with me before you decided to run my life."

"Where are you going?" he called to her as she walked out of the room.

"I don't know, but somewhere you aren't." She was determined to make it to her room and pack her clothes. She would figure the rest of it out later. She just knew that she could not spend another night under the same roof as that man. And to think, she had let him be her lover. What *had* she been thinking?

Brandishing her wand, she quickly packed what she would need for the short term. She would figure out how to get by later.

"Hermione, please don't go," Lucius said from the doorway.

"Out of my way," she ordered.

He moved aside. "You will always be welcome here. You are still a Malfoy."

"We'll see about that." She wasn't sure what she was going to do, but she was positive that being part of this family was not something she wanted. Brushing past him, she was eager to be on her way. The fact that he didn't follow her surprised her. She had expected him to put up more of a fight, try to keep her at the manor. After all, she was pregnant with the Malfoy heir.

Deciding that the time for stalling was over, Hermione looked up at Ginny. "I learned something disturbing about Draco today. We've grown apart over the last couple of years, and I just learned why." She paused, trying to determine the best way to continue. "It turns out that he's been cheating on me."

"With who?" Ginny asked.

"Phaedra."

"Oh," Ginny replied quietly.

Hermione was surprised at her friend's response. She wasn't sure what she had expected, but that wasn't it. "Did you know that he was with someone else?" she asked cautiously.

"Well... Truthfully, I think a lot of us have suspected that. But we thought it was getting better, that the two of you had worked through whatever it was. I mean, you are

pregnant."

But not with his child, Hermione added silently. "I thought things were looking better, too," she lied. She knew they hadn't been, but she had entered into a happy arrangement with Lucius, which had made her life better. "I think you can guess what happened when Lucius found out. He was livid."

"And he threw you out of the house?" Ginny asked. She knew that Lucius was not a nice man, but she hadn't thought he could be that heartless. After all, he still stood by the old pure-blood ways of blood being everything, and with Hermione pregnant with the next generation, Ginny would not have expected him to turn her out.

"No. I had to get out of the house." She wasn't sure how to continue. "Draco and I are through. Now that I know who he was with..."

"What did Lucius do to her?"

Hermione sighed; she really didn't want to get into the explanation. "He's cast her out, with Draco. He didn't want anything to do with either of them."

"He disowned his son?" Ginny asked incredulously.

Hermione nodded.

"Wow! I thought family was everything to him?"

"It is. That's why he did it. He couldn't have his son embarrassing him like that."

Harry burst into the house. "Ginny! You have got to see the *Evening Proph...* Oh, hi, Hermione," Harry said sheepishly as he hid the paper behind his back.

"Harry, let me see the paper."

Harry reluctantly handed it over, and Ginny moved to read over Hermione's shoulder.

"He did what?" Ginny asked as she saw the announcement. "Is that true?"

Hermione threw down the paper. "Yes. That bastard invoked some ancient law to make me his wife."

Harry slammed his hands on the table. "I'll make him pay for that."

"Harry. No."

"You want to be his wife?" he asked.

She really didn't know the answer to that question. "He was trying to do what he thought was right for the family. Getting into a duel isn't going to make the situation any better. I'll deal with it on my own, but I need some time to figure out what I want to do."

"You know you can stay here," Ginny offered.

Hermione looked at Harry and could see the anger flowing off him. "I appreciate the offer, but I think I'll spend some time with my parents." She really didn't want to have to be around Harry since he tended to hold grudges. "I think some time away from the wizarding world will be good for me." She rose from the table. "Thanks for the tea and the shoulder, Ginny." She gave Ginny a hug and then turned to Harry. "Please, let me take care of this myself."

He relented, "All right. But if you need anything, let us know."

She smiled. "I will."

With a heavy heart, Hermione knocked on the door. She hated the idea of coming home to her parents' house, but it was better than living under the same roof with Harry.

When the door opened, Paula Granger took one look at her daughter and pulled the younger woman into her arms. "Hermione, dear. What brings you here?"

Hermione found she could no longer hold back the tears and let her mother lead her inside.

"Alan, get the tissue," Paula said softly to her husband. She led Hermione to the sofa and waited for her daughter to calm down before asking gently, "What happened?"

Alan sat on his daughter's other side and handed her the box of tissues.

After blowing her nose, Hermione took a deep breath and forced herself to speak. "I found out that Draco...was unfaithful. I decided I had to leave." Once again, the tears came unbidden.

"Oh, dear, that's horrible," Paula said as she wrapped her arms around Hermione. "I always thought he was a little dodgy. I'm sorry this happened to you. Did you want to talk about it?"

"Not right now," Hermione replied. "It still hurts too much." Even though she had not been loyal to Draco, his betrayal, and the subsequent chain of events, was incredibly painful.

For a moment, Paula looked as though she was going to push her daughter to talk about what had happened. Instead, she said, "Well, you're welcome to stay here as long as you need."

"Thanks, Mum." Hermione had always prided herself on being independent, but there was something about a mother's embrace that instantly made even the worst situation at least a little better. Perhaps after a good night's sleep, she would know how to discuss everything with her parents. She knew that they would not understand most of it. They had supported her decision to marry Draco, but they had never seemed to really agree that it was a good idea, though they admitted there was much about the wizarding world that they did not know. Faced with the difficult road before her, she started crying again and took comfort from the gentle rocking of her mother's embrace.

Hermione was quiet the rest of the evening and chose to go to bed shortly after dinner. Paula accompanied her upstairs.

"Are you sure you don't want to talk about it?" Paula asked gently. "You might sleep better."

"I don't know that there's too much to say. He...he's had a lover for more than a year now. I guess I should have known and I did sort of suspect it, but I was in denial. Lucius...discovered him and let me know. I just had to get away from the house and any reminders of him."

Paula gave Hermione's hands a reassuring squeeze. "Your father and I are here for you. Just call if you need anything, dear. I'll put in a call to Andrea and see if I can get some clothes from her."

Hermione was going to tell her mother that she had packed clothes, but realized that these would be Muggle clothes, and those would be something she would probably

need. "Thanks, Mum."

Paula gave her another hug. "We'll get through this. Don't you worry."

"Good night, Mum," Hermione said, letting her mother know that she wanted to be left alone.

Once the door was closed, and she was trying to get comfortable on the bed, she began to rethink that idea. Now that she was alone, all that she had were her thoughts. Of course, it didn't help that she was having a hard time finding a comfortable position on her bed. She definitely missed her bed at the manor.

As she was finally starting to drift off to sleep, the baby started kicking. She caressed her stomach, trying to will the child to be still. Malfoy's child. Lucius Malfoy's child. She couldn't believe she had been so naïve to let that monster trick her. But she had really wanted to be a mother, and it had been the only way, hadn't it? She began to wonder if she could live with this child. In a few short months, it would become a reality, and she would have a child that would serve as a reminder of the treachery she had been subjected to.

She started to cry as she realized how difficult her life would be. As far as the Muggle world was concerned, she had no education. She knew that her life in the wizarding world would be consumed by the scandal. If she divorced Lucius, she would find herself ostracized. He had manipulated her so that she really had no choice but to do what he wanted. Realizing this, she ended up crying herself to sleep.

A/N: I hope that you enjoy this sequel as much as the original. Writing Hermione has proven more difficult than I had anticipated, but it has been fun, though I keep having to pull myself away from Lucius's POV. As always, the muses and I appreciate receiving feedback.

When this is over, I will begin work on Episode Three, which will be Draco's Tale.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 6

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Chapter 2

The manor was quiet. Phaedra and Draco had been given one hour to leave. In a particularly generous gesture, perhaps it wasn't generous, but a way to expedite their departure, Lucius had given them the use of one house-elf. He grinned as he sipped his wine. Draco didn't know it, but at midnight, the elf would return to the manor. The last house-elf that had been in the service of the Blacks was now dead. The thought of Draco and Phaedra having to do domestic chores made him chuckle.

Realization that the manor was empty dampened his mirth. The possibility that Hermione would leave had never crossed his mind. After all, during their episodes of wild sex, there had been times when she had indicated that she wished she were married to him instead of Draco. That was what made her behaviour so perplexing. She should have rejoiced in the fact that her wish had become a reality. His plan had been to spend the night having mad, passionate sex with her. Instead, he was alone and getting drunk.

He finished his glass of wine and glanced at the clock when it began to chime. Ten o'clock and Hermione had still not returned. He assumed that it was unlikely she would return tonight. Naturally, she was upset by the afternoon's revelations.

Rising from his chair, he began to pace, considering his options. Clearly, he needed her to return. She was carrying the Malfoy heir. The question was, where had she gone? It was quite likely that she had gone to talk with Ginny Potter. Given Harry Potter's volatile nature, he thought it unlikely that she would have stayed at the Potters. That meant that she was probably at her parents' house. He would have to visit her tomorrow, try to talk some sense into her.

Lucius knocked on the Granger door. Alan Granger answered the door. "Good afternoon, Alan. I was wondering if Hermione is here?"

"Why do you want to know?"

Lucius assumed from the cautious tone that Alan knew something had happened, but not the entire story. "I know what Draco did, and I can imagine how much it must have upset her to learn about his indiscretions. I was hoping to speak with her, to let her know that I don't hold her responsible, that I find his behaviour reprehensible, and that she is still a welcome member of the family." He hoped this statement was sufficiently vague and would appeal to Alan's parental instincts.

"She isn't feeling well and isn't up to having visitors."

Lucius flashed his most charming smile. "Come now, Alan. I know that she isn't feeling well because of what happened. I know she must be very upset and confused about the events. I think that what I have to tell her will ease her mind."

"Please, come in," Alan said as he opened the door.

Lucius could see that Paula had been standing just out of sight behind the door. He was not surprised. Crossing the room, he took her hands in his. "Paula, I am so sorry that Draco has caused this much difficulty. The pain that he has caused Hermione..."

"I know that it wasn't your fault," she reassured.

"I must bear some responsibility since he was raised in my household. He has paid for his mistake. I am sure that you don't want to hear the details. Hermione left the manor so suddenly that I didn't have the opportunity to reassure her that I don't hold her at fault. I know that she isn't feeling well, but it is rather important that I speak with her." He hoped that they would believe he was acting as a concerned parent.

"I suppose a few minutes wouldn't hurt. Why don't I take you upstairs?" offered Paula.

"Thank you," he replied smoothly, pleased to see that he could still charm people at will. Of course, Muggles were always easier to deceive. He followed Paula upstairs.

"End of the hall on the left," she said.

"I shouldn't be long," he said, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder before heading down the hall. He knocked on the door. "Hermione?"

"Go away! I don't have anything to say to you," she shouted.

He tried to open the door, but found it locked. Thankfully, he was excellent with unlocking spells. "Darling, please don't say that," he said as he entered her room. Once in the room, he cast a Silencing Charm.

"What part of go away don't you understand?" she asked bitterly.

He glanced around the room before taking a seat on her desk chair. "A great deal where you are concerned. I care about your well-being. I was quite upset when you didn't return last night."

Eyeing him disdainfully, she replied, "You saw me pack, you heard what I said, and you knew I wasn't coming back." She rolled over on her bed, turning her back on him, hoping that would encourage him to leave.

He rose from the chair and sat behind her on the bed. "Darling, come now. I know that you were in shock when you heard the announcement." After a short pause, he continued, "It was perhaps a bit thoughtless of me not to consult you..."

Unable to believe that was the excuse he was giving, she shifted to sit and face him. "Thoughtless? That's the best word you can come up with? What you did was barbaric. After everything you have told me, how could you treat me like a commodity?"

He reached out to brush her cheek. "Darling, you are not a commodity. You know that is not how I see you. I was trying to spare you pain when I made my decision. I know this is what you want."

She shoved his hand away. "How could you know what I want? When have you ever asked me what I want?" It was only now that she realized how little control she had had over what was happening in her life. Now was the time to change that.

He sighed. "Darling..."

"Quit calling me that! I'm not your 'darling'." Why couldn't he take the hint and just go away?

Any hint of a smile faded from his expression. "As you wish. I care about you, and I know that you care about me. Would it be so bad being married to me?"

She didn't understand how he could be so oblivious to her needs, especially after all the long conversations they had had together. "You didn't ask me! You used me. All you see in me is a womb to create an heir, isn't it?"

He sounded aghast. "How can you ask that? After everything we have had, do you truly believe that?" He reached out to caress her arm. "You are much more than that. You are a friend, a lover. Do you truly want to throw away everything that we had together?"

Tears started flowing down her cheeks. "You should have asked me." That would have made all the difference. How could he have claimed to respect her and then do something so disrespectful?

He pulled her closer. "I realize that now. My decision that Draco should be the one to tell you was perhaps not the proper one."

For a moment, she considered accepting his apology, but then she realized he was spinning a web of words and pulled away from him. "Just...go away. You don't understand me at all."

He started losing his patience. "I understand a great many things. What are your plans for the future if you don't return to the manor?"

"What do you mean?" she asked suspiciously.

"I just want to make sure you think your decision through before you do something rash." When she didn't respond, he continued. "You see, I know that you are a very independent woman, I know that living with your parents is not your first choice. As you are independent, I somehow doubt you would accept my support. Where does that leave you? It is very unlikely that anyone would hire you in your current condition. That means that you would be living off your parents' welfare. And after the child is born? Then what?"

"What do you mean?" she asked nervously.

"Both of your parents work. I presume that you would seek employment of your own. It's clear that this would not be the environment the Malfoy heir should be raised in..."

"Get out, you monster!" She couldn't believe what he was implying.

Trying to hide his frustration, he said, "Hermione..."

She interrupted, "I am not letting you take my child."

"A child you don't even want," he retorted, letting her anger feed his.

"I said that I wasn't sure, not that I didn't want this child. We'll manage without you," she said defensively.

"When you realize that I am right and that you have no choice, I will be at home." Hurrying out of the room, he nearly slammed the door.

She knew it was only a matter of time before her mother knocked on the door, and she did her best to compose herself.

"Hermione, dear? Are you all right?" asked Paula through the cracked door.

"I'm fine, Mum. Come on in." She knew that hiding from her mother would only make it worse.

"Did you want to talk about it?"

"Not really." There was no way that her mother could ever understand.

"He wasn't trying to convince you to forgive Draco, was he?" Paula asked suspiciously.

Hermione couldn't suppress the nervous laugh. "No, he most definitely wasn't." Deciding to tell her mother a little more of the truth, she continued, "He has disowned Draco and assured me that I won't have to see him anymore."

Paula was shocked. "He disowned his son?"

"It was pretty bad, Mum. There would have been very bad publicity if he didn't. I really don't want to talk about it."

Paula wrapped her arm around her daughter. "I'm sorry. Why don't we go out and get some fresh air? I know a nice quiet place we can stop for tea."

She liked the idea of getting out of her room. She could still smell Lucius' cologne and wanted nothing more than to get him out of her mind. She still couldn't believe he was threatening to take away her child.

When Hermione returned to her room that night, she was startled to see a house-elf. "What are you doing here?"

"Master sent Pipsy to serve Mrs. Malfoy," the elf replied and held out an envelope.

She took the letter from the elf and slowly opened it.

Dearest Hermione,

I know we didn't part on the most amiable of terms today. I'm dreadfully sorry that I lost my patience with you. I was concerned when you didn't return home last night, and it was wrong of me to lash out at you.

I would have come to apologize in person, but I believed that you would refuse to see me.

To ensure that you are taken care of, I have sent Pipsy. She will assist you in whatever way necessary. Additionally, I am prepared to send you the nursery furniture if you decide to remain at your parents' house.

I do hope you believe that I am sorry. I never wanted to do anything to drive you away. The manor is quite empty with you gone. Your absence is most noticeable at night. The thought of having you in my bed, for the entire night, where I could bestow my affection upon you is quite appealing. The feel of your warm body against mine is something I long for. I had hoped that you felt the same.

If there is anything else I can do for you, do not hesitate to ask.

Yours truly,

Lucius

Momentarily, she considered crumpling the letter. Instead, she placed it on the bedside table thoughtfully.

"From Master," Pipsy said as she held out a small pouch.

Hermione took the pouch and opened. Inside were some galleons and several hundred pounds. She closed the pouch and thrust it back at the elf. "You can return that to Mr. Malfoy and tell him that I have no need of your service or his money."

The elf started quivering. "Pipsy can't do that. She was told that under no circumstances was she to allow Mrs. Malfoy to refuse."

Hermione didn't want the elf to start hurting herself. "All right, all right. It's just that this house is no place for a house-elf. My parents wouldn't understand. Can you take a letter back to Mr. Malfoy?" She hoped that she could get Lucius to be practical and take the elf back.

"Oh, yes. Pipsy can do that."

Once Pipsy was gone, she contemplated her predicament. She knew that her child would likely be magical. Remembering how different she had been from the other children, how she had found solace in her books, and how hard it had been for her to make friends at Hogwarts, she knew that she couldn't do that to her child.

She would stay with her parents long enough for Harry to calm down. She knew that he and Ginny would welcome her for as long as she needed a place to stay. As much as she hated to do it, she thought that she might be able to use her friendship with Harry to regain some respect in the wizarding community. It was very Slytherin, but he was the one person with more clout than Lucius.

And she was sure that Harry would not mind. She probably wouldn't even have to ask him for any help. After everything they had been through, they would do whatever they could to help the other.

After an attack of real life, I have finally been able to put the finishing touches on this chapter. I may have a few minor changes to later chapters, but nothing that should cause too long a delay. I do hope to have subsequent chapters up a bit quicker. I'd like to thank nota for being a wonderful beta and giving me someone to bounce ideas off of. She catches me when I try to get too sneaky. I'd also like to thank Sinaz for her help with the first few chapters of this story.

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Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of 6

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Hermione was pleased that she had not heard back from Lucius, though she was a bit surprised. She had expected the house-elf back after a few hours at the earliest, but Pipsy had returned almost immediately and had no message from Lucius. Over the course of the next few days, she waited for a letter to arrive, or worse, Lucius himself, but neither occurred. She wasn't willing to believe that he had given up on her, so she remained on-guard.

Her mother had at first been apprehensive about having a house-elf, but after realizing how helpful one could be, Paula had changed her mind. Hermione decided she would concede this one good deed to Lucius. Besides, there was no way for her to send the elf back. He had been very careful in giving Pipsy her orders to ensure that Hermione had to accept her service.

She was still trying to determine what to do about supporting herself and convinced her mother to accompany her on a trip to Diagon Alley. Along with picking up a book she had placed on order, she wanted to contact some of her former classmates and learn what everyone thought about the scandal. Since it had been a few days from when the news had first been announced, she hoped to hear more honest opinions.

When she and her mother exited the Flourish & Blotts, they almost literally ran into Lucius on the alley outside the store.

"Hermione, Paula, what a pleasure to see you. How are you?" he asked jovially and kissed both women on the cheek, lingering slightly longer on Hermione's cheek.

"It's getting better," replied Paula.

Hermione glared coldly at him.

Ignoring Hermione's glare, he addressed Paula. "That's good to know. Have the two of you eaten lunch yet?"

"No," said Paula.

"We were just heading home," Hermione added quickly.

"I would be honoured if you two ladies would join me for lunch. My club serves the most marvellous dishes and it's just up the alley." He flashed them both a friendly grin.

"I think that would be a lovely idea," replied Paula.

The scowl on Hermione's face deepened. She thought that she was up to something, but since her mother didn't know the entire story, there was no way she could gracefully refuse his invitation. A part of her thought that he had planned this meeting, that it seemed too coincidental, but she knew that he was not the type of person who would lurk in Diagon Alley on the off chance she would arrive. When he offered her his elbow, she was forced to accept rather than make a scene.

As they walked down the alley, he amiably chatted about the weather and other innocuous topics that would not alienate Paula. Hermione thought that he was being quite charming, and that only served to fuel her anger.

Once at the club, Paula was somewhat overwhelmed by the reception and the surroundings. Not only had she not spent much time in the wizarding world, but she had not fully realized how influential Lucius was. Hermione knew that getting her mother on her side was probably a lost cause at the moment. There was nothing for her to do but be polite for the duration. She tried to glare at him, but he ignored her glare, instead engaging Paula in conversation about dentistry. Of course, he did not completely ignore Hermione.

Under the table, he brushed his foot against her leg. He answered Paula's questions about his business politely, claiming it was too tiresome to get into the details, giving no indication that anything untoward was happening out of sight. She was most interested in the world of magical candy, and that wizard children did not seem to be plagued with cavities as Muggle children were.

When Paula excused herself to go to the ladies room, Hermione said coolly, "You can stop that, now."

"My dear?"

"Stop playing footsie with me. It's not going to work. And charming my mother won't work either." She wanted to yell out that she knew what he was doing and that it wouldn't work, but making a scene would only hurt her. Even in his private club, word would surely make it to the press that she was distraught.

He casually wiped his mouth with his napkin. "I was doing nothing of the sort. I merely wished to have a pleasant lunch with you and your mother. In the past, I have had very little opportunity to spend time getting to know your mother. Is it wrong that I have chosen to rectify that?"

"Yes, because I know why you are doing it. They won't approve of this, so stop trying to win them over."

"I'm sorry you feel that way. We are family, and if you are going to be staying with your parents, I should get to know them better. After all, your mother doesn't seem the sort who would deny me the right to see my grandchild." He gave her a knowing grin.

"So you've changed your mind about taking the child from me?" she asked, looking over at him with suspicion.

"Those words were spoken in haste and under emotional duress. I hope that you won't take them seriously." He reached across the table and took hold of her hand. "Come home. It will be better for you."

She could see her mother returning from the loo and pulled her hand away. "I'm happy where I am," she said defiantly.

"Of course," he replied in a tone that indicated disbelief.

"That lavatory! It's the most wondrous thing I've ever seen," exclaimed Paula.

For a moment, Hermione was able to forget the ugliness caused by the man sitting across from her as she shared the joy of her mother's first big foray into the magical world.

Hermione was infuriated, though she didn't let her mother know. How dare Lucius treat her mother like that? Of course, he was being polite and friendly to a Muggle and had even invited one into his club. She was sure something like that had never occurred before. She tried to remind herself that he was only doing that because he wanted the child she was carrying, but he had apologized for his previous, callous remark on that subject, and she began to doubt her conviction. After all, he had always treated her well, showed her respect, even when Draco wouldn't. He had been a tender and thoughtful lover. Was she being too hasty in refusing him?

After a busy day with her mother, she was quite exhausted when she finally made it to bed. She was surprised to find a rather ornate, small, green jar and a note on her pillow. After a brief examination of the jar, she set it down and picked up the note, unwilling to risk exposure to the unknown contents.

Hermione,

I saw this today and thought of you. I'm not sure if it's the brand you use, but when I smelled it, it took my breath away...it reminded me of the way you smell in bed at night: soft, warm, and dare I say, sensual?

Consider this small token an apology and a peace offering. I only wish I could be there to apply it in person. Ah, to feel your warm, soft skin again... I do sorely miss

spending time with you and had hoped that this new arrangement would be beneficial to us both.

Fondly,

Lucius

Cautiously, she picked up the jar and unscrewed the cap. It had a pleasant and light scent, not unlike her preferred lotion. As she changed for bed, she decided to try it. Applying the lotion to her stomach, she noticed a warm, tingling sensation that was quite pleasant. Rubbing the lotion into her skin, she began to feel quite aroused. Perhaps it wouldn't be bad having Lucius around? She began to imagine his hands gently caressing her.

Trying to push that thought out of her mind - she was mad at him and was determined to prove that she didn't need him - she crawled into bed and quickly drifted to sleep, unable to fully purge Lucius from her mind.

As sleep overtook her, the imaginary hands returned, softly caressing her body, setting her on fire. It had only been a little more than a week since she and Lucius had last been together, but she had been looking forward to his return...at least until he made the announcement.

"Don't think about that, darling," a voice whispered in her ear.

She gasped as the hand gently brushed between her legs. The only thing she could think about was the fire that his touch ignited. Every brush of his hands against her skin made her desire grow. "Oh, Lucius," she moaned. His hands explored her body and she writhed in delight. Never before had his touch felt so good. As he continued to caress her, her breath came in gasps. His touch was torture and she couldn't take it anymore.

Showing him onto his back, she straddled him. "I need you."

A victorious grin flitted across his face. "Do you?"

Lowering herself onto him, she replied in voice filled with desire, "Yes." As she rocked over him, his hands continued their dance. Her senses were heightened, she craved his touch, wished he had two more hands. Verging on sensory overload, she cupped her breasts and gently twisted her nipples. Closing her eyes, she moaned and cried out as a massive orgasm washed over her.

Hermione woke, panting and sweaty with her sheets twisted about her, to the sound of someone knocking on her door. "Hermione? Are you all right?" came her mother's muffled voice.

Images flashed through Hermione's mind. Looking around, she saw she was at her parents' house, though she had the impression she had just been somewhere else.

The door cracked and Paula peeked into the room. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah. Fine," she replied uncertainly.

Paula whispered to Alan outside the room and then slipped inside, closing the door behind her and sitting beside her daughter. "We heard you crying out and were worried about you. Were you having a nightmare?"

Hermione was starting to piece together what had happened. She was glad that her father had not come into the room. "No, it wasn't a nightmare. It was a rather erotic dream," she quietly admitted, thankful the dim lighting would hide the fact she was blushing.

Paula smiled. "Oh, I used to have those all the time." She got lost in memory. "Your father used to like that. I would wake him up..."

"Mother!" proclaimed a horrified Hermione. She didn't need to know about her parents' sex life. "It just seemed so real. I could feel him."

"That's pretty normal. It has to do with all the hormones."

That sounded plausible. After all, she found that her sex drive had definitely increased. Perhaps being estranged from her lover had caused her to have this sort of vivid dream? She would have to place a Silencing Charm on her room in the future in case she had any more of these dreams.

At breakfast, Hermione was quite distracted as she tried to make sense of the dream. When Lucius had been gone on his business trip, she had dreamed about him, but never anything quite as vivid as last night's dream. She tried to convince herself that she did not subconsciously want Lucius. How could she be attracted to someone who would be so disrespectful toward her and also threaten to take away her child? True, he had apologized for that, but she wasn't about to believe that he was telling her the truth.

"Hermione? Are you feeling all right?" Paula asked.

"What? Oh, sorry, Mum. I'm fine. I'm just thinking about the future."

Paula gave her an encouraging smile. "You know you are welcome to stay here as long as you like."

"I know. I'm just considering my options." Her trip to Diagon Alley had only served to reinforce the fact that she belonged in the magical world and not the Muggle world. She would pay a visit to Ginny later and see if Harry had calmed down to the point that she would feel comfortable there. She felt bad about imposing on her friends, but she needed to be around her kind.

Of the people she had found yesterday, none of them were willing to speak to her honestly. She received the insincere 'I'm sorry' followed by her friends claiming they had important business elsewhere. Even Fred and George had seemed uncomfortable around her. While she had read the *Evening Prophet* story the day the scandal broke, she had not seen the *Prophet* since then and what it likely contained on the Opinion or Gossip pages. Judging from the reactions of everyone she encountered, she was sure she did not want to.

Lucius was taking tea at his club, as usual. Quite unusually, someone joined him.

"How did the potion work?" asked Severus as he poured a cup for himself.

"Exactly as advertised the first night. I do not believe she used it last night. If she did, your reputation is just a bit exaggerated."

Severus grinned. "I assure you that my reputation is not exaggerated. As such, I would be very surprised if she did not use the lotion tonight. That sort of stimulation is very difficult to resist. I believe it will be more so for her." After a few minutes silence, he added, "If her...talent is as you say, I'm quite surprised that Draco would have done something foolish enough to lose her."

"The boy is a fool, and an inexperienced one at that," Lucius replied gruffly, not wanting to talk about Draco.

"Indeed?" Severus sipped his tea. "So, you really disowned him?"

Waving his hand dismissively, Lucius replied, "It's of little consequence. Hermione still carries the Malfoy heir." He had been about to mention that the Malfoy gene pool was better off without Draco's influence, but he remembered that he could tell no one the truth about Hermione's child. In time, this unfortunate event would be forgotten, and no one would remember that Draco was supposedly the child's father. "And if this child proves too weak, there will be others."

"Assuming she consents to the arrangement. After all, you enlisted my assistance because she left you," Severus goaded.

"She was distraught, but she will overcome that feeling and realize the stark reality that without me, there is nothing for her. And if she continues to stubbornly refuse to play the role she accepted by marrying Draco, I will still have that child." He did not like to lose and did not intend to lose this time. For a while longer, he would continue to play nice, but if she remained stubborn, she would learn what it was like to cross him.

"You could easily cast her away. There are other eligible women who would be happy to be the next Mrs. Malfoy."

He replied sardonically, "Oh, yes. I can find another like Phaedra. No, thank you. Besides, Hermione has a political weight that none of them have. Money can only buy so much political power; being a hero of the War can be much more valuable. You, of all people, should realize that."

"And if she realizes the properties of the lotion? She is quite bright and I would not be surprised if she suspected you had done something...Slytherin."

"The lotion's properties are subtle enough that she will think it has nothing more than aphrodisiac properties. I doubt she will suspect that it forms a link between the two of us. While she is good at Potions, she has not made a study of the more arcane ones as you have."

Severus scowled. "Well, I wish you luck. You may find taming her to be more trouble than it's worth. She has always been quite...wilful."

"A very good trait to have in business and politics." Lucius grinned slyly as he realized how many opportunities Draco had missed by having Hermione as his wife. Since their marriage had still been young, Lucius had not pushed. In hindsight, he should have provided Draco with more oversight, but there was no changing the past. He would take control of the future in the way one as young as Draco could not.

A/N: The story is mostly done. I have completed the first draft and am in beta discussion on the remaining three chapters. Unless I have a major epiphany, this will be a 6 chapter story. I have to thank nota for her wonderful advice which has helped this story become what it is.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 of 6

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Chapter 4

Hermione held the jar of lotion in her hand, pondering it. Two nights ago, she had used the lotion and had the most sensual dream. Last night, she had not, and she could not even recall having dreamt at all. The analytical part of her mind wondered if the lotion had somehow caused the dreams. She knew of no potion that had such properties, but then again, her interest in erotic potions was limited.

Placing the jar on the nightstand, she decided to ignore it. For the first five minutes, she was successful. After that, she reasoned that she should test the lotion to see if it had indeed been the source of her dreams. But what if it was? What would that change? Why would Lucius do something like that?

She did not really know the answers, but knowing how important her child was to Lucius, she knew that he would not do anything to harm her or the baby. Surely, there wouldn't be any harm in using the lotion again.

Picking up the jar, she applied the lotion, and quickly felt sleep overtaking her.

When her awareness returned, she could feel his arms wrapped around her, his warm touch exciting her. "I've missed you," she whispered huskily, gazing up at him with lust-filled eyes.

"And I you," he replied tenderly before giving her a passionate kiss.

It wasn't long before he was bringing her to the edge of release and holding her there. She moaned and writhed at his touch. "Harder. Please." But he maintained his slow steady pace. From her current position, she could do little to encourage him. He had held her on the edge of orgasm before, but never for this long. When she tried to pull away, he held her hips tightly, keeping her on her hands and knees. "Lucius, please!"

"Patience, darling," he whispered.

She wanted to beg for him to hurry, but the dream was fading.

Hermione slept fitfully the rest of the night. She had tried applying more lotion, but it had not made the dream return. Chiding herself for her foolishness, she mused that perhaps it was not the lotion, but merely her vivid imagination. It disgusted her that she would fixate on Lucius like this, but she had to admit that he was the most satisfying lover she had ever had. During the war and its aftermath, Hermione had occasionally found herself taking comfort in the arms of her co-workers, but she had never had a partner or lover who compared to Lucius.

When she finally woke again the next morning, she could tell that it was late enough that Harry should have left for work. She had to talk about her dreams with someone. For a few moments, she thought about discussing them with her mother, but she knew that a Muggle would never understand her situation. She knew that Ginny would be most likely to understand, but their conversation wouldn't make sense unless Ginny knew the whole story. Could she trust Ginny with it? Harry would never understand if he found out. Determining she really didn't really have much of a choice, she decided to talk to Ginny.

Wrapping her dressing gown around herself, she headed downstairs. "Good morning, Ginny," she said cheerfully as she entered the kitchen.

"Hermione, good morning," Ginny shouted over the sound of Sarah screaming as Jimmy stole one of her toys. Ginny summoned the toy and handed it back to Sarah. "Jimmy! What have I told you about taking your sister's toys?"

"Not to do it," he replied as he looked at his feet.

"Right." Ginny returned her attention to Hermione and greeted her with a hug. "It's good to see you. Sorry about the racket. They've just started this phase. Goodness knows how I'll handle three of them, but if Mum could keep seven of us in line, I'm sure I'll find a way to manage three."

"I'm sure you will," Hermione replied wistfully. Like Harry, she had envied the Weasleys' large family. For years, she had dreamed of having a large family of her own, but now, she wasn't sure that would happen.

"Can I feel the baby kick?" Jimmy asked.

Hermione took a seat at the kitchen table while Ginny prepared tea. "The baby's asleep right now, but if he wakes up, I'll let you feel him." She had no idea if it was a boy or a girl, but for some reason, she thought of her child as a boy.

Jimmy looked slightly disappointed, but finally smiled. "Okay."

Ginny brought the tea to the table. "Jimmy, go play with your toys now, so I can talk to Aunt Hermione."

"Yes, Mum," he replied sullenly.

Once Ginny made sure he really was going to play with his toys, she asked, "Something on your mind?"

Hermione was taken aback that Ginny had so easily read her expression. She looked over her shoulder to make sure Jimmy was far enough away that he wouldn't overhear. "I have to talk to you about Lucius."

Ginny leaned closer and whispered in reply, "He's forcing you to honour the marriage, isn't he?"

"It's more complicated than that. I need you to swear to me that you won't tell Harry what I'm about to tell you. If he were to find out..."

"This isn't something that's putting you in danger, is it? Because if it is, I'm going to have to tell him."

Hermione reassured, "No, it's nothing like that. I just need you to promise."

"All right," Ginny replied reluctantly. "I won't tell him."

"Remember, I'm telling you this in the strictest confidence. I hadn't planned on telling anyone, but the rest of it doesn't make any sense if I don't, and you're the only one I can talk to." She paused and took a deep breath. Even after having planned what she was going to say, she found it difficult to continue. "You know that Draco and I were having problems. Even though I didn't really want to admit it to myself, I suspected he was having an affair, just as you did. You weren't the only one to notice. Lucius realized that I was not getting shown much attention. Over the years, the two of us have formed a bit of a friendship; I think we actually have quite a bit in common. I turned to him as a source of comfort...both emotional and...physical," Hermione finished quietly.

Ginny sat in stunned silence for several long seconds. "You and Lucius?"

Hermione nodded. "The first time was... Well, this is his baby."

"Are you sure?"

"Very." Trying to build off the momentum of making the big revelation she continued, "Had Draco's affair come to light differently, I probably would have accepted his solution to the problem without question."

"Do you love him?" Ginny interrupted.

Hermione shrugged. "I don't know. I hadn't really thought about it like that. We're good together. I just... The way he treated me, it was like he saw me as property. It made me reconsider everything he told me or did for me in the past. Now, I just don't know what to think about him." She told Ginny about his thinly veiled threat to take the baby, the apology, the house-elf, and his seeming change of heart. "I just don't know, anymore."

Ginny leaned forward and gave Hermione a hug. "What does your heart tell you?"

Hermione sighed. "I know that life as a Malfoy will probably be best for the baby. But what about me? I'll always wonder if he sees me as something to be given away as he pleases. And now I've started having these dreams. He gave me a jar of lotion a few days ago, and the two times that I've used it, I've had very vivid, erotic dreams."

"How vivid?"

"The first night, he brought me to orgasm. The second, I was so very close, but then the dream faded away. I thought it was the lotion, but when I reapplied it, nothing happened. When I woke up from my dream last night, I seriously considered going back to him. Hell, I'm still thinking about it. Do you think it's some sort of potion?"

Ginny shrugged. "I've never heard of any like that, but that doesn't mean there aren't any. I also know that I have much better sex dreams when I'm pregnant than when I'm not. It might just be your subconscious trying to tell you something."

"But what do I do about that something? My parents would never understand. Hell, no one else seems to understand. I've heard the whispers. And if word were to ever get out that Lucius really is the father..." She shuddered at that thought.

"Don't worry. I'm not telling anyone that, no matter what you decide."

"Thanks. This is supposed to be a happy time, but now I'm left with nothing but questions. I don't fit in with the Muggle world, I'm not sure the wizarding world wants anything to do with me, and Lucius could easily make my life miserable. It's almost like I have no choice but to go back to him."

Ginny placed her hand on Hermione's. "We were serious when we said that you are welcome here for as long as you like. Being here will keep Lucius away. He won't be willing to cross wands with Harry. Even if the wizarding world doesn't want anything to do with you, we'd be happy to have you here. Harry sees you as a sister anyway, and so do I."

Hermione smiled. She was grateful to have such wonderful friends. She knew that staying here would keep Lucius away, allow her to sort out her feelings. Even if she did return to her parents' house, she realized that they would continue to let Lucius see her, since she could never tell them the entire truth. And she thought that Ginny could definitely use a house-elf. "Thank you."

Hermione found life at Godric's Hollow quite pleasant. For once, Harry wasn't asking questions, but merely providing emotional support. Of course, bad-mouthing Draco was something Harry had probably wanted to do for years. He had not been at all happy when she had decided to marry the younger Malfoy. But he also took every opportunity to slander Lucius, and there was still a part of her that wanted to defend the man who was technically her husband and the father of her child.

During the day, she and Ginny would do things with the children, whom Hermione thoroughly enjoyed spending time with. While playing with Jimmy and Sarah, she realized that her prospects of having a large family without Lucius were practically non-existent. Under wizarding divorce laws, both parties had to agree to terminate the

marriage, and she didn't see him doing that. For better or for worse, she was trapped with him.

At the end of her second week at Godric's Hollow, Hermione was getting ready for bed and picked up the jar of lotion. Looking into it, she saw that it was nearly empty. She considered putting it down and saving the rest, but she had been so very close last night. She just had to hurry her dream up. Deciding that she would make a trip to Diagon Alley in the morning to purchase more, she scooped around the edges of the jar. Besides, she told herself, she and Ginny had agreed that there was not likely to be anything harmful about it.

As she applied the lotion, she hoped she would finish the dream tonight. So far, it had only happened once. She didn't think she was doing anything different from what she had done that first night. After all, she was only applying lotion. It wasn't as though she were testing a complicated potion.

The following morning, she was quite frustrated when she woke. Even more frustrating was the fact that she still couldn't get Lucius out of her mind. She had tried concentrating on the latest celebrity news from *Witch Weekly* and had even taken to going to the Muggle movie theatre during the day, but every night, it was Lucius in her dreams.

After helping Ginny and Pipsy with breakfast and getting the children dressed, she made her way to Diagon Alley to see if she could find the store that sold the lotion. She didn't tell Ginny exactly why she was making the trip, but she suspected that Ginny knew.

None of the first three shops she visited carried lotion in jars of the proper shape. She knew there were only two more shops in Diagon Alley that carried that sort of product. Once again, she began to wonder if Dark Magic was associated with the lotion. Throughout her association after the war with Lucius, she had never had the impression that his renunciation of the Dark Lord and the Dark Arts had been anything other than sincere. Now, she began to doubt that. If she did not find the lotion in Diagon Alley, she would have to consider the possibility that he was manipulating her.

Her stomach began to rumble more insistently, and she was beginning to wish she had packed a snack. She would check Madame Babette's Beauty Boutique and then get something to eat at one of the cafés. As she walked by Sampson's Scriveners Shop, an attractive quill caught her attention. The next thing she knew, someone had placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Darling, you really should watch where you are going so you don't injure yourself," Lucius said softly as he smiled warmly at her.

Shrugging out of his grip, she replied haughtily, "Perhaps you are the one who should watch where you are going. I should think I would be quite difficult to miss."

"Indeed, it is impossible to not notice one as lovely as you," he said smoothly.

Listening to his flattery, she could hardly believe that she had once fallen for his hollow words. Yet, even believing his words to be hollow, another part of her still reacted to his presence. The dreams she had been having were affecting her judgement, and she knew she had to get away from him. "If you will excuse me, I have places to be."

"Do you have plans for lunch?" he asked innocently.

"What?"

"I was on my way to my club for lunch, and I thought that perhaps you would like to join me, unless you have already eaten."

He smiled at her in a way that she found irresistible. It sounded so harmless. After all, his club was still a fairly public setting. What harm would there be in eating lunch with him? And perhaps she could casually find out where he had purchased the lotion he had given her. "Just lunch," she said firmly.

"Of course, my dear." He offered her his elbow to escort her.

Realizing that not taking his arm might draw undue attention, she accepted. Touching him and inhaling his scent made her pulse race. Discretely, she tried to take a couple of deep breaths to calm herself.

"Are you all right? You look flushed."

She blushed even more now that he had noticed. "I'm fine. It's been a long morning," she replied, hoping he would believe her lie.

"Of course. I daresay a few moments rest will have you feeling back to normal. Is everything going well at your parents' house?"

"Yes, just fine." She really didn't want to have any sort of conversation with him. When they arrived at the club, the staff fawned all over them, and she was a bit surprised, but secretly pleased, that they were escorted to a private room. Her first instinct was to think that he had set this up in advance, but how could he have managed that? The maitre' d indicated that this arrangement would be quieter and more soothing for them.

After they were seated and had ordered, Lucius said, "I must say that you look marvellous, whether you choose believe me or not. Pregnancy really does suit you."

Once again, she found herself blushing. Thankfully, she was saved from having to respond as their food arrived. During the course of the meal, he engaged her in a conversation about the latest legislation on house-elves he was planning to submit to the Ministry. It was not the freedom she had hoped for, but it was far more protection than they had now.

She had forgotten how much she enjoyed getting into debates with him. After finishing their meal, he led her to a small sofa where they continued chatting. She didn't notice that his touches became more frequent and lasted longer, or that he was slowly moving closer to her. The fact that she was supposed to be angry with him for manipulating her was also forgotten.

He reached down and picked up her feet, placing them on his lap and slipping her shoes off, and he began rubbing her ankles. "You should try to stay off your feet."

After she had shifted to sit sideways on the sofa, she leaned back and closed her eyes. She hadn't realized how sore they had been. "I do try. That feels wonderful." As his hands moved up her calves, she began to relax more, relishing his touch. Memories of her dreams came to the surface, and she found herself wishing his hands would drift further up her leg. She was disappointed when he released her left leg and started on her right. She giggled and flinched as he began rubbing her right foot. "That tickles."

As he rubbed harder, he asked, "Is that better?"

"Much." Once again, she relaxed against the sofa. This time, when his hands reached her knee, she reached down and gently guided his hand onto her thigh. She was throbbing in anticipation of his touch. As his hand moved further up her leg, her breaths began to come in little panting gasps. This was much better than any of the dreams she had been having.

When he removed his hand, she opened her eyes and found she was gazing into his grey ones. "Lucius," she whispered, unsure of what else to say.

He let his hand gently brush her hair. "I need you..." he began.

"I need you, too," she interrupted and laced her fingers in his flowing locks.

Placing his finger on her lips, he continued, "There is a reception Friday evening for the French Minister of Magic, and I would like you to attend."

This abrupt introduction of a new subject caught her completely off guard. "What?" She was having a hard time thinking of anything other than finally fulfilling her dreams.

"There is a reception on Friday, and I am obviously required to attend as a prominent member of the business community. As our...arrangement has been much publicized,

this would be the perfect opportunity to put all of that unfortunate gossip to rest, especially since we have not been seen together in public much." He nibbled at her neck.

"I can't go to a reception like this.pa" The fog in her mind was starting to clear.

"Darling, I will have the best seamstress brought in from Paris or Milan to ready a suitable gown for you. You will shine above any other witch in attendance; no one will be able to take their eyes off of you."

She gasped as he buried his face in her cleavage. Pushing his head away, she tried to force herself to think clearly. "I am not doing anything to help you, not after what you did to me."

Gently caressing her stomach, he replied, "This would not just be helping me, you would be helping yourself as well. You well know the power of the Malfoy name. Look at all the projects you accomplished as Mrs. Draco Malfoy; as Mrs. Lucius Malfoy, you could accomplish so much more. You hold your future in your hands...Hermione, dearest. You know what you have to do," he whispered.

His hand had drifted under her skirt and between her legs, and she found it incredibly difficult to concentrate on anything other than her sexual desires. How could he speak about anything so mundane? "Lucius, I need you," she begged.

Teasing her through her knickers, he responded, "And I need you. I'm sure we can make this arrangement mutually beneficial."

"Anything," she replied desperately. She wanted no, needed to be with him.

Pulling away from her, he rose and helped her to her feet. Before Apparating them home, he gave her a deep kiss that took her breath away.

A/N: Okay, folks, I have the first draft completely back from my lovely beta, nota. There are a few minor things to change, but the story is, in essence, done, and I hope to post a new chapter every few days.

Many thanks to all that have taken the time to review. Your reviews really motivate my muses. Now that they are free of this story, I can turn them loose on something new.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of 6

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Chapter 5

As soon as Hermione realized where they were, she started tearing into his clothes and shoving him toward the bed.

"Why, Hermione? I didn't know you cared," he said playfully.

"I've been thinking of you for weeks," she replied breathlessly as she let him remove her dress. He gently kneaded her breasts and twisted her nipples, and she moaned in ecstasy, but it was not enough. She needed to feel him inside her. She pushed him onto the bed. Seeing that he was as aroused as she was, she slowly lowered herself over his erection, relishing the sensation of him filling her. "Oh, Lucius," she moaned.

As frustrated as she had been for the last couple of weeks, it did not take her long to climax. When she tried to stop, Lucius grabbed her hips and encouraged her to continue, to bring him to release. After he finished, he let go of her and she lay down next to him. He wrapped his arms around her and she snuggled against him. She got lost in the secure feeling for several minutes. As she was drifting into an uneasy sleep, she realized where she was and tried to pull away. "Let go," she ordered.

Lucius continued to hold her. "Is something wrong?" he asked gently.

"Everything. I shouldn't be here." Lifting his hand, she was able to pull away from him. "What have we done?"

"Come now, darling. It wasn't that bad. You seemed quite interested a few moments ago." He rose and placed his hand on her shoulder. "Think of what it means to be a Malfoy, what you would be giving up. Meet me here Friday for lunch. Make your decision after the reception. Think about what happened today," he purred.

It was only then that she noticed that he had summoned her clothes and was holding them out for her. Why was it that she could never seem to think rationally around him? "And if I don't?"

"If you do not attend the reception, it will be noted on the gossip pages. It will cast you in an unfavourable light."

"Even though I'm pregnant?" She dressed as quickly as she could.

"My dear, the baby is not due for more than a month. There is no reason that you could not make at least a brief appearance. You know how important image is to those in power."

"And it makes you look good, too," she replied sardonically.

"I would not look as bad as you if you did not attend. Think about it." He summoned his dressing gown and casually tied it around his waist before pouring himself a drink. "You may leave from here."

Hermione's mind was in a fog as she departed the manor. She knew that he was being nice because he wanted something, but she had to admit that she stood to benefit, too. She was feeling better than she had since she had initially fled from the manor.

When Friday came, Hermione still had her doubts about meeting with Lucius. She knew that he would continue to weave lies and try to manipulate her. She paced her

room, trying to decide what to do. She knew he was correct about the gossip. The wizarding world liked to preserve the status quo and, as odd as it seemed, her being with Lucius was the status quo.

Heading downstairs, she made up her mind. "Ginny, I'm going to head over to my parents' house. I'm not sure when I'll be back. I'll probably eat dinner there."

"All right. I'll let Harry know. Have a good time."

"Thanks." Hermione felt badly about deceiving Ginny, but she didn't need Harry finding out what she was doing.

Rather than Apparating into the house, she chose to arrive through the door.

Lucius swept into the entryway. "Hermione, how wonderful of you to join me." He embraced her and gave her a kiss on the lips. "Come, there is someone I want you to meet." He led her into the drawing room. "Hermione, this is Signora Antonia, a renowned seamstress from Milan. She has agreed to design your gown for this evening. Signora, my wife."

Antonia closed the distance to Hermione and took hold of both her hands, holding them out to the side so she could get a good look at her new customer. "Mrs. Malfoy, a pleasure to meet you. Your husband's description does not do you justice." Releasing Hermione, Antonia circled around her. "Yes, Mr. Malfoy, I believe you were correct about a nice green. It will accent her eyes, bring out the colour." With a flick of her wand, a measuring tape flew out of her bag and began measuring Hermione.

As the tape worked, Antonia took notes while Hermione gave Lucius a curious gaze. He beamed proudly at her. "Green?"

"I know you must feel partial to Gryffindor red, but I do believe you look much better in green."

As Antonia finished taking notes, she slammed her book shut. "I will be ready for the first fitting at four. Mrs. Malfoy, I assure you this will be a dress fit for a queen. No one will be your equal."

Lucius bowed. "My deepest appreciation for your work this afternoon. We shall leave you to your work." He turned his attention to Hermione. "Shall we take lunch in the garden?"

The rest of the afternoon, Lucius and Hermione chatted pleasantly while enjoying cool lemonade, surrounded by a riot of colour, a light breeze wafting the delicate fragrances of a multitude of exotic plants around them. As they talked, she forgot that she was supposed to be mad at him. He was so incredibly charming and pleasant when he wanted to be.

A house-elf arrived at their side. "Master, Mistress, Signora Antonia is ready."

Lucius rose and helped Hermione to her feet. "I believe you will lose your reservations about a green dress once you see it."

"You've seen my dress?"

"Signora and I discussed the concept of your dress yesterday. I wanted to ensure that you would have the proper attire. I know how self-conscious you are about going to the reception." He left her at the door to the drawing room. "Well, my dear, I will let the two of you discuss the dress and wait impatiently to see the finished product."

Hermione entered the drawing room and saw the most exquisite green silk dress on a dress form. It was trimmed in gold with a centre panel of intricate gold brocade material. The dress was embroidered with crystals and had an otherworldly shimmer. "It's...amazing."

Antonia said proudly, "And it will look even better on you. Come, I will help you dress."

When Hermione had the dress on, she looked in the mirror. The green really did bring out the colour in her eyes. "The cleavage..." she said hesitantly.

Antonia tapped her finger to her lips. "Yes, that does need some work." She made a few small marks to the dress. "This will only take a moment."

Hermione waited behind the screen as Antonia made a few alterations to the dress. When she donned it again, she saw that Antonia had done the opposite to the cleavage that she had hoped. She felt almost naked and placed her hand over her breasts.

"Ah, no, my dear, you must not be ashamed of your best assets." Antonia gently pushed Hermione's breasts up. "There, that will be perfect. A true masterpiece."

Hermione twirled before the mirror. She not only looked beautiful, but she felt beautiful, too. "It's exquisite. Thank you very much."

"Not at all." Antonia curtsied slightly.

Hermione changed back into her clothes, not wanting to risk ruining her dress. Now all she had to do was tame her hair. In her bedroom, she found a house-elf, who offered to help her with her hair. It took nearly an hour, but graceful curls, which were artistically piled atop her head, replaced the frizziness. A net of pearls helped hold it together.

Since it was nearly time for them to leave, she changed back into her dress. She was admiring her reflection when Lucius walked up behind her.

He had a broad grin on his face as he spoke. "You are truly breathtaking. There is only one thing more."

"What might that be?"

He pulled a jewellery box from behind his back and set it on her dressing table. Opening it, he picked up a truly amazing diamond necklace. The central stone was at least 5 carats, and the chain was studded with smaller stones arranged in a very intricate pattern. When he fastened the necklace, the large stone settled on her cleavage. "And of course, you will need matching earrings." He handed her two large dangling diamond earrings.

She knew she shouldn't get used to looking like a princess, but that was exactly how she felt at the moment.

"And one last thing."

She couldn't imagine wearing any more jewels. "What thing?" The box on the table was empty.

He pulled a small ring box from his pocket. "It is only fitting that you should make your debut with your new wedding ring set."

The size of the ring took her breath away. Even though it was large, it was not overly ostentatious. She was in so much shock that she didn't resist when he placed the two rings on her left hand. The band was simple gold with a vine pattern etched into it. She thought it was exquisite. "It's lovely."

Leaning forward, he kissed her on the lips, gently parting her lips, but not deepening the kiss too much. As he broke away, he murmured, "I'm glad you like it."

Hermione was breathless; his kiss, while not overly passionate, had left her extremely aroused. Once she regained her composure, she realized that he was wearing a matching ring. Once again, he was manipulating her. "It's only for the reception," she insisted, though she found she did not entirely believe her words.

"Of course," he replied. "Shall we?"

When they arrived at the reception, both the British and French Ministers of Magic warmly greeted them. As she entered the main reception hall, Hermione couldn't help noticing that everyone was staring at them, and she began to feel very self-conscious. She tried to imagine what they were whispering to each other about her, and she grew concerned that it was not likely to be favourable.

Lucius leaned close and whispered to her, "My dear, the whispers are because you are the most beautiful witch present and wearing the most exquisite of gowns. I daresay that everyone here is jealous."

"Jealous that they can't have you and your money," she whispered snidely.

"Darling, please, let's be polite for the evening." He led her to a small settee. "I'll be right back with something for you to drink." Leaning down, he gave her a kiss on the cheek.

It's an act. It's all an act she told herself. She would not fall for his words again. He didn't really care about her, no matter how convincing of a performance he put on. While she was waiting for his return, Kingsley Shacklebolt sat beside her. "Hermione, good to see you here. You look marvellous."

"Thanks, Kingsley. How are things in the Auror office?"

"Calming down quite a bit. We aren't seeing as many people who are claiming they are paving the way for You-Know-Who's return anymore. Truthfully, I'm surprised it lasted as long as it did. Last time, it only took them a couple of years to die out." He glanced towards the bar. "How are you holding up?"

She tried to give him a confident smile. "I'm moving on. Harry and Ginny have been a big help."

"Good. If you need anything, don't forget that you have friends." He gave her hand a reassuring squeeze before standing. "Mr. Malfoy," he said curtly

Lucius handed Hermione her drink and shook hands with Kingsley. "Mr. Shacklebolt. I trust you are keeping all the potential Dark wizards in line?"

"As always. If you will excuse me?" He inclined his head at Hermione. "A pleasure to see you again."

Lucius followed Kingsley with his eyes as the Auror walked away. "I wish people would not be so judgemental. Would you like to rest here for a bit, or do you think that you're up to mingling?"

She wasn't entirely sure. If she was with Lucius, it would be less likely she would have people coming up to her to ask her how she was doing, but then again, she wasn't sure she wanted to be that close to him. In the end, she decided to accompany him.

At first, she felt uncomfortable being around Lucius, and she still believed that everyone was staring at her. As time passed, she became more engrossed by the conversations they were having with various Ministry officials, and she finally found herself involved in a lengthy discussion with the head of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. She only realized that it was time for dinner when Lucius wrapped his arm around her waist.

"Are you ready for dinner, darling?"

"Oh? Is it that time already?" She couldn't believe she hadn't heard the bell.

Lucius had an affectionate smile on his face. "That it is. Perhaps you and Mr. Peterson could meet next week to continue your conversation?" He arched an eyebrow at Peterson.

"Of course, Mr. Malfoy. I will have my secretary contact yours to arrange an appointment."

As Lucius led Hermione to the dining room, he asked, "Would it really be so bad?"

She blushed as she realized what she had been doing; she was taking advantage of the Malfoy name.

Throughout dinner, they conversed pleasantly with the others at their table. And she began to realize that no one in wizarding society seemed to be judging her. Everything she had overheard had dealt with Draco and how he was good blood gone bad. Hermione had to suppress a fit of laughter when she heard that. Everyone seemed to have forgotten that Lucius had served You-Know-Who twice. Somehow it seemed his incarceration in Azkaban had softened everyone's opinions of him.

When dinner ended, the soft sounds of a string quartet could be heard coming from the other room. Lucius rose and offered his arm to Hermione. "Would you grant me the honour of a dance?"

She graciously accepted and let Lucius lead her to the dance floor. At first, she wasn't comfortable being the centre of attention, but with his confident demeanour, she quickly changed her mind and began to relish the attention. When she looked into Lucius's eyes, she was surprised by the sincerity of his smile. A part of her wished she knew Legilimency, but she reasoned that he likely knew Occlumency. She found herself getting lost in those pale grey eyes. The more she looked into them, the guiltier she began to feel about having pushed him away. How could she have doubted that everything he had done had been in her best interest? The tears started welling in her eyes and she bit her lip.

Lucius stopped dancing and wrapped his arm around her waist. "Why don't we find somewhere for you to rest a bit?" He led her to a bench on the veranda and brushed the tear off her cheek. "What's wrong?"

Wrapping her arms around him, she buried her head in his chest. "I've been so hard-headed."

Returning her embrace, he kissed the top of her head. "I wouldn't say that."

"But I have. I've been terribly rude to you. And I feel so badly about it."

"You shouldn't feel badly about that. I was awful to you, as well. I should have let you know what I discovered, but all I knew was that I didn't want to risk you revealing our secret." He held her for quite some time before speaking again. "We are good together. I think we compliment each other quite nicely." She started to pull away, and he handed her his handkerchief.

After wiping her eyes and nose, she looked up at him. "Why did you encourage Draco to marry me?"

He smiled softly at her and stroked her hair. "You are intelligent, attractive, incredibly ambitious... All traits I value." After a few seconds, he added, "You are exactly the sort of woman I wanted to marry."

She couldn't help blushing. "Really?"

"Absolutely," he replied before kissing her deeply.

As she got lost in his kiss, she began to wonder how she could have been so stubborn about not accepting him. The kiss ended as suddenly as it had begun.

"I think we should get back to the reception," he said quietly.

"Oh. I suppose you're right," she replied, unable to hide the disappointment.

A/N: Once again, thank you, nota, for all your help. There's only one more chapter left, everyone. I have had a lot of fun with this story. I know that I have mentioned there will be a Draco story in this series, and I have not changed my mind, but my muses have a couple of ideas they are just itching to write that I will have to get through first. Most of them are short, so I think it should only be a couple of months before I start posting "Fallen From Glory".

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of 6

Draco cheated on Hermione, and Lucius invoked an arcane wizard law that left her life in shambles. Can she reconcile what Lucius has done and reaccept him as her lover? Or will she run forever from the intrigue and deceit that comes with being a Malfoy? Episode Two of the Glory Trilogy. "To Regain Glory" is Episode One.

Chapter 6

They remained at the reception for only about a half hour longer before Lucius made their excuses to their host.

"Lucius, must you leave so soon?" Minister Whiting asked.

"I'm afraid I must, Trent. I would never dream of sending my wife home alone, and she has had quite enough excitement for the night," Lucius replied smoothly.

"Ah, yes, of course. How thoughtless of me. I do hope the two of you have had a pleasant evening," he said as he kissed the back of Hermione's hand.

"You were quite the gracious host this evening," Hermione replied.

"It was a pleasure having you here," Whiting replied before releasing her hand and shaking Lucius's. "I hope to see you soon."

"As do I. Good evening, Minister," Lucius said politely before leading Hermione out the door. Once outside, he Apparated the two of them home and proceeded to dance a small waltz with her in the foyer. "You were divine tonight, darling. I daresay everyone was quite smitten with you."

"Oh, really? You noticed?" she asked playfully. More often than not, his eyes had been on her all evening.

"Of course I did. I notice everything." He leaned down and gave her a passionate kiss. "You worried yourself for nothing. All of the gossip I heard was favourable...to us, that is. Now, as splendid as that gown is, I would really prefer to see you in nothing at all."

She giggled and shoved him playfully. "Lucius."

"If you do not wish to walk upstairs, I shall just have to Apparate you there." He wrapped his arms around her and nibbled at her neck.

"Well, my feet are a little sore..." She didn't get a chance to finish as he carried out his threat. He then began carefully unbuttoning her gown. "Would you hurry?" she asked impatiently.

"Not tonight, darling. This frock was quite expensive."

"And you think I'll need it again? Wouldn't it look odd if I wore the same dress to the next reception?"

He pulled her hair back and nipped at her ear. "Not in the immediate future, but I had rather hoped you might have an open mind about having more children." He slowly lowered the dress to the floor and waited for her to step out of it.

Turning to face him, she asked, "You want more children?"

He gently caressed her stomach. "I have always wanted a large family, but it was never possible."

She was working on unfastening his robes. "I think we can talk about that."

Lucius knew that his plan was almost complete. She was nearly his. From the way she had looked at him during the reception, this should be all she needed to be convinced that she was better off with him.

She was lovely. She might think her growing girth made her unattractive, but he found it strangely erotic. In a little more than a month, she would give birth to his child. That thought aroused him even more. Standing behind her, he pulled her tight and rubbed his hips against her, letting her feel his arousal. At the same time, he caressed her stomach, her breasts. He had to feel her. This time it was definitely no dream, and there was no need to rush; they had all evening. She quivered at his touch. "I love you," he whispered into her ear.

"Oh, Lucius," she whispered and leaned back against him. "Do you really?"

"I would have let you go if I didn't." Deciding the time for small talk was over, he led her to the bed.

She shoved him onto the bed. "I need you," she growled.

Lucius was slightly taken aback by this brazen attitude, but he was not going to complain. Situating himself behind her, his hands danced across her skin, touching her in all the places that aroused her. He delighted in feeling her squirm and hear her moans.

"Lucius, please, I've waited so long," she pleaded.

Reaching between her legs, he teased her briefly, enjoying the slick feel. Unable to ignore his needs anymore, he carefully thrust into her. She pushed against him, encouraging him to continue. He tried to move slowly, but she grabbed his hip and urged him to move more quickly. Knowing that he wouldn't last long if he did, he whispered, "Hermione."

"Take me," she growled.

Needing little encouragement, he could feel his release coming. Judging from the noises Hermione was making, so was hers. As she climaxed, she cried out his name and brought about his release. He held her tightly, pleased that this time it was not a dream. "How do you feel?"

"Wonderful," she sighed.

Propping himself on his arm, he admired her body. Unlike some other pregnant women, she was gaining weight in all the right places, making her figure more voluptuous than it had ever been. When she noticed what he was doing, she tried to cover herself, but he stopped her. "I want to admire you."

"Admire me? I feel like a hippopotamus."

Leaning over, he kissed her belly. "I assure you, you in no way resemble any sort of animal. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

"Liar." She laughed and tried to push him away.

Carefully moving over her, he lay so that he was facing her. "It is the truth. I am irresistibly attracted to you." He saw a tear roll down her cheek. Brushing it away, he asked, "What's wrong?"

"I've been so foolish."

He smiled warmly at her. "You weren't the fool, I was. I should have told you what I was planning. I knew how you felt about me, and I thought it would be enough. Will you forgive me?" Yes, she was putty in his hands. Her emotions were charged, and he could use them to his advantage.

"There is nothing to forgive." She shifted so she could give him a kiss. After a few moments, she asked, "How do we explain this to my parents? This is one wizarding law they wouldn't understand."

"You know your parents better than I, so I will defer to your judgement. But you must tell them quickly." He placed his hand on her belly.

Placing her hand on top of his, she replied, "I know, but not right now." Rolling over, she spooned against him, gaining comfort from his embrace.

As Hermione was lying in bed, with Lucius's arm wrapped around her, she felt happy. Suddenly, she realized that there had been photographers at the reception last night. Surely, a picture of her and Lucius would be published in the morning paper. She pulled away and began looking for her clothes.

"Hermione?" asked a very confused and half-awake Lucius.

"I have to get back to Harry's." She went through the wardrobe looking for the clothes she had arrived in.

"For what reason?"

"I didn't tell them I was going to be with you," she admitted sheepishly. "I told them I was going to my parents' house. If I don't go back, he'll be worried."

"Wouldn't they assume you spent the night there?"

"Up until they read the paper, yes."

"Are you trying to keep us a secret?" he asked playfully.

"You know how touchy Harry gets. I just need to tell him in my own way."

He rose from bed and summoned a house-elf to get her clothes. "Should I expect you for breakfast?"

Considering his question while she dressed, she finally replied, "I think perhaps lunch might be better." After kissing him, she said, "I'll try to get back as soon as possible." She held him tightly, not really wanting to leave, but knowing she had to. "I love you," she softly and gave him one last kiss before leaving.

Standing outside Harry and Ginny's house in Godric's Hollow, she knew that to get any closer would alert Harry. Perhaps he would be sleeping too deeply to wake. After all, he had no reason to suspect she had been any place other than her parent's house.

After walking up the path, she quietly unlocked the door and slipped into the darkened house. She lit the tip of her wand and headed upstairs to her room.

As she passed Harry's room, she heard him mutter, "Hermione?"

"Sorry I'm back so late. I lost track of time." He didn't say anything else, so she quickly changed for bed to get a few more hours of sleep before the inevitable discovery.

When she heard the children wake, she knew that Harry and Ginny would not be far behind. Deciding that she would do as she always did, she headed downstairs to get breakfast started while Ginny and Harry got the children dressed.

Jimmy was quite noisy as he came downstairs and was telling Ginny what he wanted for breakfast.

"You will eat what you are given," Ginny told him, for not the first time. She saw Hermione cooking eggs. "Did you get any rest last night? I know you came in late."

"I'm fine. Don't worry about me. I'll have breakfast ready in a minute." Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Harry pay the owl for the *Daily Prophet*. She knew that he wasn't really the type to read the paper too closely, especially the society page, and she hoped that today would be no different. She wanted to be able to bring up her leaving when she was ready.

They all settled down to breakfast and Hermione ate nervously as she watched Harry reading the paper.

Harry dropped his fork to the plate and dropped the paper. "Hermione!"

"What is it?" asked Ginny.

At the same time, Hermione said, "I can explain."

"It better be a damn good explanation," Harry said.

"Harry!" admonished Ginny. "Not in front of the kids." As she looked at Harry, she glimpsed the picture and then stared closer at it, and then she looked at Hermione. "Is that really you and Malfoy?"

Hermione could see that it was a picture of the two of them dancing at the reception. Harry and Ginny were both reading the accompanying article. She wanted to explain, but thought it would be best to let them finish reading first. "Harry, please, I can explain." she said when she realized that he was at the end of the article.

"What did he do to you?" Harry demanded of her.

"Harry, please, calm down and let me speak," she replied sternly. "He didn't do anything to me. I willingly went with him last night. Stop!" she said as she saw him preparing to interrupt. "I went with him because according to the law, he is my husband. You know how important appearances are to the wizarding world." *And the fact I will be an outcast if I don't go back to him*, she added silently. Of course, that was really a moot point since *shedid* want to go back to him. He said he loved her, and even if he didn't, he treated her with a great deal more respect than Draco had. Besides, she could use the Malfoy name to her advantage, and Lucius's backing had much more sway than Draco's ever had.

"You look like you were having a good time," he said while he pointed at the picture.

"For more than a year I lived at his manor. We developed a good friendship." *A very good friendship*, she added as she wondered how much to tell him. "Despite what you may think, we do have a lot in common, and you've seen that he isn't the same man he was during Voldemort's return."

"That's what everyone thought the first time," Harry said sarcastically.

Ginny placed her hand on Harry's. She knew Hermione's secret, but would not reveal it without her consent. "So you wanted to spend time with him?"

"I know it sounds strange, but I really do miss him. We used to take tea together, go on long walks, have intelligent discussions. He's really quite intelligent," Hermione said wistfully.

Ginny asked cautiously, "How do you feel about him?"

Hermione sighed and looked between her two friends. They weren't ready to hear her honest answer. "I'm going to be moving back to the manor."

Harry leapt to his feet and slammed his fists against the table, causing Sarah to cry and Jimmy bury his face in Ginny's side. "I forbid it!"

"It's my life and I'll do what I please. I want my child to know his father!" she replied abruptly. Once the words were out, she realized she couldn't take them back.

Harry paled. "His father? You mean...?"

Hermione rubbed her stomach protectively. "This is Lucius' child, and I love him. I'm glad that Draco was caught, and that I'm now Mrs. Lucius Malfoy. He understands me and loves me." She started calming down, realizing that getting too worked up would not be good for the baby. "He's been trying to convince me to come home since I left. It's just taken me this long to realize that's where I belong. But you can't tell anyone else that he's the father. If word were to get out..." She knew that if word of the affair between her and Lucius ever got out, they would both be discredited.

"Wait a minute? You and Lucius? But he disowned Draco for doing the same thing."

"Because he wanted to be with me, and that was the perfect opportunity. He's always thought that Draco was weak and he blamed Narcissa." Realizing that her friends now possessed potentially dangerous knowledge, she added, "No one can know. If word gets out... Well, I probably would never be able to show my face in the wizarding world again."

Ginny gently pulled Jimmy away from her so that she could give Hermione a reassuring hug. "Of course we won't tell anyone." She shot Harry a look that said he would obey that promise.

Harry and Hermione stared at each other for close to a minute.

"Harry, you can't tell anyone," she said quietly.

"How could you?" asked Harry. When she didn't answer, he got up and walked out the door.

"I hoped that he would take it better," Hermione said.

"He just needs some time." Ginny looked back down at the picture. "It looks like you had a good time last night."

Hermione smiled. "I did. He dances divinely and is so kind and gentle." She sighed as she recalled what a wonderful night it had been. "I should start packing my things."

Ginny sighed. "I'll miss having Pipsy around."

"I'll talk to Lucius. I don't see why we couldn't spare her."

"You would do that for me?"

Hermione smiled. "Of course I would." She went upstairs and it wasn't long before she was ready to leave. Sending Pipsy ahead, she went to say goodbye to Ginny and the kids, though she knew that in the days to come, she would spend quite a bit of time here. She knew that Ginny would always be her true friend.

When she returned to the manor, she could hear Harry yelling at Lucius in the study.

"If you ever hurt her, mistreat her, or cheat on her, I will kill you!"

She peered around the doorframe and saw that Lucius was unperturbed by Harry's outburst.

"I assure you that I have no intention of *harming* her. I have strived to protect her and ensure her happiness. Surely, she has told you that," he replied condescendingly.

"And how do I know that you don't have her under some sort of spell. I know how you are. You're *Slytherin*!"

Lucius chuckled softly. "You say that as though it's something bad. I have done nothing untoward to influence her decision. Is it so hard for you to believe that we could be in love? Would you deny her the happiness that she has longed for?"

"And I'm supposed to trust you? I'm sure you had *nothing* to do with her marrying Draco. He was a good actor. He convinced her they were in love and look what happened. I'm not going to let it happen again."

Hermione decided she couldn't stand listening to this anymore. "Harry! What do you think you're doing here?"

He briefly glanced at her before looking suspiciously at Malfoy. "I'm looking out for you."

She crossed the room to embrace Lucius, who had stood up as she entered the room. He kissed her tenderly, not caring that Harry was watching his every move.

"I don't need you looking out for me. I'm an adult, and I can look out for myself. I've made this decision, and I'm happy with it. And I assure you, Lucius has not coerced me or used any sort of potion on me." She still didn't know the exact nature of the lotion he had given her, but she was reasonably certain it had no mind-altering properties. As she settled on the sofa, Lucius placed his arm protectively around her, and it felt very right.

Harry had a look of utter disbelief on his face. After trying several times to say something, he finally recovered his voice. "I want what's best for you. If you think this is best right now..." He trailed off when he couldn't think of anything else to say.

"I do. And I appreciate you looking out for me, but I don't need it right now. You and Ginny are welcome to visit whenever you wish."

Harry looked at Malfoy, trying to read the older man's face. "We'll do that."

"We would be delighted to have you spend the weekend here at your convenience," Lucius replied sincerely.

This seemed to be all that Harry could take. "I'll see you later, Hermione." He gave Malfoy one last glare before departing.

Once Harry was gone, Hermione gave Lucius the best hug that she could. "I'm glad you didn't start fighting with him."

He kissed the top of her head. "I knew it would serve no purpose. Why don't you get some rest and then we can work on the nursery this afternoon?"

She thought that was a wonderful idea. And she was glad that Lucius had not objected to her giving Harry and Ginny an open invitation. She knew that Harry's suspicious nature would cause him to accept the offer, and she knew that, in time, Harry would come to realize that Lucius was nothing like Draco, and that the two of them really did belong together. She could do things as Mrs. Lucius Malfoy that she would never have otherwise been unable to do. When she woke that afternoon, she would start her new life.

~The End~

A/N: Thank you very much to those that have read and reviewed. I hope that you have enjoyed this story. Also, I would like to thank nota for her help in beta reading this story.

As for the final instalment of the trilogy, "Fallen from Glory", I have a couple of other projects that are begging for attention before I get to that one. I do have projects nearing completion, which is a plus. I'm still going to estimate a couple of months before I start posting it since I will want to get most of the story written before I start posting.