

Rage Against the Dying of the Light

by phoenix

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

We Interrupt This Broadcast...

Chapter 1 of 7

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We Interrupt This Broadcast...

Nor dread nor hope attend

A dying animal;

A man awaits his end

Dreading and hoping all;

Many times he died,

Many times rose again.

A great man in his pride

Confronting murderous men

Casts derision upon

Supersession of breath;

He knows death to the bone

Man has created death.

-Death by William Butler Yates

Narcissa Malfoy sat in the parlor, working on her needlework, just as she did every night. She was nearly finished with the Manor landscape.

Suddenly, the music stopped, and the announcer's voice came over the speaker of the Wireless. "We interrupt tonight's program to bring you an important public service announcement. We have just learned that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has been defeated once again by Harry Potter."

She dropped her needlework as she felt the blood drain from her face. Crossing the room, she knelt in front of the Wireless. If this had indeed been the final battle, then it meant that Lucius and Draco had been there. The news report had her undivided attention.

"We are still waiting for more details, but initial reports indicate that there were a large number of casualties on both sides. Flames and smoke are visible from Hogsmeade. We still don't know how the Death Eaters entered the Hogwarts grounds. Aurors rushed to the scene as soon as word of the attack was received. Preliminary reports indicate that many of the students were evacuated as the fighting began. Currently, Ministry officials are searching through the battleground for survivors.

"As soon as names are confirmed, survivor and casualty lists will be published by the *Daily Prophet*. Again, we can confirm that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has been defeated by Harry Potter at a battle that just took place at Hogwarts. We do not know if Potter has survived this battle, but The-Boy-Who-Lived has already survived one attack by You-Know-Who, and, and so we all hope that he survived this attack likewise.

"Please, stay tuned for more information."

The music started up again, and now it was very celebratory music.

She started crying, wanting desperately to turn it off, but then, she didn't want to miss any follow-up reports. "Atta!" she screamed. When the elf popped into sight before her, she said, "Go to Diagon Alley and wait outside the *Daily Prophet* office. As soon as they publish the casualty list, get a copy and bring it straight here."

"Yes, mistress." The elf bowed and disappeared.

She stood up and paced nervously back and forth, wondering how likely it was that she would hear anything about her family. She knew that the Death Eaters would be a secondary concern to the Ministry officials. They would be more concerned with their own and with the students.

When Lucius had first become involved with the Death Eaters, she had begged him to sever his ties, but he had gently explained that the Dark Lord was the future, and supporting him would someday place them in a position of extreme power. As things had turned violent, she had begged him to be careful. She was afraid of what would happen to him, but she knew better than to insist that he turn away from the Dark Lord. She knew that would be fatal.

After the Dark Lord was defeated the last time, she had feared for their future. She didn't want to raise their son alone, and she feared that the Ministry would seize their assets, leaving her destitute. Thankfully, Lucius had made several large donations to various Ministry concerns, and the authorities were quite sympathetic to his assertion that he had been acting under the Imperius Curse. Her sister and brother-in-law had not been so lucky.

She had pleaded with Lucius to find a way to keep them out of Azkaban, but he had explained to her that for him to make any such attempt while Bella insisted on so vehemently declaring her loyalty to the Dark Lord would only jeopardize his own freedom. He simply could not spare Bella and Rodolphus and still maintain his respectability in society. Reluctantly, Narcissa had agreed with his reasoning.

When the Dark Lord had returned, the old fears had come back with him, stronger than ever before. Lucius had insisted that it would be different this time, that they were going to find the prophecy that would allow them to rise to power and control the wizarding world. Pure-bloods would be returned to the prominence that only they deserved.

She had listened to his ruminations with trepidation. All she could think of were the many people who had gone to prison the last time, and how she feared that Lucius would not be so lucky again if the Death Eaters did not succeed this time around. He reassured her that there was nothing to worry about, that the Ministry was in full denial, and that by the time they admitted the reality of the situation, it would be too late.

Her greatest fears had been realized when he had been captured at the Ministry. She had begged him not to go that night, but he had insisted that Potter and any of his friends who dared to openly support him would never be a match for fully trained wizards, especially those versed in Dark Magic. She had paced nervously that entire night too, anxious for his return.

When Bella arrived in the wee hours of that next morning, her heart had sank. She knew that something had happened to Lucius. Hearing that he had been captured had devastated her. She thought that nothing worse could happen.

She had been wrong.

When the Dark Lord had called on Draco to atone for his father's mistakes, she could see it all starting anew. She could not bear to lose Draco, too. For that reason, she had insisted on seeing Severus and pressuring him to take an Unbreakable Vow to protect Draco. He had done so reluctantly, and it had been the only thing that allowed her to get any sleep.

Draco had been punished for his failure to kill Dumbledore, but at least he had survived. She had seriously considered taking Draco and fleeing the country. She knew enough about Dark Magic to allow them to start life anew, even though under reduced circumstances, far from the Dark Lord's influence. At least they would live.

On the eve of her departure, the unimaginable had happened. Lucius had been rescued from Azkaban. He had been thinner then when she had last seen him, and his luxurious hair had been cut short, but his eyes were still the same. She did not think that she had ever been so happy.

From what he told her about the Dark Lord's plans for the future, she knew that he would never leave, that he and Draco would faithfully serve their fearsome master to the end. Knowing how important this was to him, she had done her best to not let him know how upset she was. She was the dutiful wife who supported her husband.

Now, it was entirely possible that both of them had died for their master.

As she waited for news from the Wireless or Atta, she continued to pace restlessly. None of the reports had anything of interest for her. As she had expected, they concentrated on providing news about Ministry forces, though they did give the names of a few Death Eaters. She collapsed in tears as they announced that her sister had been killed. The newscaster seemed positively joyful as he announced it.

She collapsed in tears. Her sister had made mistakes, but she was still family. No one deserved death, and no one deserved her death to be a reason for celebration.

Finally, she could no longer stand the cheerful tunes, and she turned off the Wireless. Deciding she needed something to calm her nerves, she crossed to the sideboard and poured herself a large measure of Scotch. She didn't care for it, but it was convenient. The liquid burned as she gulped it, but she could feel her breathing and heartbeat relax.

"Mistress? Atta is having the list," the elf announced.

She snatched the paper out of the creature's hands and scanned it. Other than Bella, Walden Macnair was the only other Death Eater on this list of casualties. None were listed on the survivor's list. "Go back and wait for the next update," she ordered. She wasn't sure if this was a good sign or not. Some of the Death Eaters had to have survived, not all of them would have been killed. The Ministry loved trials, and the Aurors were always told to bring back their victims alive. And she had to believe that Lucius was a well-known enough man that the Ministry would have to gloat over his death. He was alive. She had to believe that he was alive. She could not go on without him.

Hours passed and the lists that Atta brought back grew longer, but still, there was no Malfoy on either of the lists. One of the elves had brought her food, but she was too nervous to eat.

She had no idea how much time had passed, but she jumped in fright when she felt a hand on her knee.

Lucius was kneeling before her, sorrow in his eyes. "I'm sorry, my love. I tried... to protect him... but... I..." He pulled her into his arms.

She wrapped her arms tightly around him, hardly daring to believe this was not a dream. "Lucius? You're alive!"

"Yes, my love."

She said quickly, "We have to get out of here. The Ministry will be looking for you. I have made preparations..."

He interrupted her by placing his fingers on her lips. Softly, he said, "No, they won't. I told them of the attack. You were right. I was wrong to ever ally myself with the Dark Lord. And now..."

She could tell that something was wrong. He had tried to tell her something when he had arrived, but she had been so excited about seeing him that his words had not registered. "What is it?" she asked nervously and pulled back so that she could see his eyes. She was shocked to see that his cheeks were wet from tears.

"I tried to protect him, to remove him from the battle, but I was too late. Darling, Draco..." He could not finish, could not bring himself to say the words.

She placed her hand over her mouth and shook her head, denying the truth of his words. "No. It's not possible. He can't be. He is so young." Tears streamed down her cheeks. She could not believe that her beautiful boy was gone.

Lucius used a handkerchief to dab her tears. "I know. It's not fair. But at least he died a hero. At the end, he too, saw the light. He refused to leave, not wanting to show cowardice."

"Draco... gone..." She collapsed in Lucius's arms, trying to draw comfort from his strength, but she could feel that he, too, was crying at the loss of their son. The next thing she knew, he was carrying her upstairs and placing her in bed. He held her tightly against him, neither of them saying a word.

Tomorrow, they would have to adapt to the new world, but tonight, they would mourn their son.

A/N: As always, thanks to ever wonderful nota for betaing this latest bit of insanity. I know I have other projects I should be working on, but the muses have spoken.

At this point, I'm not sure if the story is over or not. It's open ended so there could be more, but it does end at a good stopping point. I guess it depends in part on what you, dear readers, want. :)

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Chapter 2 of 7

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Lucius held Narcissa. He could tell from her breathing that she was not asleep. He held her tightly, waiting for her to ask about Draco's death. He knew she would. It was a very hard thing for him to accept, but he knew that it had to be even harder for her. She had loved Draco much differently than he had. Where he had seen an heir, she had seen something much more. He had always thought that she coddled him too much, but in retrospect, it was probably the affectionate love that she showered on him that had allowed him to change allegiance.

He tried not to think that that same love might also have been responsible for Draco sacrificing himself to ensure the Dark Lord was defeated. Whatever happened, he had to ensure that Narcissa never came to believe that. If she descended into despair, she would never agree to have another child.

After Draco had been born, she had claimed that it was too traumatic, that the miscarriages she had suffered had been too much for her to bear, and that she did not want to ever go through that again. Since she had borne him a son, he had not made an issue of her desire to have no further children. Now, he would be forced to. The Malfoy family would not die with him. He had no brothers and no male cousins. He would not be the last Malfoy. Since he loved Narcissa, he wanted her to be the mother of his heir.

"How did it happen?" she asked softly, disturbing his thoughts.

"Are you sure you want to know?"

She rolled over to look into his eyes. "I have to know how my son died."

He had been preparing for this ever since he had watched Draco fall. "Once the battle started, the two of us worked our way to the edge of the fighting where we could divest ourselves of our masks. We then worked to protect the school."

His voice took on a distant quality as he tried to emotionally divorce himself from what he had participated in. "As the fighting raged on, we found ourselves getting pulled into the center of everything. I tried to pull Draco back to the periphery, but he seemed determined to protect Potter. The fighting grew fiercer and fiercer, and suddenly we found ourselves at the center of a scene of madness and mayhem. I looked over just in time to see him blocking the Killing Curse for Potter." At least that's what everyone thought. The truth was that they were close enough that no one else (he hoped) realized the truth--that he had been the true intended victim.

She clutched tightly at him and choked back a sob.

Not wanting to pause too long in his account, he continued, "I retaliated immediately, ensuring that our son's killer did not die an easy death." He closed his eyes tightly, fighting back the emotions threatening to overpower him. She needed him to be strong.

"Who was it?" she asked hoarsely.

"It doesn't matter. Justice has been served," he replied evasively.

"Lucius, who killed our son? I must know if it was one of our friends, even if he no longer lives."

He could hear the determination in her voice and knew that she would not let him keep this knowledge to himself. "Cissy, please."

"Lucius," she demanded.

"Very well," he said resignedly. "It was your sister."

There was a moment of silence before she replied, "Bella? Bella killed Draco? I can't believe it."

"Now do you know why I did not want to tell you? That woman was not the same sister you knew eighteen years ago. Prison changed her. Her devotion to the Dark Lord changed her. Even if Draco had not taken a spell meant for Potter, she would have killed him. Her dying words were that Draco and I were traitors and deserved to die. She even threatened that she would be the one to kill me."

"My sister said that?" Narcissa asked in disbelief.

He gently stroked her hair. "She did. As I said, the madness had taken over. She was not herself." He held her tightly as she started crying again. Eventually her crying subsided;

he glanced downward to see that she had finally fallen asleep, utterly exhausted.

The next few days passed in a blur. Narcissa was refusing to leave their rooms, and she was barely eating. He tried to spend as much time as he could with her, but he had to arrange Draco's funeral and meet with the Ministry. He shielded her from most of the details of what he did there. She did not need to know the particulars of his settlement. It would be costly both monetarily and socially, though, most of his social circle had been Death Eaters and were either dead or in Azkaban now.

The one concession he had been able to draw from them was that he and Draco would be publicly recognized for what they did in the end. He knew that some of the more perceptive members of the wizarding world would always see their redemption as purely selfish which it had been but publicly, they would be recognized as heroes of the war, and whatever new society arose would have to accept him.

He knocked softly on the door before opening it. "Darling, are you ready?" he asked softly.

"Is it time?" She dabbed at her cheeks with a handkerchief before setting the veiled hat on her head.

Standing behind her, he placed his hand on her shoulder. "I'm afraid so."

As they walked toward the garden, they wrapped their arms around each other's waists. "Have... others come?" she asked nervously.

"A fair number. Our son will not be mourned alone."

He was not sure how he managed to maintain his composure through the brief ceremony, especially when he eulogized Draco. Even more surprising than the fact that Potter was in attendance had been that he had actually gotten up to speak about Draco and the nobility of his sacrifice.

As Potter spoke, Lucius gripped Narcissa's hand tightly and closed his eyes, hoping to transfer some of his strength to her. He knew that she had been dreading this day even more than he had.

When the funeral finally ended, he accepted the condolences of those who had attended. After he thanked the last person, he looked for Narcissa, only to find that she was gone.

Potter stepped up. "I saw her heading that way," he said pointing deeper into the garden.

"Thank you," he replied.

"Mr. Malfoy," Potter interrupted. "Thank you for what you and Draco did. I know it couldn't have been easy. And what Draco did... It really surprised me, and I wish I'd known that side of him."

"Thank you for your kind words," he replied sincerely before turning around to search for his wife. While Potter probably did not realize it, his eulogy would have far reaching effects for the Malfoy reputation. Perhaps it was best that Potter had not been sorted to Slytherin. Of course, all of this could have been avoided if he had been.

He found Narcissa sitting deep in the hedge garden on a small stone bench. "Darling, you should come inside."

Her gaze was lost in the distance. "I used to read to him here. Watch him play."

Kneeling beside her, as there was no room for him on the bench, he said, "I know, my love. This house is full of memories." Softly, he kissed her cheek. She collapsed to her knees in front of him and clutched his robes tightly as she was overcome with grief.

Four days after Draco's funeral, the Ministry held an awards ceremony. Now that the dead were buried, they wanted to honor the living. Lucius had dressed for the occasion several hours in advance, knowing that it would take time to convince Narcissa she had to attend the ceremony too. She had insisted several times that she did not want to leave the manor. But he knew how powerful an image the grieving mother receiving her son's award would be. It was an opportunity that could not be missed.

He found her listening to the Wireless and sat beside her, picking up her hands in his. "Darling, it is very important that you come to the ceremony today."

"I barely made it through the funeral. I would absolutely fall to pieces..."

Placing his fingers on her lips, he stopped her protestations. "Our son will be honored. While he cannot be there, I am positive that he would want you there," he said softly. She was every bit as Slytherin as he was and surely realized the political importance of attending, but he wanted to stress the emotional side as well.

"I know..."

"Narcissa, darling, everyone knows what we have lost. Draco will not be the only fallen hero honored. We will not be the only ones fighting to contain our grief. Please? For Draco?" Leaning forward, he softly trailed kisses along her cheek to her neck.

"Love, stop," she said playfully.

He couldn't help grinning at the sound of her voice; it was his Narcissa. "Why?" he murmured into her flesh, but did not do as she asked.

She half-heartedly tried to push him away. "It's not right. We are in mourning."

"That does not mean I love you any less. Indeed, it makes me realize that I should never take anything for granted. Especially not you. Dearest, surely you realize how

important this is."

She sighed. "I do."

Pulling away, he gently brushed her hair. He wondered if he looked as old as she did at just this moment. Probably. These last few days had taken a lot out of them both. "Just this one last appearance, then we can slip away to the hunting lodge and grieve in peace."

"Not France?"

He knew how much she loved to spend time at their chateau in the south of France, but part of his agreement with the Ministry was that he would not leave the country on personal business for three years. "Some other time, darling."

As he stood at the Ministry ceremony, he forced himself not to look at Narcissa. He knew she would be doing the same. While the Minister recounted the events of the fateful night, waxed poetic on the bravery of those present, and began reading the citations for the awards, he let his mind drift to the future. Once again, he would have the chance to shape the world that emerged from the rubble. This time, there would be no trial for him. He had agreed to testify against some of the other Death Eaters, no one of any importance or that came from an important family, of course.

Along with that future, he would need a new heir. While Narcissa was no longer young, she was still in her childbearing years. Though, it would be some time before he could approach her about the idea. At least half a year. And he would have to be sure to broach the subject as though he were not trying to replace Draco. Strictly speaking, he wasn't. As a parent, he had made many errors, ones he did not intend to repeat.

The Malfoy name had been preserved, and it was only a matter of time before all this ugliness was forgotten and he was returned to prominence.

A/N: Once again thanks to nota for helping clean up some of my wording. There are times that she has a much more elegant way with words than I do.

As you might have guessed, this story is going to go back and forth between Lucius and Narcissa's point of view. It's a little storytelling exercise on my part to keep the same character's perspective through a chapter.

Return to the Land of the Living

Chapter 3 of 7

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

Six months. It was hard for Narcissa to believe that it had been six months since her sister had killed her dear, sweet boy. That was almost as shocking to her as the fact that Draco was never coming back. Glancing out the window, she saw that the weather mirrored her mood: grey, cheerless and rainy. Shifting her gaze to the man seated across from her, she wondered how he could go on as though nothing had happened.

Following the funeral and then the awards ceremony, he had thrown himself back into business and politics, making arrangements to rebuild the industries that had been destroyed, finding a way to make a profit out of the rubble. He didn't seem to give Draco's death a second thought, and it disgusted her.

She had been devastated, barely able to function for weeks. Eventually, she had realized that she still had duties to perform, and so she had reluctantly gone about them, putting on a brave face to the wizarding world, being the dutiful wife of an important wizard. But her heart was no longer in it. She derived no joy from the soirées and gossip that had once been her lifeblood. All she wanted was to be able to retreat from the world and mourn her son.

"Darling? Were you listening to me?" Lucius asked as he reached across the table and placed his hand on hers.

"No. I'm sorry. My thoughts were elsewhere," she apologized.

He had a pained look in his eyes as he seemingly forced her by sheer willpower not to turn away for once. "My love, I'm worried about you. You have not been yourself..."

"How can I be myself?" she snapped. "I've lost my son. Or had you forgotten that?" She would have run away, except that he did not release her hand.

"I could never forget that," he replied softly as he rose from the table and tried to wrap his arms around her trembling body.

She fought against his embrace. "You certainly don't act that way. You've gone on with life as though nothing has happened. Let go of me, you monster!" She beat against his chest.

"Darling, I mourn his loss every day. I wish that he were still with us, but I am unable to change the past. We must move on and face the present. We must build ourselves a new future. Life is for the living."

"For the living? What is there worth living for?" She abandoned her struggle and collapsed into his embrace, no longer even trying to hold back her tears. "Everyone else is going on about their lives, talking about the future, talking about their children," she sobbed.

Softly he said, "We could try again..."

"No! I won't go through that again. It was too difficult last time." She knew she was being unreasonable, but it had taken years and there had been several miscarriages. That was part of why she had cherished Draco so much: she had known that she never wanted to go through such pain and loss again."

He wouldn't let her pull away. "Darling, there have been many advances since then, potions that can help..."

"No! I can't do it again. You don't know how hard it was emotionally. I just can't do it again." She looked up at him, expecting him to continue arguing with her, demanding that she do his bidding. She knew that he would want an heir, and a part of her feared how he would react to her refusal. But there was no anger in his eyes as he looked at her.

He gently brushed a tear from her cheek. "I know how hard it was for you, and I would not want to see you suffer like that again. Perhaps you could see a Healer, hear his opinion on your chances before you completely rule it out."

She knew that he was just trying to convince her. Still, his tenderness surprised her. He normally did not react well to people refusing to do his bidding. She had been an exception at times, but when something was truly important, he did not back down easily.

"Or if not a Healer, I could speak with Severus about providing you suitable potions."

"No, Lucius. I cannot do this again. Please, don't ask it of me." She knew that her words were not at all what he wanted to hear.

"As you wish," he replied and released her.

As she left the breakfast room, she knew that would not be the last she heard of the subject.

Narcissa observed Lucius carefully over the next several weeks. She knew that he would not let the subject drop for long. He would pursue it relentlessly. Oh, he was never overt, but she could tell that he was still very interested, hoping to wear her down. She waited for him to once again make the request, but he never did. A part of her wondered what would happen if she refused the next time he asked. Would he be so determined to get a new heir that he would demand a divorce... or worse?

Once again, she pretended to be engrossed in her needlework when he returned home from work.

"What would you think of having a ball here? Something to celebrate All Hallow's Eve?"

"Are you serious?"

"Of course I am, my dear. I have been working to make it the social event of the year. Everyone who is anyone will be invited." He leaned close as though he were telling her a secret, "Though I suspect some will attend purely to determine how far we have fallen. This will be the perfect opportunity to show them that the Malfoys remain strong."

"I don't know, darling. Is it really right for us to host something like that so soon..."

He placed his fingers on her lips. "Darling, enough time has passed. The mourning period expired weeks ago. We must publicize this soon in order to retain our place at the head of wizarding society. Our party will be *the* event of the season, but our guests must be informed of it now, so that they can plan to celebrate the day with us, instead of making other plans. Please, we must go on with our lives, show the wizarding world that we remain strong."

She tried to put on a brave face. "Of course. I think it would be good to host something here. It will give me something to focus on." She knew these were the words he wanted to hear.

He smiled broadly. "There's my Narcissa. I will see to the invitations, and I will, as always, trust you with the particulars of the affair. I could never come close to matching your expertise in social matters."

The month and a half leading up to All Hallow's Eve, she was quite busy. Decorations needed to be procured, food and beverages ordered, the ballroom needed to be cleaned, and she had devoted much more time than she had expected focusing on a charm to ensure the garden would be in full bloom. During these last six weeks, she found that she did not think of Draco nearly as much as she had before.

Finally, the evening of the ball arrived and she found she was very glad she would be masked.

Lucius entered as she was making the final adjustments to her costume. "Ah, my darling, you look absolutely devastating." He gently wrapped his arms around her.

She replied playfully, "Stop. You'll ruin my hairstyle. It took Etta forever to get this right."

Softly, he kissed her neck. "Now, you know that isn't true. I have learned to be very careful over the years. You will be the most gorgeous witch in attendance."

Turning to face him, she replied. "And I must say that you are quite handsome this evening. You don't think that our costumes are too presumptuous, do you?" She had looked at him incredulously when he had suggested they go as Louis and Marie Antoinette.

"Not at all." He picked up her mask and held it out to her. "Now, my love, we need to prepare to receive our guests."

For the first part of the evening, she felt that she was back in her element. Greeting guests and mingling through the ballroom reminded her of the life she had once had. Unfortunately, as the evening drew on, she couldn't help but notice that several of the women were pregnant and that several others were talking about their children.

Finally, Narcissa could take it no longer, and quietly slipped upstairs.

A/N: Well, I apologize for the long delay in posting chapters. Real life intervened, and what can you do about that? I am working on the next chapter already and have a very good idea of where it is going, so hopefully, it won't be long before I post that one. Thank you for your patience and your reviews.

And Death Shall Have No Dominion

Chapter 4 of 7

Lucius realizes that Narcissa's grief is far deeper than he had first assumed. Will he lose his wife or help her recover?

Lucius surveyed the ball. Everything was going wonderfully. Everyone who was anyone had come to his soiree. As a dutiful host, he had circulated throughout the room, making everyone feel welcome and important.

As he reviewed the scene spread out before him, he noticed that someone was missing. He could not find Narcissa. Moving to the side of the room, he called one of the house-elves, who informed him that she was upstairs.

Carefully slipping away from the guests, he made his way to their rooms. "Darling, is something wrong?"

She dabbed at her cheek. "I just—couldn't take it anymore. It's too much."

Sitting next to her on the bed, he asked, "What's too much? We've been to events like this many times before."

"It's not that. It's the families. They keep talking about their children, a-a-and mine is gone." She collapsed into tears against him.

He held her for a few minutes, stroking her hair gently. "It's all right."

"No, Lucius, it's not," she whispered.

"Darling, life must transcend death. We must go on."

"I know. I just don't know that I can go back down there."

"You must. Our guests will wonder where we are."

"Please, could you tell them I'm not feeling well? I just... I can't," she pleaded.

After kissing her softly on the lips, he replied, "I will. And I will return as soon as possible. Be assured of that." As he made his way back downstairs, he pondered this unexpected outcome. Obviously, this would be more difficult than he had anticipated. Then again, maybe this could be used to his advantage.

It took close to an hour for him to see his guests off. The ball had been a smashing success. Business deals had been arranged, but it still did not seem like enough. He was tired of burying himself in his work when he knew it was all for nothing.

When he returned upstairs, Narcissa had changed out of her costume and was standing on the balcony in her nightclothes. He wrapped his arms around her. "Darling, come inside. You'll catch your death."

"Maybe that would be for the best," she said softly.

He gently guided her inside near the fire. "Now, my love, why would you say that?"

"There's nothing worth living for anymore."

Looking into her tear-streaked face, he knew that he was losing her. "Darling, how can you possibly say that? We still have each other. You have always been my guiding star, and I would be lost without you." He had nearly had to beg his father to let him marry her. The elder Malfoy had wanted his son to marry the oldest of the Black sisters since there were no male Black heirs to that line, but Lucius had been relentless that Narcissa was the one for him. She would be the perfect mother for the Malfoy heir, not Bellatrix.

"You could go on without me. You'd be better off without me," she said morosely.

He held her tightly, frightened by what she was saying. "Nothing could be further from the truth." He had hoped that resuming their social life would help her climb out of the depression she had been in ever since Draco's death. Instead, it seemed to be having the opposite effect, and he feared that she would do something drastic. "Come, darling. Let's get some sleep. Everything will look different in the light of morning." He tucked her into bed before changing into his nightshirt and joining her.

He tried kissing and comforting her, but that didn't seem to help. He was somewhat relieved when she finally cried herself to sleep. Tomorrow, he would see about getting her some help. He couldn't stand seeing her like this any longer.

The following morning, Lucius paced his study. Checking the clock, he saw it was ten after. He did not appreciate being kept waiting. Finally, the door opened. "Where have you been?" he snapped.

Severus arched an eyebrow. "For someone who claims to be so desperate for my assistance, that is a dangerously rude greeting."

Lucius scowled. Severus was the only person who could talk that way to him and expect to survive unscathed. "You saw Narcissa last night. She is not herself. She still has not recovered from Draco's death." Moving to the sidebar, he poured himself a measure of Scotch.

"A little early in the day, isn't it?" asked Severus reprovingly.

Lucius waved off the comment. "I need a potion that will balance her emotionally. Right now, I can't even discuss having another child with her. And time is running out."

"I could just give you a fertility potion to counteract her birth control."

Lucius frowned. "No. I want her to want this child, but it will be difficult to convince her..." *...after last time*, he added silently. To stave off the guilt he could feel clawing to the surface, he drained his Scotch and poured another. Early in their marriage, he had only cared about having a male heir. She had miscarried four times because the first four children had been girls, and he had not been willing to wait years for a male heir. And this branch of the Malfoy line, and the Malfoy name itself, must go on. Now, he regretted that decision, but he could not change the past. It would be different now. He did not care whether he had a son or a daughter. He wanted his wife back, his family back.

"Lucius?" Severus asked.

"What?" he snapped. Clearly Severus had been talking to him, but he had heard nothing.

"I'll see about brewing a potion for her. It might not be completely effective without a detailed examination. Tell me what you can about her mental state."

It took half an hour, but Lucius provided Severus as many details about Narcissa's behavior as he could. Once he was left alone, he sat at his desk, considering the glass of Scotch in his hand. He knew that he shouldn't drink it, that alcohol never solved anyone's problems, but it did make the guilt go away... for a time.

This was his fault. If only he had been more patient, more understanding, Narcissa would not be in this state now. Setting down the glass, he decided to go for a walk, hoping the fresh air would clear his mind.

Three days later, Severus returned. "This might help. Unless you allow me to examine Narcissa, this is the best I can offer."

Lucius gently took the small bottle. "Anything will be better than nothing. I have one of the house-elves keeping an eye on her. How should she take this?"

"You can put it in any juice, and she should not notice any unusual taste. ~~Do~~*not* mix it with alcohol. One tablespoon a day should be sufficient. If it isn't, do not increase the dose, but inform me."

"And if I need more?"

"We'll address that problem later if we need to. For now, you must talk with her, get her to deal with her grief, her fears. This will allow her mind to become more lucid, but it is not a long-term cure. Especially if you want children."

"Understood. And, Severus, thank you."

Severus arched an eyebrow. It was rare that Lucius ever thanked anyone and meant it. "You're quite welcome."

Once Severus was gone, he summoned one of the house-elves. "One tablespoon of this is to be mixed with Mrs. Malfoy's juice every morning."

"Yes, sir. Ippy will see that it is done."

Tomorrow would be her first dose. He hoped that it would return his wife to him.

A/N: Once again, thanks to nota for her assistance beta reading this. She finds the perfect word that has eluded me. :D The title of this chapter is taken from yet another Dylan Thomas poem. This one by the same name as the chapter.

The Road Not Taken

Chapter 5 of 7

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that, the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

-Robert Frost

Narcissa shoved the last few bites of her breakfast around her plate. It was still hard for her to accept that Draco was gone, but it didn't hurt as much as it once had. Lucius had been wonderful towards her, spending time in the evenings with her, taking her to the theater.

"Darling, I thought you might like a trip to the shore next week."

She looked up at him. "What? In the winter?"

"I thought the change of scenery might be good for us. After all, with the Winter Solstice coming, the Muggles will be swarming all over the area."

Solstice. Her heart sank as she realized what came after Solstice. "Christmas. This will be our first Christmas without Draco."

He moved around the table to kneel at her feet. "I know, darling. That's why I thought the change of scenery might help. There are so many memories here."

"Are you saying we should forget him?" she asked defensively.

"Not at all. We would still celebrate his life, but I thought it would be easier away from here, away from all those memories."

She sighed. "I suppose you are right. I'll send a couple of house-elves ahead to make sure the cottage is aired out."

When they arrived at the cottage, she had to admit there was something refreshing about the sea air. "Would you like to go for a walk?" she asked.

He wrapped his arm around her. "I would love to." He didn't say anything else as they started walking along the path.

"I'm glad you suggested this. This is what we needed. Though, I'm surprised you didn't suggest going to France."

"I would have loved to have taken you to France. Unfortunately, it will be another two and a half years before I can leave the country."

She froze in shock. He had never told her about the conditions of his release, and she had never asked. "So long?"

"It's a small price to pay to be with you." He looked into her eyes, a look of longing on his face. "I think it's time to head in. You must be getting chilled to the bone."

She leaned against him. "Not with you holding me. Let's walk a little longer."

When they finally returned to the cottage, a small meal was ready and waiting for them in front of the roaring fire. After they ate, she snuggled against him on the sofa. "I love you."

"I love you, too." He leaned down to kiss the top of her head, but she lifted her head and met his lips with hers.

She crawled on top of him, eager to feel her husband's hands caressing her skin. She was already, feeling more like herself than she had since that horrible night.

Eventually they moved to the bedroom, where they could be more comfortable. "You are still the most beautiful witch I have ever laid eyes on," Lucius said as he slowly undressed her.

"And you are my handsome wizard," she replied playfully.

After a long evening of lovemaking, she lay snuggled against him, running her fingers through the coarse hair on his chest.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked lazily.

"How lucky I am to have you. To have someone who has been so patient with me."

He softly rubbed her shoulder. "Have you given any thought to having more children?"

She tried to pull away from him, but they were too entwined. "Lucius, you know how I feel about that..." It had been so long since he had brought the issue up, that she had finally begun to hope that he had accepted her feelings.

"Cissy, love, things have changed in the last twenty years."

"I know, but I'm older now. It would be even more difficult."

"Darling, you are in perfect health. Don't you long to hear the laughter of children in our house again?"

"I do, but I had thought that it would be our grandchildren." She leaned back against him, seeking comfort.

"As had I, but that has changed." After a few minutes, he added, "What do you say?"

"I don't know..." she said reluctantly.

He rolled over so she was lying on her back, and he propped himself on his arm. "We always dreamed of having a large family, and we have been given another chance to consider that." His hand drifted down so it rested on her stomach. "If there are... difficulties, Severus has offered his discreet assistance."

"Severus?"

Tracing his finger along her bare skin, he said, "You know that he can be absolutely discreet. And then we wouldn't have to go to St. Mungo's... I swear to you that I will make this as easy for you as I possibly can."

She did love him and wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. So far, he had been very patient with her, but deep down she knew that if she did not at least try to have more children, he would leave her... "Please, Lucius, ask me again in the morning."

They spent nearly two weeks at the cottage. It was invigorating and she did find it healing being away from the Manor. This was the first time since... since Draco's death that she had spent an extended time away. And contrary to what she had expected, she was finding that she was no longer hiding from the memories.

Some evenings they would sit by the fire and remember happier days, days between the wars, when life had been normal. Lucius's only concerns had been his vast financial empire and raising Draco to be a suitable heir. While he had sometimes been harsh, he had also been loving.

Narcissa remembered days of the two of them sitting on the floor and Lucius enchanting toys to entertain his young son. Those days were so simple and joyous, and a part of her longed to experience those days again. Much had changed in the last eighteen years. Perhaps the time was ready to try again.

After their vacation at the cottage, she almost felt like a newlywed again. Lucius was doting on her with simple gestures such as coming home and giving her a single rose, just as he had when they had first been married. She felt more like herself, recovering from the horrible incidents of the previous year. Finally, she decided that she was ready to try again.

With the dawning of spring, she became somewhat discouraged that she still was not pregnant. She had known that it might take time, but the longer it took, the more discouraged she became.

"Darling, is something bothering you?" Lucius asked that evening at dinner.

"I'm just frustrated. I'm not sure this is going to happen."

"I could talk to Severus."

"I don't want him to know about this. Not yet."

"When?"

"I... don't know. Later." Even though she knew that Severus could help, she was still reluctant to involve a third party. A part of her still feared that no pregnancy could possibly succeed; another part of her was secretly happy that she was still not pregnant.

As spring turned into summer, the depression started to return. She could tell that Lucius was growing more and more irritated. Severus's name came up in conversation more and more often. He also made offers of bringing in a private Healer, but she was still reluctant to accept his offer.

One day she returned home from a shopping trip and found Lucius and Severus together in the study. She could feel her heart sink even though she tried to greet him pleasantly. "Severus, what an unexpected surprise to see you here."

"Narcissa, a pleasure as always. I needed a break from the students and Lucius was kind enough to extend an invitation."

"Will you be joining us for dinner?"

"Unfortunately, no. I am expected back shortly. Perhaps some other time."

"Of course. I look forward to it." She walked away from the study and waited for Severus to leave. Once he was gone, she returned to confront Lucius. "What was he really doing here?"

"Exactly what he said. It was a purely social call."

"I don't believe you."

He tried to wrap his arms around her, but she pushed him away. "Darling, I would never do that."

"Oh, no? I know you. Better than you might think you do. When you want something, you don't let anything stand in your way. Are you planning to drug my food or drink?"

"No. In fact, I have not even broached the subject with him. I have done my utmost to respect your wishes. Please, believe me."

She searched his face for any sign of deceit, but could not find any. Not that she completely trusted him. She would discuss this with the house-elves later. Several of them were descendents of Black house-elves and were more loyal to her than to Lucius. They would let her know if he was tampering with anything she ate.

Rather than remain upset with him, she knew that she should be discussing with him ways to make their dream of starting a new family a reality. But she still had the fear dwelling within her.

A/N: As always, my eternal gratitude to my beta, nota, for helping me out. She prodded me along when I wasn't sure how I wanted to end this chapter, though it took me a while to realize I hadn't finished it. LOL

I think there will be two more chapters and I hope to have them both done before I move in mid-December. We'll see how cooperative the muses are.

How Long Am I to Wait?

Chapter 6 of 7

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

Chapter 6 - How Long Am I to Wait

Lucius paced his study after Narcissa departed to see to preparations for dinner. *Why was she so suspicious? Why was she so against the use of potions? After all, she claimed that she too wanted nothing more than to have another child.* Those two questions had been bothering him for some time now, and he still had no answer. Even after more than twenty years of marriage, he still did not understand women.

Neither of them was getting any younger, though he knew it was more important for her to get pregnant as soon as possible, especially if the child ended up being a girl. He shuddered at that thought, realizing that his previous tactic of terminating the girls would not work this time. To that end, he had been taking a potion that Severus had developed which would improve his chances of having a son. But it was by no means perfect.

During their discussion, Severus had suggested that Lucius hire a private Healer from the Continent to help her deal with her grief and reservations. That was exactly what Lucius wanted to do, but Narcissa had been adamant about not involving outsiders.

What Lucius really wanted was to kick a house-elf, to hear the satisfying scream of something in pain, but he knew that wasn't an option just now. He needed to present a

caring and loving exterior to Narcissa.

Reaching into his pocket, he stared at the vial of milky liquid and grinned mischievously. Well, if Narcissa wouldn't seek help, he would bring it to her. It had taken Severus months, but he had finally developed a topical conception aid. Lucius would purchase her an expensive new facial cream, imported from Paris, mix this in with it, and present it to her as a gift. While it was untested, Severus was reasonably certain that it should not take more than a few months for it to work. Slipping it back into his pocket, Lucius patted the vial protectively.

He was amazed at what he would do for love. The old, pre-war Lucius would have moved on to someone other than Narcissa by now. The new, post-war Lucius was doing everything in his power to hold onto her. He marveled at how important she had become to him.

A few days later, Lucius presented Narcissa with a small box. She eyed him suspiciously as she took the gift and unwrapped it. He sat beside her, wrapping his arm around her shoulder.

Her eyes lit up as she saw what was in the box, a very exclusive facial cream from Paris. "Lucius, darling, however did you get it?"

"I still have friends who owe me favors. One was in Paris and agreed to pick it up for me. I do hope you like it." He smiled sincerely at her, truly happy to have done something to regain her trust.

Unscrewing the lid, she inhaled deeply to test the fragrance. "Of course I do. It's marvelous." Setting the jar down, she turned and gave him a deep kiss.

Momentarily, he was caught off guard, not expecting such a spontaneous show of affection, but he soon regained his composure and hungrily returned her kiss. After all, she had not been speaking to him the last few days; she had been acting very suspicious of him again ever since his latest meeting with Severus.

Carefully, he twisted around so that she was beneath him on the sofa. "That is an excellent 'thank you', my love."

Smiling playfully, she ran her finger down his nose and replied, "It's more of an 'I'm sorry'. I know you love me, and yet I've been treating you so horribly. Forgive me?"

"Of course, darling," he replied before capturing her mouth in another passionate kiss. As they kissed, his hand explored her body, hoping to ignite her passion. His actions were rewarded as he felt her hands caressing him. This was indeed turning out to be a very rewarding day.

Two months after giving Narcissa the cream, Lucius remained quite pleased with her increased libido, but highly disappointed that there were still no other apparent results. He was now waiting for Severus at a Muggle establishment and doing his best not to fidget in the uncomfortable Muggle clothing.

"It's about time," he growled as Severus slid into the booth and took a seat across the table from him.

"I am on time. I cannot help it if you arrive early and then become impatient. Unlike you, I do have outside responsibilities."

He scowled at Severus' brusque manner, but decided to ignore the rudeness, at least for now. "Why isn't your potion working? After all, you are the Potions master," he asked sarcastically.

Severus replied in an equally quiet voice, "I cautioned you that it was not a topical potion. It was meant to be ingested, and I warned you that I could not vouch for its efficacy if delivered topically. Why not just use a more traditional potion and put it in her food?"

"Because a number of the house-elves belonged to the Black family and would tell her that I had been tampering with her food. Refine the potion," he ordered.

"Are you sure that the difficulty does not lie with you?" Severus asked in a condescending manner.

Lucius was not willing to share the details, but he had subjected himself to poking and prodding by a Muggle physician to ensure just that. "I am positive," he replied forcefully.

Severus leaned back in the booth. "I'll see what I can do when I have the time. You know there are *easier* ways to accomplish your goal."

Lucius knew exactly what Severus was implying. "I will do it this way. And if any harm comes to her, I will see that you are held responsible."

Severus arched an eyebrow. "And do you really think anyone would believe you? Need I remind you that you are not the most credible person in the wizarding world at the moment?"

Lucius leaned forward and said in a menacing voice, "If you do anything to discredit me, be warned that I have plenty of incriminating information on you also. Information you would most definitely not want the Ministry to have. Refine the potion, and you will be rewarded for your troubles." He threw enough Muggle money on the table to cover their drinks and stormed out of the establishment, eager to be home and back in his proper clothes.

More than a year had passed since the end of the war. Lucius was growing more and more disconcerted by the fact that Narcissa was still not pregnant. And that she would still not agree to see a Healer. He had even offered to take her to a Muggle physician, but she had declined. It was becoming more difficult for him to maintain his patience with her. He knew that she had to understand the gravity of the situation, and thus he could not imagine why she was willing to do nothing to resolve it. A part of him was beginning to wonder if she knew that she could not have more children and was trying to prolong the inevitable.

He wanted to have a family with her. It was what he had wanted since he was fourteen. She was his perfect mate. But if it did not happen soon, he would be forced to do something, something he did not want to contemplate.

Looking across the table, he noticed that she was shoving her food around her plate, but had barely eaten anything. "Narcissa, my love, is something wrong?"

"No, nothing at all," she replied sullenly.

"Are you sure? You're not ill, are you?"

"No. I'm fine." She set her fork down, indicating she was finished with her meal.

Placing his napkin next to his plate, a small smile spread across his face. Rising from his chair, he moved to kneel next to her and took her hand in his. "Darling, could you possibly be...?" He knew that if she were not ill, there was only one thing that would cause her to lose her appetite that badly.

"I could be, but I didn't want to get your hopes up." Even though she tried to fight back the smile, she did not succeed.

Pulling her into an embrace, he said, "I believe a call to a Healer is warranted. We should confirm this news as soon as possible."

"I believe you may be right."

Lucius paced nervously outside the room. Narcissa had asked for privacy during the examination, but he thought it was taking far too long. Finally, the door opened and the Healer slipped out. "Well?" Lucius demanded.

A broad grin spread across the Healer's face. "Congratulations. You are going to be a father."

Lucius could feel his anxiety level dropping. One very large hurdle had been passed. "Boy or girl?"

"It's a girl," the Healer announced simply.

"Are you sure?"

"Mr. Malfoy, I have been doing this for longer than you have been alive. Of course I am sure."

While he was pleased that Narcissa was pregnant, he couldn't hide his disappointment that he would be having a daughter rather than the son he so desperately wanted. "Thank you, Healer."

"My pleasure, Mr. Malfoy. I have given her a great deal of advice to make this as easy as possible for her. I'll be back next month to check on them, but I don't anticipate any complications. She is a very healthy woman."

Once he was left alone, Lucius pondered his options. Truthfully, he had but one. Unless this pregnancy was successful, he knew that the chances of her agreeing to try again were nearly non-existent.

Finally, he composed himself enough to enter the room. Slowly, he opened the door. "Darling?"

"Come in," came her reply. Once he was inside the room, she wrapped her arms around him in a smothering embrace. "It's wonderful news, isn't it?"

"The best news I have received in a long time," he replied, wrapping his arms around his beautiful wife.

A/N: Well, there should be one more chapter after this one. A great big thank you to nota for her loyal work as my beta. :D If the muses are willing, I should be able to have the final chapter to her tomorrow. It's a bowl game day, and J wants to sit at home and watch football. That is generally a great activity for me writing since it doesn't require much in the way of attention from me.

I'd also like to thank all those that have hung with me and left reviews. Your feedback is incredibly meaningful to me.

Sorry there was no poetry this time. I'm too beat to find something.

Future's Glory

Chapter 7 of 7

Narcissa has been the loyal wife of a Death Eater for twenty years. She has kept her opinion to herself, but everything is about to change.

A/N: Well, I would like to thank everyone for being so patient with me. This chapter has been far too long in coming, and I hope you will find it a satisfying end to this little tale. As always, many thanks to nota for her assistance as a beta and letting me know I was not crazy to think it needed a little something more at the end.

Chapter 7: Future's Glory

Narcissa felt miserable. She was bloated, achy and exhausted. This felt ten times worse than when she had been pregnant with Draco. Or perhaps it was just so long ago that she had forgotten how bad that had been.

Shifting yet again, she searched in vain for a less uncomfortable position, but nothing seemed to make her feel any better. The child was pushing against her insides, stretching out even though there was no more room to stretch. And to make matters worse, she still had two weeks to go.

Lucius was doting on her as he had never done before. She had to admit that it did feel wonderful. It had been years since he had been this attentive towards her. Well, not exactly true, he had been quite amorous while convincing her that they should have more children, but she knew that was because he had wanted something. Now, it felt truly wonderful to be treated like royalty, especially when she looked so miserable and felt even worse.

She wasn't aware that Lucius had returned home until he picked up her foot and began massaging it. "How are you feeling, dearest?"

Startled back to the present, she managed a small smile. "What? Oh, tired."

"Well, you're nearly there. Soon we will have a lovely child."

Unconsciously, she rubbed her swollen stomach. "How very true. But it will be worth it, won't it?" She had felt this same way while pregnant with Draco. Her initial euphoria at the idea of being a mother had changed to near panic as she watched her body transform as the child within her grew. Yet one look at his angelic face had convinced her it was worth every discomfort...the same emotions she was feeling this time.

"Very much so." His hand slid up her leg, gently caressing her.

She could see a gleam in his eye, but it was not entirely lust. "What are you thinking about, my love?"

"About how wonderful a woman you are and how lucky I am to be married to you. And about how positively breathtaking you are." He was now leaning over her, lowering his head for a kiss.

She playfully pushed at him. "Stop. I'm hideous."

"Darling, you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. The fact that you are carrying our child has not changed that. It only enhances your natural beauty, and the way I feel about you." He pushed a little harder and finally claimed his kiss.

His words and actions made her feel better about herself, and she eagerly returned his kiss. As their amorous encounter unfolded, she felt a familiar tightening in her abdomen. Trying to push him away, she said, "Lucius."

He did not cease his advances. "Narcissa," he whispered lustily.

She pushed more insistently. "No. Not now."

Confusion spread across his face. "What?"

"The baby. I think I'm in labor."

"Labor?"

"Yes, dear. Please, Lucius, you need to send for the Healer. Now."

At those words, he seemed to regain some of his senses. "Yes, the Healer." After hurriedly summoning one of the house-elves and sending it out to fetch Healer Jacobs, he helped Narcissa upstairs.

After lying in the bed a little while and being unable to achieve any measure of comfort, not to mention finding Lucius' pacing annoying, she said, "I think I'd like to get up and walk for a bit."

"Are you sure?" he asked nervously.

"Yes, it's perfectly safe, and it will help keep my mind off what's happening while we wait for the Healer."

"Where is he? Why has he not arrived yet?" Lucius asked anxiously.

"I'm sure he'll be along soon, Lucius. We still have time."

Nearly three hours later, Narcissa's water had broken, her contractions were much closer together and there was still no sign of the Healer. In fact, the house-elf had not returned either and an anxious Lucius sent a second. "When that blasted fool gets here, I'll give him a piece of my mind. His actions are negligent..."

"Darling, no. I'm sure there is a valid reason for him not being here yet." She really needed him to be calm as she was fighting her own panic and fear of having the baby without proper medical assistance.

Finally the Healer arrived. "Where have you been?" demanded Lucius.

"In a moment, Mr. Malfoy." The Healer turned all of his attention to Narcissa and cast a quick diagnostic spell over her. "Seems I arrived just in time. Are you ready, Narcissa?"

She nodded, relieved that he had arrived on time, if only barely. The desire to push was becoming overwhelming. As far as she was concerned, this could not be over soon enough.

After an exhausting hour of pushing, she was rewarded by the wail of their daughter.

"Congratulations. It's a beautiful, healthy baby girl," the Healer said as he swaddled the child and handed her to Narcissa. As she hugged the tightly wrapped bundle protectively against her body, tiny little lips began to suckle at her swollen breast. It had been so many years since she had felt this sensation, but it was all coming back now. Everything was going to be all right.

Lucius was at her side, a proud grin on his face as he looked at mother and child.

He could not help thinking back on those early pregnancies. This was what he had denied both of them in his blind pursuit of an heir. What had he done? Was this precious infant, a perfect mixture of himself and Cissy, really so bad? Even now, the resemblance to her parents was uncanny. She clearly had her mother's mouth and her eyes were not the typical blue of most infants, but the same grey as his.

He was sure now that they would have another son, maybe more than one. He would not give up on that dream; it was meant to be. But for now, as he watched the joy that shone in the face of the woman he really did love, this small piece of Narcissa and Lucius Malfoy would do.

"She is adorable, isn't she?"

"Perfect," replied Lucius as he reached down and gently brushed his daughter's cheek. "What shall we name her?"

This was something Narcissa had been contemplating for a long time. The two of them had agreed that if was a boy, he would provide the name, but if it were a girl, she would have the honor of naming their daughter. "Harmonia Grace. I think it is a fitting and hopeful name for the world we've brought her into.

It was not the name Lucius would have chosen, but he agreed it was an appropriate name for the times. He hoped that would prove true. "It's lovely, and I hope it will suit her well."

"I think it will." A bit reluctantly, she handed Harmonia over to Lucius, finally succumbing to exhaustion. As she drifted off to sleep, she felt suffused with happiness for the first time in more than a year, and maybe much longer than that. Once again, the Malfoys were a family.

Not quite two years after Harmonia's birth, Lucius and Narcissa were blessed with a second child, this one the son that he so longed for, Augustus Lucius. Lucius had purposely chosen a first name that was not in his family's history.

Narcissa thrived as a mother, and he pushed away the guilt he felt for having denied her this feeling for so long. They were both happy now and had started fresh in an age where Voldemort has been vanquished.

When Augustus was six months old, she started hinting that she would like another child. Lucius could not have been more pleased. He had realized that having a large family was not the burden he had once thought it would be. Even with his restriction on travel outside the country soon to be lifted, he realized that he much preferred staying at home. Harmonia was a very bright child, and he enjoyed spending time with her and even spoiling her a little. Augustus had the same spark that his sister did, and he could hardly wait to begin grooming his son as his heir.

He was taking a much different outlook to fatherhood this time than he had with Draco. The Malfoy name was something people would strive to marry into. Once again, his family would be great, reborn from the tattered ruins of a dark master.

