What about the Neighbours?

by DawnEB

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No, NIMBY isn't a House-elf

Chapter 1 of 1

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AN: Okay, I learned my lesson. People don't seem to read stories about Death Eaters without Severus and/or a (male) Malfoy. Since I still seem to be channelling DE's, and Severus isn't really one, that leaves me with a trip to Malfoy Manor.

I've been fiddling with this for a while, since I last visited Wiltshire. The mention of a Real Life character in a couple of other fics I've read in the last week spurred me on to finish it.

Narcissa Malfoy entered the Morning Room and looked out across the perfect lawns just in time to see someone departing through the gates at the end of the drive. Shortly after she had called for a pot of tea to be served, her husband came storming in. He threw himself into a chair with careless elegance despite his agitation, she noted with approval. Sensing the Master's mood, the house-elf managed to deliver the tea tray almost unnoticed, and Narcissa sat next to Lucius on the sofa and proceeded to prepare his cup just the way he liked it. She curbed her curiosity, knowing Lucius would explain everything in his own good time.

Sure enough, after taking a healthy swig from the delicate bone china, Lucius started talking. "Our neighbour came over this morning for a little chat," he said. "Something to do with a new 'attraction'."

Narcissa made a small sound at her enlightenment and reached across to smooth his long locks in a calming fashion. There was only one resident of any of the neighbouring properties that was likely to visit. The Malfoys had had a cordial yet distant relationship with his father, but the present incumbent was a far more outgoing and eccentric character who would pop in unannounced several times a year. This annoyed Lucius on several levels.

Whilst it was common knowledge that a small number of Muggleborn witches and wizards cropped up each year, wizard folk were not generally aware that there were also Muggleborn Squibs. These people had the random trait that produced magical ability in a non-magical community, but who had so little magic as to be overlooked by the organisations which kept an eye out for that sort of thing. These were the people who saw ghosts and strange things, had frequent flashes of déjà vu or had odd things happen around them, but would never be able to produce the magical strength or endurance to wield a wand.

Normally, this wasn't a problem for the magical community, as when these Squibs bred (if their superstitious neighbours didn't kill or sideline them before they got the chance), the magic was further diluted and came to nothing. However, when a Squib was born into the aristocracy, who have a concern for bloodline much like pure-bloods, it was entirely possible that these offspring were likely to be matched in subsequent generations.

In this way a family of what could be described as Muggle Squibs was created. They may occasionally throw out a full-blown witch or wizard, but otherwise the trace of magic was usually limited to the ability to see things most people couldn't, and to attract the attentions of certain magical creatures that would hang around the homes and individuals of the family. From this came all sorts of traditions regarding ghosts, ghouls, boggarts, banshee and the like. The Thynne family fell into this category.

In the Sixteenth Century John Thynne had bought the land of a monastery that had been dissolved because of, amongst other things, accusations of witchcraft. The fairly

dissolute lifestyle of the monks had made it easy for the locals to attach the increasing number of strange happenings to them, whereas the Malfoy family that had moved into the neighbouring estate a generation before seemed to be the epitome of respectability. Thynne built an impressive house on his new estate, and his family had lived in it ever since.

The dodgy status of the neighbours would not have worried the Malfoy family normally. They simply wouldn't have any need or desire to mingle with either Muggles or Squibs. However, an incident with Lucius' grandfather and Henry Thynne brought the attentions of both families together. Ludicrus Malfoy was walking his pair of tame Griffins along a road between the two estates when Henry hailed him and admired the animals. Assuming this to be some passing wizard, and proud of his beasts, he deigned to spend some time in conversation with the younger man.

Over the next few weeks, they met several times and passed a few polite words. When Ludicrus later discovered to his horror that he had been talking to the heir of the neighbouring Muggle estate, the household believed themselves lucky that the only casualties had been a crystal decanter set, three vases, a chair and an elderly, bad tempered and incontinent Crup that belonged to an equally elderly, bad tempered and incontinent aunt.

The damage was done, however. Henry Thynne and his family kept popping up whenever the Malfoys ventured beyond their boundaries, and it would cause too many questions from both sets of authorities if some inexplicable accident was to happen to a Peer of the Realm and his family. Even if they had decided to open the Family Estate to hordes of common Muggles for cash.

It was bad enough that the previous haven of the surrounding countryside now had hordes of Muggles swarming like emmets, but when young Lucius returned home for the summer following his first year at Hogwarts, it was to discover that the neighbours had combined their fascination with exotic beasts with the tourist venture and opened a 'Safari Park' with a number of wild non-magical animals like lions roaming free over the grounds. The Malfoys could only hope that this would result in a gory reduction to the Muggle influx, but had so far been disappointed.

Henry had been succeeded by his son, Alexander, as Marquess of Bath in 1992. It was Alexander who was not only expanding on the enterprise started by his father, but insisting on maintaining a 'friendly dialogue' with his magical neighbours. Truth be told, the 7th Marquess could probably walk through Diagon Alley without wizard folk spotting him as a Muggle, but, well, he just wasn't *Malfoy* people. And he wouldn't take the hint.

Finally, the unthinkable had happened. Their neighbour had rung at the gate first thing, full of excitement for his new venture. He seemed oblivious to the horror-struck look on Lucius' face as he outlined the new exhibits. He had even stuffed some complimentary tickets into Malfoy's unresponsive hand as he stood there, stunned by the revelation, cheerfully commenting, 'I'm sure your boy will love it!' before he left in a flurry of brightly coloured robes with a twinkle in his eye, both disconcertingly reminiscent of Dumbledore.

"So, what is he up to now?" Narcissa asked in soothing tones when she judged Lucius was calm enough to behave rationally. Her husband pulled some glossy leaflets out of his pocket, crumpled as if gripped tightly in an angry fist at some point, and threw them onto the tea tray. Smoothing them out and reading them, she saw that Longleat would be extending its menagerie to include herds of Abraxons, Granians, and Aethonans amongst the zebra, Hippocampi amongst the hippopotami, and erumpent among the rhinos. Coming soon would be a troop of Clabberts and a flock of Diricawl. The Apparition point looked like it would overlook the lawns. If the success of the Muggle side was anything to go by, there would soon be hordes of magical *hoi polloi* appearing just over the hedge and picnicking within sight of Malfoy Manor.

When Lucius started to mutter things like, 'If they want to see dangerous beasts close up, I'll send them all on a trip to the Forbidden Forest,' Narcissa was confident he'd calmed down enough not to destroy any of the furnishings. She left the Morning Room, surreptitiously taking the tickets with her. Draco would be home for the holidays soon, and he always caused havoc with the house-elves when he got bored. Maybe she could persuade Lucius that it would be a way of finding out if there was something that they could use to get the Ministry to close it down? Besides, she'd never seen a live Erumpent up close.

Lord Bath in one of the Longleat mazes

AN: There isn't a name given for Lucius' grandfather in canon as far as I can tell, so I have dubbed him Ludicrus (Sextus) simply becaus #Ip Pompeii was on TV the other night and it appealed to me:) I wonder if he had a house-elf called Lurkio? Ocops! *stamps firmly on nascent plot bunny*

Information about Longleat http://www.longleat.co.uk/ and the highly entertaining 7th Marquess of Bath (his early life in autobiography, some of his murals and poetry, etc.) http://www.lordbath.co.uk/ (yes he's real, see the picture above).

Thanks, hugs and kisses once again to LucyS for the beta work, and I'll think about your ideas for a short sequel/epilogue.