

She Leaves a Trail of Honey to Show Me Where She's Been

by WonderfulChild

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Warning: A bit of violence and a few naughty words herein.

Bella knew her plan had worked when Evan Rosier came scampering out from the atrium to have a hushed and flustered conversation with Severus and Rodolphus.

She pretended she hadn't noticed and continued sipping her after-dinner coffee, nodding absently at Dame Malfoy's incessant nattering about her darling boy Lucius's displays of wandless magic before he was out of nappies and trading a look of shared irritation with Narcissa while the old bat was adding sugar to her cup.

Bella thought that Narcissa ought to do away with her hag of a mother-in-law before the baby came. She was already intolerable now always instructing Cissy on how best to feed Lucius, clothe Lucius, coddle Lucius as if he were five instead of twenty-five and Bella could only imagine how she would be with a grandchild.

Good thing Rodolphus's mother was dead already no harping mother-in-law to do away with.

Out of the corner of her eye, Bella saw Rodolphus and Severus rise from their chairs and disappear into the atrium.

"Excuse me, Madam Malfoy," Bella said, setting aside her empty cup. "I want to see if Rodolphus will take me for a stroll in the gardens."

Dame Malfoy gave Bella a fake smile, which clearly said that she could care less where Bella was going. She heard from Mimsy Bulstrode that Olivia Parkinson told her that Dame Malfoy didn't care for Bella's modern ways. And she shouldn't especially since Bella planned to tell Cissy to put a nice, undetectable poison in the hag's tea the first chance she got.

Bella drifted towards the atrium, pausing to speak to her Auntie Walburga here, and Roger Nott there, and then the doors of the atrium were closing behind her, and the party was but a distant white noise against Rabastan's wailing.

Rabastan was on his knees, covered in blood and sobbing into Rodolphus's robes; Severus and Evan were behind the bamboo conducting a hushed and furious conversation about body disposal; the half-blood Rodolphus had been fucking was in the tulips, dead.

"What's happened here?" Bella said, stepping delicately through Dame Malfoy's ridiculously overgrown foliage; large ferns tickled her ankles, wild roses snagged at her robes, and a particularly vicious orchid snapped at her as she passed.

"What did you do?" Rodolphus hissed at her. He was furious; she could see it in the set of his jaw and the slight ticking of the vein in his forehead. Rabastan tightened his grip on Rodolphus's robes and whimpered something that sounded suspiciously like "What's wrong with me?" but it was so muffled that Bella couldn't be sure.

"Me?" Bella asked. She stepped over the dead woman's ankles and settled in an ostentatiously large wicker chair. "Whatever are you talking about?"

"This," Rodolphus snarled, gesturing at the dead woman. Bella glanced at it briefly; why Rodolphus had had anything to do with that was beyond her.

"What about her?"

"Don't play innocent, Bella. Rabastan told me everything."

"Did he?" She shrugged. "I told you to leave her."

Rodolphus flushed. "I did leave her. Two weeks ago."

"Oh, dear me." Bella yawned. "How unfortunate."

Rodolphus stared at her in astonishment; Bella noticed a bit of lint on her robes and picked it off delicately.

"Evan, come take Rabastan," Rodolphus said at last. Evan came scampering through the ferns, and Severus followed, his expression simultaneously shuttered and annoyed. Severus looked halfway decent tonight; he had actually washed his hair. "Get him a drink, but don't let him near Lucius. He'll have kittens if he finds out what happened in here."

"What about that?" Severus asked, gesturing at the dead woman.

"Leave it for now," Rodolphus replied.

Rodolphus and Evan had a time prying Rabastan from his robes, but when he finally came away, shuddering and whimpering, he only willingly went with the others because Rodolphus promised to follow soon after.

With the others gone, the atrium fell silent except for the sound of something slithering in the underbrush; Bella wondered if it was Dame Malfoy's Devil's Snare that everyone was always on about.

Rodolphus slumped on the wicker ottoman in front of her and dropped his face into his hands. He sighed heavily.

"Rabastan isn't a toy," he said wearily.

"Of course not, darling," she murmured.

Rodolphus dropped his hands and looked at her imploringly. "Then why do you use him like one?"

Bella smiled gently and slid forward in the chair until their knees touched. She ran her fingers through his hair and studied him. He looked so very weary. She knew he wasn't sleeping well and had refused to ask Severus to brew him a nice Sleeping Potion. And, of course, he and Lucius were spending hours and hours at the Ministry, blackmailing and bribing and doing all they could to discredit Andromeda in the eyes of the Wizengamot. That blood traitor deserved everything she got, and there was no reason for Rabastan or Amycus or any of the others to go to Azkaban for it.

"You shouldn't have done it, love," Bella continued, gesturing at the dead woman in the tulips. "She was a filthy, Muggle-loving half-blood. I can't even believe you would consider touching something like that."

"I don't give a damn about her, Bella," he snapped and knocked her hand away. "I'm not even talking about her. I'm talking about Rabastan. You can't use him as your personal tool for revenge. You know he is just barely able to control his urges as it is, and he's a mess when he loses it."

"Then perhaps next time you'll have second thoughts about cheating on me."

Rodolphus narrowed his eyes. "Are you holding me hostage with my brother? Because, Bella, you aren't the only one who can cast the Cruciatus."

"I know that. I taught you how to use it," she snapped. She studied him for a moment. "Tell me. What possessed you?"

Rodolphus dropped his eyes again; Bella narrowed hers. He was being very evasive. One of the lovely things about the man was that he was willing to look her in the eye, at all times, for all reasons. It was as endearing as it was infuriating, which was more than she could say about anyone else who tried it. But now he was looking at his hands, tracing his lifeline with one of his thumbs, allowing his hair to fall in his face.

"I miss you," he said in a small voice.

Bella laughed. "You miss me? Rodolphus, you sleep beside me every night."

"I need more, Bella," he told her.

"More?" she asked, wondering where he going with this. "More what?"

"More of you. I don't want to... I don't want to share you any more, not even *with*him."

Bella stared at him, completely taken aback that he would dare say something like that to her. She loved him a great deal, a fact that had come as quite a shock to her one rainy Saturday morning a month into their marriage. He had been fucking her to orgasm, and she had looked up into his face, all flushed and bewitched and enraptured, and known, just known, that she loved him, loved him until her heart swelled to the point of bursting, loved Rodolphus, perhaps, as much as she loved *him*. But even so, there were certain things she would not tolerate and that kind of demand was one of them.

Time to put a stop to this, now.

Bella slid closer, pushing one knee between his legs, and took his face in her hands. "Rodolphus, look at me."

He raised his dark eyes to hers; they were full of fear and longing, and she felt a bit bad for how besotted he was.

"I love you, Rodolphus," she said and kissed him gently, chastely, breathing in the smell of him, the subtle scents of leather and sandalwood mingling with the overpowering scent of Dame Malfoy's lushly blooming roses.

"And I love him," she said and leaned in to kiss him a second time, hungry for the taste of him on her tongue, but he drew back, his eyes full of pain.

"Bella," he whispered beseechingly.

"Shhh," she said and pulled him close, kissing him, nudging his mouth open with her tongue, pushing her knee against his groin. Rodolphus leaned in eagerly, taking her

hips in his hand and pulling her closer. When she pulled away this time, he leaned towards her, his lips hovering mere centimeters from her own. "There's enough room for both of you, Rodolphus," she whispered and kissed him again, catching his lower lip between her teeth, nibbling and sucking and tasting.

He groaned and leaned in, and when she knew he was lost in the kiss, she bit.

Hard.

The coppery flavor of blood flooded her mouth just before Rodolphus shoved her away and stumbled back into the ferns.

"The fuck, Bella?" he growled as he wiped the blood off of his chin.

Bella came to her feet, and when he looked at her again, his eyes full of rage, she had her wand pressed into the soft spot under his chin.

"I can love you both, Rodolphus, and I will," she snarled. "And if you ever demand something like this again, you'll join your little whore in the tulips."

They stared at one another silently for a moment.

"Are we clear, love?" she asked him.

"Perfectly," he said.

"Good." Bella lowered her wand. "Now clean that up. I'd hate for our in-laws to think that we are inconsiderate guests."

Lifting the hem of her robes with one hand, she swept out of the atrium

The party had continued on without her, just as stiff and boring and pretentious as it had been when she left. Roger Nott, Augustus Rookwood, and a few others were all huddled together talking in hushed voices about things that were deeply important but no doubt deeply boring. Bernard Bulstrode was telling a tasteless joke to Olivia Parkinson, who was listening to his story with a pinched look, rubbing her pregnant stomach protectively. Lucius was eyeing Severus, Evan and Rabastan suspiciously while he only half listened to her father telling some ridiculous story about trapping a boggart in her mum's knicker drawer. Her father was swaying on his feet and clearly in his cups again, so Bella swept by and retrieved the glass of brandy from his hand, to much protesting and swearing.

When she at last returned to the company of Dame Malfoy and her dear baby sister, the old bat was in the middle of explaining how best to raise a Malfoy son.

"Rodolphus wouldn't take you for a stroll, my dear?" Dame Malfoy asked, giving Bella a saccharine and insincere smile.

"No. I'm afraid he is too busy admiring your tulips," Bella replied, refreshing her cup.

And that set the old bat off, nattering on about fertilizer potions and the proper warming charms for the tulips. Bella nodded in all the right places and sipped her tea, smiling sympathetically at her sister's look of longsuffering.

No, she would take care of Dame Malfoy herself. Cissy was preggers, and a lot of those undetectable poisons were dangerous for would-be mums to handle. It could be a gift for the new baby.

And not just an undetectable poison, either, Bella decided, as the wretched woman launched in to a lecture on the proper care of African Snapping Orchids, it would have to be painful, too.

Painful and deadly.

Author's Notes: 1. Polargirl issued the prompt "You said you'd keep me honest" for her Wednesday Challenge. This was the plot bunny that came out of it.

2. This fic fits into the "Walk Through the Fire" timeline. However, it does stand alone.

3. Thanks to my beta Sophi, who helps me spell Wizengamot.

4. The title comes from the song "Reptile" by Nine Inch Nails.