

Shades of Gray

by *tatiana*

A quick glimpse into the relationship between Narcissa and Bellatrix.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: Not beta'd. Therefore, all mistakes -- grammatical and otherwise -- I take full responsibility for. Comments and criticism always welcome.

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The two girls sat in the grass beneath the drooping branches of the willow tree, whispering to one another. The silence of the hazy afternoon was interrupted only by their occasional bouts of giggles.

To look at them, you would never know that they were sisters. Bellatrix was older, and at seventeen her body had already taken the shape of a woman's. She reveled in the newfound power of her sexuality; it was a power that had nothing to do with her magical abilities, but she used it to her advantage nonetheless. Her younger sister was the exact opposite. At fifteen, Narcissa still held the waiflike figure she had been cursed with since childhood. Her long platinum hair and alabaster skin a stark contrast beside her darker sister.

Narcissa envied Bellatrix's confidence but didn't realize that in turn, Bella envied Narcissa for her quiet grace. The two sisters complimented one another well and were the best of friends.

"Cissa," Bellatrix whispered, lying down so that her head was in her sister's lap, "do you fancy that Malfoy boy?"

Narcissa absentmindedly ran her fingers through Bella's silky strands, "You mean that arrogant blonde boy? The one who swaggers about with that ~~that~~ *readful* cane?"

Bella giggled at the accurate description of Lucius.

"He's just awful, really," Narcissa continued, "rather like a peacock. And he's always bragging about what a fine Quidditch player he is and how he has the *best* broom that money can buy."

The delicate blonde deepened her voice and mimicked his lazy drawl, "*My father bought the entire house team new brooms.*" She clucked her tongue disapprovingly and shook her head.

Bella glanced up and saw a faint smile on Narcissa's face despite her pitiful attempt to show contempt for the boy.

She sat up and cackled triumphantly, "I knew it! You *do* fancy him!"

Narcissa's face flushed as she suppressed a smile and reached out to swat her sister, who was doubled over with laughter.

"Well, at least I'm not as bad as you are, sending ten owls a day to that Lestrangle boy," she retorted.

Bella's laughter subsided, "But that's different. I've never played coy with Rodolphus. He knows that he is to marry me next summer because I told him so."

Narcissa looked astonished, "You did not tell him that!"

Bella nodded, "Of course I did. Although I suppose he didn't really have any say in the matter, poor boy looked a bit bewildered actually. Oh, Cissa," she sighed, "Things are going to change over the next few years and you have to find your happiness now. Take your rightful place and you shall be rewarded tenfold."

Narcissa reached out and took Bella's left hand, turning it palm up in her own hand. She slowly pushed the sleeve of her sister's robe back and Bella watched her younger sister as she curiously ran a finger over the mark.

Lucius Malfoy may have been a bit of a prat at times, but at nineteen, he was already well connected within pureblood society *and* the Ministry. He was a handsome young man, probably too much so for his own ego, but Bella happened to know that he was fond of her younger sister and had asked after Cissa on several occasions. He came from one of the oldest pureblood families and they would make a good match in life and love. Narcissa was still young but she exuded a cool confidence that belied her age and she presented herself in the refined fashion that was expected of a society witch.

"Did it hurt?" Narcissa barely whispered, eyes transfixed on the Dark Mark that her sister hid beneath her sleeve.

Bella reached out and tilted Narcissa's chin up so that their eyes met. "Yes, very much so. But I have made my choice and so has Rodolphus. I know of one other that has made his choice as well." It was obvious she meant Lucius.

Cissa looked back down at her sister's arm and raised it to place a gentle kiss on the Mark, hating the thought of anything causing her Bella harm.

Bella smiled at the gesture and leaned forward, pressing her own lips to Narcissa's before hugging her fiercely.

"I love you the most and I will always protect you, no matter what."

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Bellatrix flung the heavy hood of her cloak back to reveal her face, etched with rage. She turned around angrily, "YOU WILL NOT DO THIS, NARCISSA!"

Narcissa stood firm, the only person who did not cower beneath Bella's wrath. "I have made my choice," she said coolly, "and neither you, nor Lucius, will stop me."

Bella looked wildly at her brother-in-law, who was pulling on his own dark robes, and asked in disbelief, "Are you going to allow this, Lucius?"

Lucius adjusted his collar and smoothed his long blonde hair down in an annoyingly calm fashion before responding, "We shall see what happens once we arrive."

Bella narrowed her eyes at them both and hissed, "Fine, have it your way," before pulling her hood back on. She turned to leave and was stopped by a hand on her arm.

"Wait-" Narcissa faltered, "I -- I swore to you that I would always protect you, no matter what, and if that means taking the Mark and fighting beside you, then that is exactly what I shall do."

Bella's anger ebbed momentarily as she looked at her sister intently, "Must I tell you again, that have gained the Dark Lord's favor. He recognizes *my* loyalty above all else and I will not allow this to happen. Do you understand? Draco needs you. I need you."

Narcissa flinched at the mention of her young son and glared at her sister.

"Cissa, please...if this is truly what you wish, then I will take you to our Lord and you may take the Mark. But not tonight. *Please...*not tonight." Bella pleaded, knowing what she and Lucius were facing and not wanting Narcissa to be a part of it.

Narcissa reluctantly acquiesced to her sister's wishes and it was well past four in the morning when the wards of the Manor alerted her to Bella and Lucius's return. She slipped on her dressing gown and rushed down the back stairwell to meet them, stopping cold when she realized that he was alone.

Lucius slipped the dark hood back and looked up at his wife, "Narcissa, something went terribly wrong..."

That was all she heard before she went numb. The world around her became nothing more than a blur of shapes and colors. With one swift movement, Lucius was there. His arms went around her, catching her as she collapsed and clutched the front of his robes, sobbing.

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It was several months before the Aurors finally caught up with Bellatrix and Rodolphus. Their faces were splashed across the front page of the Daily Prophet and their trials were swift and judgement harsh. There was never any doubt as to her sister's fate - even with all of her husband's connections within the Ministry. Bellatrix destroyed any chance at freedom as she proudly declared her loyalty to the Dark Lord before the entire courtroom and the press.

Narcissa sat in the back and watched helplessly as her beautiful Bella was taken away.

"I loved you most of all."