

In the Time of the Warlock

by Fairfield

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The story begins after OotP, but the Death Eaters wore disguises and escaped unrecognized from their raid on the Ministry.

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Chapter one summary: 'The Wand Also Rises.'

Chance Encounters and Forbidden Fruit

Chapter 1 of 9

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Prologue:

"Are you ready?" asked the elder priest.

"Place the materials before us," replied the artisans.

In the month that would be known as October, at the harvest festival that would be known as Halloween, from a group of priests that would be known as Druids, a band of heretics had assembled.

"There is too much magic in the world."

"There is not enough reason. We are stumbling. We are blind."

They poured then sealed magic between the layers of silicate and opal. The world changed as they worked. The stars became less bright; the woods became less dark. The renegade Druids managed to trap half the world's magic within the jewel before exhaustion overcame them. They hid the jewel under a layer of impenetrable rationality...rationality they were certain would not be comprehensible for thousands of years.

"We are finished."

"The magic is safe until the world is ready for it."

The sentry cried out. The mob overwhelmed the small group of heretics.

"We were too late," said a rugged warrior with blood on his weapon.

The sun dawned on a different world...a world losing its charm and becoming hard and sharp.

Chapter 1: Chance Encounters and Forbidden Fruit

The sun shone, the birds chirped, the bees buzzed, and the breeze ruffled the hair of a wizard who found the world charming. He was alive and well and free. He was drinking coffee at an outdoor table in a shopping square. Not everyone was so lucky.

An anxious young man, whom the wizard recognized as a recent Death Eater recruit, rapidly approached and blurted out, "A safe-house was raided last night. We think someone's a traitor."

The wizard sipped his coffee. "Do pull up a chair. Let me buy you a coffee. It would calm your nerves."

The anxious young Death Eater refused the offer. "I don't have time for sitting ... or coffee. That raid on our house last night ... luckily, only an old caretaker was there ... no documents ... but it's a warning. They're tracking us, closing in on us. There must be a leak. I'm telling you this because some people in the group are becoming suspicious of you, saying you don't believe in the cause anymore."

The elegant wizard stirred his coffee. "I believe in the cause as much as anyone. I have merely lost my appetite for torturing the helpless. It's counterproductive. We need something better, something that shows people our cause is good for them."

The anxious young man remained agitated. "I'm telling you this for your own good. I believe in you, but others are becoming suspicious. You shouldn't set yourself apart from the rest of us. I have to run, but keep what I said in mind."

The anxious young man strode away.

The elegant wizard was thinking the times were dangerous and loyalties were strained when there was another interruption. It was not the anxious young man.

"Oh, dear," said the woman, "I'm sorry."

Her packages had fallen on the table hard enough to knock his cup out of its saucer. Before the coffee reached his robe, however, he had grabbed his chair and stood to avoid the spill. If the woman had been less flustered, she would have been surprised by his lightning reaction.

"Are you okay?" he asked, steadying her with a hand on her upper arm.

"I'm ... I'm just a bit tired." 'He didn't have to take away his hand that fast,' she thought. 'Oh, my gods, am I that desperate for a touch?'

"May I offer you a chair?" he said. After she had taken his chair and he had fetched another, he continued, "Not to be inquisitive, but you have quite a number of packages."

"I'm shopping for my daughter. She's ... she's visiting her father." She looked at his overturned cup. "Let me buy you another cup of coffee." When he didn't protest, she said, "Are you shopping, or are you enjoying the nice summer day?"

"Both, actually. A shop is preparing my order. And you?"

"I'm getting my daughter's school supplies."

"Isn't it rather early to shop for school? Summer has just begun."

"My daughter likes to get an early start." She gave him her fuller attention. "You look ... professorial. Can I ask you a question?"

"I do not teach at Hogwarts, if that's what you were going to ask, but I know several faculty members." She was telling him about her daughter when he said, "Yes, I've heard of her. I've heard she's quite the scholar."

"We're both very proud of her although we have no idea what she's doing."

At that she paused. She had just confessed that she was non-magical. She had heard enough from her daughter to know that some of the magic world looked down on her.

He noticed her hesitation. "Even parents who went to Hogwarts have no idea what their kids are doing. But they greatly fear their kids are doing the same things they did."

"That would make an interesting study," she said, "family traits."

"Yes," he said, perking up at her intellectual curiosity. "Like daughter, like mother?" he wondered.

Feeling encouraged, she continued, "There're the obvious things like academics and athletics, but I wonder if it's possible to categorize mischief?"

"Don't some of your churches do that?" he asked.

"Yes, there's deadly and venal, and there're different types." She paused. "But that's sin. Mischief might be different from sin."

"It may be unexplored territory," he replied.

"Yes," she said, "just waiting for us to map it." She paused for thought. "Of course," she added, "we'd have to thoroughly explore mischief...firsthand...in all its varieties."

"Anything less would be unprofessional," he agreed.

She was looking around the square. "There're lots of stores here, more than just school supplies."

"Have you been in them?" he asked.

"No, when I was here with my daughter, it took all day to shop for school. Kids are such a distraction." There was another pause. "But it's a distraction I miss," she added.

"Do any of the stores interest you?" he asked.

She looked at her pile of packages.

"You don't have to carry them around. You can leave them at the shop that's preparing my order. It'll be a stack of packages next to the stack they're preparing for me."

She felt a twinge when she saw her parcels placed next to his. 'I'm hopeless,' she thought. 'I can't be responding to the smallest sign of being a pair.' "Get a grip, girl," she told herself.

She looked around the shop: bottles, boxes, scales, glassware, and cauldrons.

"Is this Potions?" she asked.

"The school supplies are in the front. I believe this first section is for the first and second years."

"Nothing really dangerous here, I suppose," she said. "Quite a bit of equipment, though. What do they do, learn the basics and lab procedures the first two years?"

"That's my understanding."

"This middle section must be for third through fifth years, to prepare them for their OWLs?"

"That seems correct," he said, surprised by her quick grasp of the arrangement. "Ah, now I remember, your profession would require knowing a lot of ... of"

"Chemistry, they call it," she said. "I had to pass the exams, but I don't use it or remember much of it."

"A little chemistry is a good thing," he said.

'He can't be flirting,' she thought, thoroughly caught by the attention he was paying her. 'No, he's not flirting, I'm pathetic.'

"Did any store catch your eye?" he asked.

"I've only seen the textbook section of your bookstore," she said.

"The textbook section is very well organized," he replied. "But beyond it you probably noticed a miscellany of piled books...promising undiscovered treasures beneath the heaps."

She smiled. "You make it sound exciting." As they crossed the street, she asked, "What do you wizards read? 'Le Morte de Merlin'? 'The Wand Also Rises'?"

She was about to apologize when he said, "The current best seller is 'Slytherins Wake.'"

'How did he say that with a straight face?' she wondered. 'Well, one good turn deserves another.'

"I'm confused by the title," she said. "Is it about the voyages of Captain Parselhorn or a call to action by a descendent of Salazar?"

As they entered the bookstore, she enjoyed his effort to keep a straight face.

Once inside the store, she looked at the volumes and declared, "I've been looking at my daughter's book on the history of her school. But it reads like the official version."

He could understand that. "You would like some versions more colorful, more penetrating...perhaps a collection of wild, irresponsible stories? There are some good ones."

He took her to a corner on the upper level, pulled out the standard text, recommended three others, and said, "I'll let you browse without hovering over you. I'm going to check for some recent arrivals."

'Wow, I can't believe some of these moving pictures,' she thought. 'Colorful, indeed. That's why he let me browse in private.'

She paid for the books and watched the clerk wrap them in plain brown paper. 'Appropriate,' she thought. She noticed he was directly behind her with his choice. He appeared to have selected a dirty cardboard box full of old books and manuscripts, and he appeared to be happy about it.

On their way back to the Potions shop, she stopped to look at the window display of a clothing store. "Is this what the well-dressed witch wears?"

"These are the more fashionable items...evening gowns."

'Care to see what an unfashionable non-witch doesn't wear in the evening?' she thought. 'Down, girl,' she thought.

"Do you have time for another tea ... or coffee?" she asked.

He did. As they relaxed, he described some of his mishaps when he was taking Potions in school. That let her reminisce about her courses and student life in London. She had hated Calculus. He tried avoiding his best subjects, Dark Arts and Arithmancy, but he was only partially successful.

"Not to be inquisitive, but what in the world is in that dirty old box?" she asked.

"It's from the Hadley estate. It's been in the bookstore basement for years. I just discovered it."

"Hadley?"

He squared his shoulders and looked her in the eye. "I have a confession to make. I've always liked Arithmancy. Hadley was the Hogwarts Arithmancy instructor for most of the nineteenth century. The curriculum then was probably stronger than it is now."

She nodded. "I suppose the box contains his textbooks and manuscripts."

"Yes," he said happily.

'Uh-oh,' she thought. 'I know the type. I'll never be able to compete against a manuscript full of equations. Tough luck, girl.'

"But enough about a dirty old box," he said, "you were telling me about your student days and catching London buses in the rain."

They were talking about the differences in sports when she asked him about kites.

"Kites?" he said.

"Kites," she said. "I haven't flown a kite in a long time. I used to enjoy it."

He looked puzzled.

"They're a piece of paper stretched across sticks ... on the end of a string ... the wind lets them fly in the air."

"Ah, levitation by natural forces," he said.

"Yes. I can show you. It's relaxing ... if the kite cooperates." There was another pause. "But I'm not free until this Saturday," she said.

"I have an engagement that evening, but my morning and afternoon are free if you would like to meet me then."

"Yes, very much," she said. "I'll bring some kites."

"Shall we meet here at ten, Mrs. Granger?"

"That's good. And please, call me 'Natalie.'"

"Then you must call me 'Lucius.'"

He was thinking the times were dangerous and loyalties were strained as they gathered their packages and departed.

While our lovely lady of the bookstore was discovering the flowering of colorful alternative history, a more literal scene blossomed a few miles away.

"I didn't order any flowers."

"I brought them to brighten up your dungeon, Severus. There's no cost. You've been purchasing supplies from my greenhouse for three years." She paused. "You know I added two sections for you...for your research and those potions they only prepare at school. And now you snap at me when I try to brighten up your life. That's ungrateful."

"Okay," he said. "Put the flowers wherever you like...wherever you think they will do the most brightening."

"And I've always brought you the best. I think your research and schoolwork are important."

"I'm not ungrateful, Mrs. Nott."

"Mrs. Nott? I've always called you 'Severus.' You could show a little humanity every once in a while. It wouldn't kill you ... no, maybe it would."

"Put the flowers where they'll be the brightest, Draupadi. I regret having offended you. Can you stay for tea? If you don't mind the lack of humanity?"

"I can stay. I don't mind. Will you show me the new plants the school has?"

As Severus and Draupadi entered the school greenhouses for a restful tour, Lucius entered his own house to rest from the tour of the shopping square.

Once home, Lucius headed straight for the shower to rinse off the day's dust.

Narcissa stood in the shower-room doorway. "Did you get everything you needed?"

"No."

"But now you'll have to go back. When will the stuff be in?"

"Saturday."

"Saturday. The place will be packed with people. Couldn't they have it for you earlier? You're a valuable customer."

"No."

"Mrs. Parkinson wants you to come over Sunday afternoon instead of Saturday night."

"Okay."

"She wants you to help Pansy with Arithmancy, too."

"Okay."

"Her husband's been on the continent for more than six months."

"I know."

"She needs your help with the accounts."

"I know."

"You're a saint, darling."

"Not bloody likely."

After he was out of the shower and into his bathrobe, Lucius placed several cardboard boxes on his desk.

"You're going to do the orchard accounts?" asked Narcissa. "They're a mess. You're going to tackle them after wrangling with shopkeepers all day?"

"They grow great apples. They grow great pears," he said. "Usually, they make us a lot of money, but they can't keep books worth a damn."

Lucius had finally convinced each orchard manager to keep all the receipts and records in one box. He went through the boxes several times a year to organize them. He wouldn't know if this year was a profit or loss until the season was over. Nevertheless, the Malfoys had always been landowners. A subtle use of magic kept them ahead of their competitors. Narcissa helped with their investments in retail and lending, but she drew the line at looking at the agricultural accounts.

While Lucius was having a difficult time with the grim apple-and-pear accounts, Severus was having a difficult time on account of a ripening peach at a grim old place.

"Professor, what did you do to your hair ... and your clothes?"

"I hardly think my attire is any concern of yours, Miss Granger."

"But you ... I mean, they ... they're beautiful."

"I shall add your assessment to my list of fond memories, Miss Granger."

"You needn't be sarcastic, sir, I was being friendly and paying you a compliment."

"Wow, you smell good, too," she blurted out and then blushed.

"Miss Granger, any more impertinence and I shall inform Molly Weasley."

"You needn't take such drastic action, sir. Just be mean and cruel to an admirer and I shall leave, sir," she said, turning and walking out of the room.

Severus spoke softly. "Miss Granger."

She turned.

"I'm sorry for my rude remarks. You caught me by surprise. I've cultivated being unapproachable for too long."

"You caught me by surprise, sir. A student is not supposed to tell a professor he is handsome. Are you going to tell Mrs. Weasley?"

"Molly ... Mrs. Weasley and I are not on such good terms," replied Severus. "Allow me to accept your spontaneous outburst, thank you, and forget that it happened."

'Good advice,' thought Severus, 'but I don't want to forget that it happened.'

There was a simultaneous case of unrequited admiration at the Malfoy Manor.

'Well,' thought Narcissa, 'I took a bath, put on black silk lingerie and a classy, maroon bathrobe, but he's looking at the accounts. I'll have to curl up with a good book.'

Lucius, thinking about the afternoon's conversation and wondering what a kite was, went through the orchard accounts with alacrity. He considered his domestic possibilities. He had a clear image of his wife in the next room. She would be reading on the sofa with one foot on the back of the sofa and the other on the floor. From the right angle, it would be a most enticing view. He had not become indifferent. Instead, his having her had made her charms more alluring.

Lucius made a small movement with his wand. This would have to be done carefully. The bottom half of Narcissa's robe slid off her leg and onto the floor, moving across her inner thigh as it fell. She covered herself with it again. A little later, the robe repeated the caress of her inner thigh. Narcissa fidgeted on the sofa as her garments became tight on her intimate places. She felt flushed but attributed it to the excellent book she was reading.

He reached around her and cupped her small, but perfect breasts in his hands. She could feel his hot, passionate breath on the back of her elegant neck. His rod of manhood pressed into her curvaceous, but firm globes. She could feel his heart pound out masculine desire.

'Some people really know how to write. How do they think of this stuff?' she thought. 'But I shouldn't be feeling this aroused. We're on page fifty, and they'll have sex, as usual, one hundred pages from now. That will leave him fifty pages to get married, to let his wife save him from his rash decisions, and to decide to worship her forever...another well-constructed tale by my favorite novelist, Judith Amanda Crankheart.'

She covered herself again with the bath robe that persisted in sliding across sensitive skin. A classic garment had gotten into a classic twist. When she loosened it, the blood rushed back, rebounded to her head, and the words on the page leaped out at her.

"I will make you mine, Hertia," declared Severson. "Only the bravest, most determined of suitors would face the barriers before me. Crawling over hot sand is nothing compared to what I shall have to endure, but in the end I will seduce you and have you." His smile was slow, satisfied, and wicked in the moonlight.

'What a beautiful relationship,' thought Narcissa, although she had had no such experiences. She couldn't imagine Lucius crawling, let alone over hot sand.

'And now for the real fire,' thought Lucius. The physical caresses were the warm-up. He waved his wand. In the other room, Narcissa remembered her husband's endearments and attention and affection. She remembered how proud he was of her when they were in public. 'He likes me better now than when I was a young girl,' she realized. She reconsidered his crawling over hot sand. There was no reason for her husband to work hard to get her. 'It's better this way,' she thought, 'it's a sign of long-term compatibility.' She remembered that he had had her thousands of times and he still wanted her. Her inner core warmed. She remembered how he was both tender and demanding, how pleasant it was to spread her legs and welcome him in.

'Why hasn't the last thousand years produced some literature on this?' he wondered as he continued his wand work. He had searched bookstores and private collections in vain. Thinking it too controversial to write down, he had tried to tap an oral tradition. He had not been successful.

"Stimulate a witch?" his relatives and acquaintances replied in a tone of voice that said your wife produced an heir and mistresses didn't need it. The more feeble-minded among them asked about his natural endowments.

He had joked his way out of the awkward scenes by reminding them who he had married. They forgot his social blunder as their thoughts turned to stimulating Narcissa.

His thoughts returned to the present...and her thoughts.

'What's it like having me?' she wondered. 'I suppose I feel warm and soft. I certainly get slick enough. I hope he likes how easily he slides in. How does it feel mounting me, coming to rest on the back of my thighs and my round ass? He usually does it slowly as if he's savoring it...savoring it because a mature woman is opening for him and letting him in. I know I'm moaning. He wants me and it's exciting and it feels good and I can't help it. I think he likes hearing me.'

'What's his favorite way? He usually holds my hands beside my head, puts my legs in the air, and tells me I'm pretty. It never looked pretty to me. It's all furry and convoluted. It's the opposite of the smooth silk that was covering it a minute ago. It feels so personal to present the thing to him. Maybe it's pretty if you're aroused. It's so sweet he gets aroused by me. Wish he'd finish the orchard accounts.'

'It's nice right after he enters me. His stroking me is so intimate. He's kissing me and telling me I'm his sweetheart. Later is okay, too, but the only thing I can think about is his sex inside me. Gods, my husband drives me wild. Just thinking about it is driving me crazy. When he gets me excited I move too much. He has trouble staying in. But I can't control myself anymore. At the end he holds me, rides me, and takes me. All I can do is yell and thrash. All I can feel is his taking me. I can't get enough. Enough with the orchards already.'

In the adjoining room, Lucius continued with the subtle wand movements. There was the tired, worn-out cliché of 'moist warmth,' but it didn't seem to be a tired, worn-out cliché when he was in it. 'Luscious curves' was another one. His wand described his wife's. There was a moan from the adjoining room that reminded him what he was about, and he returned to more subtle wand movements. Magic is in the mind, and he had projected a mental image of an aroused wife: hands fondling, hips rotating, and thighs squeezing. He set the orchard accounts aside to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

He walked to the next room, calling out to give his wife a chance to compose herself. "Narcissa, are you in here, love?" As he entered, his wife grabbed him and pulled him down on top of her. One of her hands pulled her panties aside, and the other grabbed his cock and stuck it in her. She pulled him inside her, wrapped her legs around him, pressed against him, and rotated her hips. She went wild. She came. She lay smiling at him.

'Do it, do it,' she thought. 'Yes, make me get on my hands and knees. Make me present myself...like a bitch in heat. Have some Narcissa Black. You keep telling me I'm beautiful...the most beautiful woman you know. Now's your chance to have me...all those curves and warmth...all that wet fur under the silk. Do you want it? Yes, grab me and put it in me. Put it in me. Yes, all the way in. Slam it into me, love. Want to have me? Want to hold me and slam into me? Harder, love. Listen to me stop and moan. Gods, you have me. Harder. I'm yours. I'm yours, love.'

Lucius held his loving lady as she did the nicest things.

When she caught her breath, she said, "Oh, I want you so much, honey." She turned, grabbed his shoulders, pressed him to the floor, held him down, and rode him. Her wet, straggly hair hung over a face turned feral by passion. Her body was lust in motion.

'I've always wondered how it was to be a swizzle stick,' he thought. 'The next time ... not so much with the wand, perhaps.'

But her eyes were tender and loving. "Darling ... sweetie ... oh, Lucius ... oh, my love." Her sweet eyes and loving voice were too much. There was no way he could resist her affection, not the affection of his loving Narcissa. Pinnacle after pinnacle of pleasure stabbed his brain as he shot load after load of sperm into her, into his wife, his chosen companion.

Narcissa collapsed on top of him, breathing heavily, her damp hair everywhere. He felt her clenching him with fingers, thighs, everything...as she gifted him with one last round of spasms. Then she was sprawled limply, her face soft and peaceful.

Her smile was slow, satisfied, and wicked in the moonlight.

Flying High and Taking Account

Chapter 2 of 9

Lo, how the mighty have fallen.

Chapter 2: Flying High and Taking Account

"Oh, hi, Lucius. You're early. Good. Is it okay if we skip tea? I'm afraid the wind will die on us."

He liked her enthusiasm. "That's fine with me, Natalie. Let's get the kites in the air."

It was Saturday morning. There was only a light breeze, but she had brought four kites...two for a light wind and two for a heavy wind. As she explained the mechanics, he got the impression that the rest of the world vanished for her. There was Lucius, the kites, and the wind. After they had flown the two light kites, she wanted to try a heavy kite. Lucius would have to run to get this kite high enough to fly in the stronger upper wind. As he sat on the ground catching his wind after the third unsuccessful attempt, he was tempted to sneak out his wand and send the sucker soaring. But they were finally successful by mundane methods, and Natalie was hopping with glee.

As he played out the string, she reached over to make adjustments and help. He watched the kite as her arms entangled with his. He watched the kite as he inhaled the fragrance of her hair. He watched the kite as her hip pressed against him, as her breast brushed him. He focused on the kite.

"You don't have to grip the string that tightly, Lucius," she told him.

He reluctantly quit for lunch.

Natalie beamed. "I was afraid you wouldn't like kites."

The two of them nibbled at their lunch, hardly aware there was food in front of them.

Lucius was aware of the lurker in the corner of the restaurant. He was hard to ignore, in fact. 'Easy enough to flush out,' thought Lucius. He told Natalie he would be back and walked briskly to the lavatory, as briskly as if he were trying to escape. Yes, here came the lurker.

Lucius stepped out of the doorway. "Well, well, Edward Goyle. What brings you to this part of London?"

"You startled me, sir."

"I suppose I did. Is the Dark Lord having you trail me?"

"Umm."

"It's quite all right. You're only doing your job. The Dark Lord is unhappy about the battle at the Ministry."

"It wasn't your fault, sir. You tried to take a bunch of brats alive, and then the damned Order showed up." Edward continued, "Do you know who that is, sir? That's Mrs. Granger. Isn't it dangerous to be around her?"

"Yes, possibly," said Lucius. "But I'm trying to spy on the enemy. She may let things slip that her daughter knows."

"That's brave of you, sir, but I think you're taking an awful chance. The Dark Lord might get suspicious, and those Order blokes are mean bastards."

"Look, Edward, you can help by not following us quite so closely. Don't worry about losing us. We'll be easy to track. She'll either want to put the kite in the air again, heaven forbid, or she'll want a coffee. You should be able to remain out of sight and still follow us."

Edward nodded his agreement. He would do his best.

Natalie wanted to go someplace quiet for lemonade.

"Did that dusty old box you bought the other day have anything worthwhile in it?" she asked.

"It's mementos from better times," he said.

She looked quizzical.

"Hadley and his friend Iverson were the Arithmancy instructors at Hogwarts for most of the nineteenth century."

"The school was larger then," she said.

"And more vigorous," he added. "The courses were tougher. Our Arithmancy department was world class."

"I remember reading about them," she said. "I looked for Hadley since you had mentioned him. There's a chapter about the two of them in one of the books I bought. They liked the ladies."

"Everything declined when Iverson died," he said. "He was younger, but he died fifteen years before Hadley. Hadley was still a competent instructor, but he gave up research and devoted himself to Druid Numerology. He said he was on the trail of something, but most people think he missed Iverson."

"Did Hadley teach until he died?" asked Natalie. "Did he continue like the history instructor?"

"No, he retired five years before his death. He didn't want to do a ghost of departed quantities number."

She kicked his shins.

She noticed his sad and wistful look. 'Is wizard society in decline? He really cares,' she thought.

Inevitably, the conversation came around to Mrs. Granger's major concern: the dark forces facing her daughter. Lucius decided to give a neutral account of the Dark Lord's rise, his sudden fall, and his struggles with Harry.

Lucius had just described the unfortunate meeting of Voldemort and baby Harry.

"Okay," said Natalie. "The Dark Lord gets zapped, but as I understand things, the wizard community didn't get any permanent satisfaction out of it."

"Uh ... yeah," said Lucius.

Natalie's brow furrowed. "Did the Dark Lord lay dormant until Harry Potter reentered the wizard world? Is there some connection between them?"

Lucius nodded agreement. He provided her with what he thought both sides knew about the encounter of the Dark Lord and baby Harry and its aftereffects. He ended with, "The question is, 'Why didn't the curse kill Voldemort?'"

"Really?" said Natalie. "I thought the question would be why the curse nearly killed him. Everyone knows the rebound is weaker than the original cast." She considered it more deeply. "It's much weaker if the collision is sticky. Clay and putty hardly rebound at all. Didn't some of the curse stick to Potter? He got a scar, parseltongue, a psychic connection with Voldemort, and apparently lots of power."

She thought for a while. "Do curses rebound? Is it just off people or off walls, too? Is a duel in a closed room dangerous?"

"I don't know," said Lucius. "We only know that Potter was impervious to this curse."

'And stop looking at me like that,' he thought. 'I feel stupid enough already.'

"We could investigate," said Natalie. "No, I couldn't, could I."

'A natural born experimental scientist,' thought Lucius.

"There's the curse of intelligence," said Natalie.

"We don't have that one," he said. 'That didn't come out quite right,' he thought.

"We'll find some wizards impervious to intelligence," said Natalie.

"We have those," he said.

"We'll blast them with the curse of intelligence, and when it rebounds, we'll get smarter and smarter."

'Wicked sense of humor, lady,' he thought.

Natalie sipped her lemonade.

'There should be a place in the wizard world for Natalie Granger,' thought Lucius Malfoy. 'It would improve things ... and she's cute.'

Natalie looked serious. "Lucius, I had a great time today. I've had a wonderful time, and it has caused me to be unfair to you."

"I don't understand," he said.

"When I met you, I had no idea who you were. I enjoyed your company, and I wanted to see you again. But I mentioned you to my daughter. She's hysterical. I half expect her to be lurking around here keeping an eye on me." Natalie took a breath. "She told me terrible things about you...things I wouldn't believe if my own daughter hadn't told me."

"The wizard world has been at war," he said. "I have done damage to the other side. And there's more than that. The people on my side have behaved badly, very badly...I among them."

"Lucius, I intended to show up today out of politeness, spend a short time flying kites, and say goodbye. I didn't intend to spend all day with you having fun. I'm treating you terribly. You've been nice to me while I've been thinking horrible things about you. But I can't ignore my own daughter."

The confrontation became too difficult for Mrs. Granger to sustain. "Lucius, I can't see you anymore. Goodbye."

Natalie Granger dashed out of the shop to be swallowed by the London transportation system and whisked out of sight.

'That was abrupt,' thought Lucius. 'She forgot her kites.' He was still in the numb state before all the pain hits.

Lucius was aware of a presence at his elbow.

"Mr. Malfoy, sir, the lady didn't leave too happy."

"Standard spy craft, Edward. Anyone shadowing us would find it difficult to believe that we'll have more clandestine meetings."

Edward Goyle nodded sagely.

As Mrs. Granger was running out the restaurant door alone, Severus was strolling with Mrs. Nott through one of her greenhouses. When they stopped to admire a spectacular fern, Draupadi took Severus's hand.

"You always struck me as a lady who's both warm and regal," he found himself saying.

He then found himself holding Draupadi...full court press. He became numb to the rest of the world as he stroked her hair. 'Is she crying?' he wondered.

The next day after lunch, Lucius kept his pressing engagement with the Parkinsons. He couldn't cry off even though he was now in the numb state from the pain of Natalie's leaving.

"I hate this stuff, and I don't see where it's going to do me any good," said Pansy.

"That's understandable," said Lucius kindly. "Only specialists in certain fields use it. A few years after leaving school you won't remember any of it. You won't want to."

"Huh?" said Pansy. A mellow Uncle Lucius was something new to her.

"What would you like to do your sixth and seventh years?" he asked.

"Well, Charms and Dark Arts," said Pansy. "I'm thinking of Potions because it will look good. I don't want to do Potions for a living."

"Right," said Lucius. "It will make you look competent. Your family is well-off, but you might like living an independent life in London for a while."

Pansy looked pleased at the thought. 'She would love to get out from under her mother's thumb,' thought Lucius.

"Doing well in Charms and Dark Arts and Potions should make you employable," he said. "There're pros and cons to taking Arithmancy. If you complete it successfully, it will make you look very competent, but we don't want it to hurt your performance in the other subjects."

"I'm not having any trouble in Charms and the Dark Arts," she said. "If I work at it, I can do the routine stuff in Potions. I'll never create anything in it."

'That was Severus's assessment,' thought Lucius.

'Uncle Lucius is certainly easy to talk to today,' she thought.

"It's the same with Arithmancy. I can plug and chug even though it's dreary. But I don't want to bust my brain on the hard stuff," she said.

Lucius waited, remembering that Natalie hated Calculus.

"Maybe I'll try all four subjects my sixth year," said Pansy.

"Okay," said Lucius. "Do you have your fourth year book here? We can cover a little bit today."

Pansy went to her room to get the book. Lucius knew that her third year in Arithmancy had been a smashing success, but the fourth year emphasized spatial relationships...the downfall of many. He remembered her parents after her third year: our daughter, the Arithmancy star. Young Pansy had basked in their pride. Then her marks had slipped to mediocre. 'Poor girl,' he thought. 'That must have hurt. Her mother was not the type to hide her disappointment. It might be kinder to get her out of Arithmancy.'

Lucius realized he was treating Pansy the way he wanted to treat Natalie. He wondered how Natalie was in spatial relationships. He wondered how she was in special relationships. 'I'll never know,' he sighed.

Lucius helped Pansy through a few problems, heard her school adventures, and listened as she carried on about her mother's latest weird hobby. Her mother had bought a mundane computer to help with the accounts.

"I wish Mum wouldn't do that. People talk about us," said Pansy.

'Ah, yes, a socially proper schoolgirl and her eccentric mother,' thought Lucius. He knew Vivian Parkinson did unusual things and then became defensive, even bitchy, about them. He reflected that Mr. Parkinson appeared in no hurry to return from the continent.

They quit well before tea. Pansy went to visit her friends after a hard session in Arithmancy, and Lucius went to examine the computer. He had heard stories about programming, and it struck him as similar to Arithmancy. Vivian Parkinson showed him how to start the computer and call up the interactive program. Yes, it was similar to Arithmancy. He had computed some large factorials and found the area under the sine curve when he noticed that Vivian was getting impatient. Lucius closed his Arithmancy programs and brought up the spread sheet to enter the Parkinson accounts.

Lo, how the mighty have fallen.

Vivian was standing behind Lucius as he entered the figures and played with the program. "I think Pansy learned a lot and had a good time today," she said.

Lucius, intent on the program, merely nodded.

Vivian adjusted Lucius's collar. "You would have made a good father for her."

He gently shook his head. He thought he had been a poor father to his son. He had modeled himself after his own father...a right cold bastard if there ever was one.

"Oops," he said. He had entered some figures into the wrong column.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I distracted you. I should leave you alone." She knew he preferred to work alone.

"No," he said. "You should stay and double check my entries. This is slow going, but we'll get everything recorded. It might take several sessions, though."

Vivian stood behind Lucius with her hands on his shoulders and checked his entries. 'I like this Lucius,' she thought. She had no idea that he was treating her the way he wished he was treating Natalie.

His behavior was having its effect on Vivian. He was only a few years older, but she and a number of other relatives and friends thought of him as Uncle Lucius. She had had naughty thoughts about Uncle Lucius. They had led to damp panties and moaning in the night. Now, he had prompted her daughter into success at Arithmancy, he had her daughter glowing with his kindness, he was helping her get through these atrocious accounts, he was letting her participate, and to top it off, he was acting like a boy with a new toy. She had always thought Uncle Lucius needed and deserved extra attention. He seemed approachable today, and a little innocent cuddling wouldn't hurt anyone.

"You seem tense," she said. "Let me rub your shoulders."

"It's all right. I'm okay," he said.

"Of course you're okay," she said. "But you've done a lot for Pansy and me. I should do something for you. It'll help you relax."

Lucius wasn't certain he wanted to relax. He was keeping the pain from Mrs. Granger under tight control. But Vivian was already rubbing his shoulders, and he didn't want to be unfriendly. The day had gone well with Pansy and Vivian. He needed something to go well.

Vivian felt him relax as she massaged his shoulders. It was great doing something for Uncle Lucius. It was great getting her hands on Uncle Lucius. Would he mind if she chastely kissed his flowing hair? Would he mind if she chastely placed her breasts against him? Would he mind if her breasts grew perky from the contact and her nipples pressed against her bra? A chaste kiss on his forehead that let him feel her perky breasts should be okay.

Lucius wondered if Vivian meant all the things she was doing. He was willing to take the chance. The pain from Natalie was overwhelming enough that Vivian's rejection wouldn't have any effect. The pain from Natalie was sharp enough that any distraction would be welcome. Lucius placed his hand on Vivian's. 'Okay, so far,' he thought as Vivian took his hand. Lucius pulled Vivian around to sit on his lap. Now she could chastely embrace him, kiss him on his lips, and press her breasts against him.

A little later, a little flustered, she blurted out, "Hope you don't mind my fat ass."

'Oh my, this is awkward,' she thought.

That left Lucius groping, not for naughty touches, but a suitable reply. "It's only a little bigger than Narcissa's," didn't seem appropriate. He managed to say. "You're a mature woman, not a little girl. And it's not fat."

That appeared to satisfy Vivian. "What would my daughter think?" she said.

"If she saw you sitting in my lap?"

"Yes."

"Your daughter's perceptive. She would think you found someone who likes you, who finds you attractive."

"Flatterer."

Lucius, trying to fill the void Natalie had left in his life, said, "It's the simple truth. Look at what you did with the computer. You researched them, brought one home, and made it work. Very few witches can do that."

"I was afraid you'd condemn me for having a mundane apparatus, Lucius. What's happening to you?" She leaned over. Their breath mingled. "Are you getting mellow, Lucius? Are you becoming approachable?"

"I'm always approachable," he said, grazing her lips with his.

"No, most of the time you're scary...dominating and scary. I was always afraid of the terrible things you'd make me do if you got your hands on me."

"Terrible things?"

"Things my husband wouldn't like...terrible things."

"Terrible things? You mean getting you to relax as I stroked your temples like this?"

"Yes."

"You mean my holding you in my lap and expecting you to give me your soft, warm kisses as you're doing now?"

"Mmm. Yes."

"You mean holding you and admiring you," he said.

"Do you really? You know I'm a bitch."

'Yes, Vivian's a bitch, but I don't have to live with her,' thought Lucius. "I may not mind?" he said, cuddling her.

That amount of reassurance had her embracing him and nuzzling him as she flicked out her tongue. He had always thought Vivian had a nice figure. Now its warmth and firm softness was in his lap. 'I wouldn't mind having her,' he thought, 'but I have to be careful. Vivian, the bitch, would love to be a tease. I'll have to let her trap herself and then walk around later remembering how she writhed for me.'

A flushed Vivian looked at Lucius and gasped out, "You can't want me. I'm a bitch. Ask my husband."

Lucius held her affectionately, kissed her softly, and spoke gently. "I don't have to ask your husband. Would you like to be my bitch?"

He continued to speak gently. "Unbutton my trousers, sweetheart. Take my prick. Like that. Yes, kiss me like that. You're a beautiful and intelligent woman, Vivian. I want to have you. I'll take you like a bitch. I'll take you like the sweet, loving bitch you are."

She moved to the floor, unfastened his trousers, and took him between her lips. A minute later, Vivian looked up from the cock she had had hard and glistening. She was on her

knees looking at the man she had always regarded as Uncle Lucius. 'He really is going to have me', she thought. 'He really is going to make me be unfaithful.'

"Stand up, darling." She stood up.

"Take off your panties, Vivian." Vivian dropped her panties, lifted her skirt and straddled him.

He grabbed her hair. Then, to her shock, he kissed her gently, very gently. He continued his caressing kisses until she returned them. Only then did he begin his entrance. Once her folds were parted, he did nothing but give her the lightest of caresses with his lips. He let Vivian Parkinson look at him, look at him with open mouth and eyes, look at him as she opened for him, look at him as she made the intimate sounds of a married woman penetrated by a family friend.

'He's making me do it,' she thought, as she moaned with the spicy thrill of giving herself to Uncle Lucius. 'I'm a lonely woman, and he's taking advantage of me.'

'I don't live with her, and I don't have to put up with any of her bitchiness,' thought Lucius as he grabbed Vivian's shapely ass and wedged himself between her lovely thighs.

Vivian responded to his hard look, his possessive hands, and his demanding moves. It wasn't her fault that Uncle Lucius was being a bad boy and making her be unfaithful. It wasn't her fault that Uncle Lucius was making her perform like a sex-starved bimbo. It wasn't her fault that Uncle Lucius was driving her wild. It wasn't her fault that Uncle Lucius was turning her insides into cream pudding. It wasn't her fault that Uncle Lucius made her pussy dance.

After she recovered her breath, she glared at him. "Did you have fun? Was I a good fuck?"

He spoke kindly. "You are quite the bitch, aren't you?"

"I said I was. I asked you a question."

"You asked two questions. The answer is 'Not yet.'"

"Not yet?"

"Your husband's been gone for six months. You're lonely. But now that you've had sex, you can say, 'Thanks, Lucius,' and walk away. There was never any relationship."

"How can you say that?" she asked.

"You just scratched an itch." He replied. "There was nothing personal about it."

"You think I just scratched an itch."

"You scratched your itch, and then you were sarcastic about it. There's no affection lost or misplaced."

"That's a fine thing to say to a lady, sitting in your lap, sitting on your prick. Especially when she came for you."

"You liked it, didn't you," he said.

"Yes."

"You want more, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, suddenly breathless.

"You like it that I intend to possess you."

"Do you really want a bitch?" said Vivian.

"I'll show you," said Lucius, taking her to her bedroom.

The photographs of Mr. Parkinson in Vivian's bedroom saw a bad boy place Vivian Parkinson on her bed. They saw her strip and then lie back with her hands above her head as she opened her thighs.

There's nothing quite like seeing your wife spread her legs for someone else.

The photographs saw the bad boy hold Vivian Parkinson down and move up between her legs. They saw her tilt her head back and moan as the hard-faced man pushed into her. When he was completely in, he paused to let her smile shyly at the photographs...the photographs that had witnessed Vivian Parkinson take pleasure in being penetrated and mounted.

The photographs saw the hard-faced man begin the encouraging moves. They saw Vivian Parkinson respond. The photographs saw the bad boy make the moves of coupling. They saw the lady of the house participate.

The photographs had always been curious about Vivian Parkinson's bum during intercourse. They shifted to another frame. There it was: delightfully round and invitingly soft...offered to the bad boy. The sleek and classic bum contrasted nicely with the furry folds in which the bad boy had his rigid shaft. The scene was primal and captivating. It was beyond beauty. The fascinated photographs saw Vivian make a wet spot.

As the photographs shifted to see her face, a trick of light showed them an image of a wasp inserting himself again and again into Vivian Parkinson. Again and again, he stung her nervous system. Her insides turned to liquid; her muscles strained; her back arched in unbearable agony. She gave the photographs a smile to let them know her movements were no longer voluntary...just a lady-like smile before she succumbed to the mind-numbing, convulsion-causing venom. The photographs watched the bad boy ride a lady stung wild.

There's nothing quite like watching someone make your wife squeal

The photographs knew Vivian Parkinson never moved like that for them. They were not pleased, but they could not tear their eyes away.

The photographs had a stern face as our bad boy began the final act of making Vivian Parkinson unfaithful. He let them see him hold her hands above her head with one hand and hold her hip with the other. His eyes swept theirs to make certain they had seen him claim her. He paused to let the photographs see a demure Vivian Parkinson. She deliberately let them see her slowly spread her legs wider.

The photographs disapproved of the bad boy having Vivian Parkinson. Nevertheless, they still shifted to the frames that let them see the bottoms of her feet, her soft ass, and his rod moving in and out of that furry slit. They experienced every plunge into their lady.

The photographs wanted to watch Mrs. Parkinson's face as she let the bad boy have her. They returned to the frames that let them see her adoring look, that let them see her moan as he pushed into her. They saw the bad boy's tension increase. The bad, bad boy pushed all the way into their lady. Their lady gave them a helpless look as the bad boy had her. The photographs shifted to the view of Vivian Parkinson's bum, thighs, and slit...the married slit that engulfed the pumping shaft of a bad boy. The photos saw the wet spot grow larger. The photographs returned to see the content face of an unfaithful wife.

The photographs didn't need to ask. Vivian was good, and Lucius had had fun.

'These images are worth keeping,' thought the photographs in the second before Mrs. Parkinson waved her wand and wiped their memories. These memories were hers to relish. It also occurred to her that the photographs could be shocked the next time she was Uncle Lucius's.

He was just a man and she was certain she could give him an accusing glare. "Have you had your fun, yet?"

Lucius quietly waited out a married woman's you-made-me-be-unfaithful rant. When she finished, Vivian insisted they shower together with special soaps, insisted he wear a matching silk kimono, and insisted he stay for sherry and biscuits.

"You were marvelous, Vivian," he said after they had showered and she appeared calm and receptive. Experience had taught him the value of the amenities, and it pays to be kind to your bitch.

When she brought out the sherry tray, she found him sitting on the couch, perusing the programming manual. He was reading the section on Boolean expressions when she snuggled under his arm and suggested he come over this Wednesday. Pansy's Arithmancy and the household accounts needed more attention. He held Vivian and occasionally paused to nuzzle his new mistress as he delved into the structure of for-loops.

"Boys and their toys," said the lady to herself as she embraced her warm and terrifying Uncle Lucius, the bad boy who had made her be naughty.

'I overdid it,' thought Lucius. 'I meant to cover the hole left by Natalie, not jump into a deeper pit.'

Greenhouse Effect and Dastardly Attack

Chapter 3 of 9

'Hogwarts makes you ill-tempered. That gods-forsaken place is killing you.'

Chapter 3: Greenhouse Effect and Dastardly Attack

"Where'd you get all these new plants?"

"I've been growing them for you. Herbologists have discovered a lot of new species."

She continued arranging them on all the available surfaces. "Several decades ago they started following mundane biologists into jungles and other remote areas."

"I haven't heard of it," he said.

"It's mostly the continental Herbologists ... and the Americans. And it's not your field."

'I'm not even keeping up with my field,' he thought. 'Damn war and spying.'

Draupadi had arranged the plants by their taxonomy. Severus thought she had overdone it. He would never be able to take care of them, but he reminded himself to show some humanity. "That's impressive, Draupadi."

"I don't expect you to take care of them," she said. "I wanted to show them to you. I brought all the articles about how they're used."

She placed a stack of papers on the table. They were scholarly articles about new potions using the recently discovered plants. It was a concrete reminder that Severus had been too busy spying to keep up in his field. He interrupted his gloomy recriminations to reflect on how much effort Draupadi had been expending on his behalf. "Gathering those articles was a lot of work," he said.

"Oh, you appreciate it," she said, bouncing over to sit beside him on the couch. "I didn't know what your reaction would be. I didn't realize how hard it was to track down information. You scholars must have constitutions of iron."

She was sitting invitingly close, and he had to admit that she had soothed his ruffled feelings. He put his arm around her shoulder. That too, soothed his feelings.

It was mid-morning on the last Saturday before the autumn term began. The faculty had greeted her as Draupadi made her way to the dungeon. They expected the sociable Draupadi to join them for tea. She might or might not be able to persuade Severus to join them.

She did persuade him. Severus and Draupadi walked to the Great Hall for morning tea completely absorbed by the new developments in herbs and potions. The rest of the faculty listened to her tales of trying to brew the potions described in the articles. Severus shook his head. He offered that the first procedures for a potion were usually a complicated mess. It took knowledge of general principles and much trial and error to discover simple, robust methods. He didn't contribute much to the conversation since his mind kept spinning off on brewing tangents.

On their way back to his rooms, Draupadi, still excited from the lively tea, kept stopping to look at paintings and asking what was down various corridors. Severus suggested she had forgotten most of the castle since she left school.

"I was never down here," she said. "I lived in a different part of the castle."

"I think I remember you when you were in school," he said. "You were a sixth-year Ravenclaw Prefect when I entered."

"Do you honestly remember me?" she asked.

"When I was a second-year, the older Slytherin boys pointed you out...an unattainable, golden-skinned beauty."

"Is that how I seemed?" she said. "I remember being lonely. Of course, I studied a lot. A few boys approached me, but they were the suave kind looking for another conquest. I despised them, and I despised the girls who giggled over them."

'There's a point in my favor,' thought Severus. 'I was never suave.'

"I'm not painting an attractive picture of myself, am I?" she said.

Severus was recalling how he felt at that age. He was too much at odds with the system, too much an ugly duckling, to take girls seriously, but he had thought about Prefects. A month after his arrival at school, Severus had dismissed Prefects. Their goal was to reinforce the power structure in order to gain future power themselves. He had always held Prefects in contempt: toadies.

"You're very quiet," she said. "Are you upset that I was a studious Ravenclaw?"

'Can we have an honest relationship,' he wondered. "Actually, I was thinking you were a Prefect."

She thought about it. "I represented a system that mistreated you, or at least, let you be mistreated."

'She's taking me seriously,' he thought. 'Now I feel like a sniveling whiner.'

He said, "You're right. It's only school. It was a long time ago."

She ran her fingers through his hair. "School is too much with you, Severus." She continued by asking, "How much does taking care of kids influence a person? I had one son, and it changed me. Besides, you didn't get to leave. You grew up with House rivalries and petty Prefects, and then you were thrown back into them."

'It might be best to let her think my problems are left-over school traumas,' he thought. 'Some of them are. If I told her the story, she would tell me my tormentors are dead or outcasts while I'm a professor. She would be correct. This hatred is a waste of time. What is this lady doing to me?'

Thinking thus, he reached out to hold her hand. To his surprise, the contact gave him an erection.

Entering his room, the two of them with unspoken consent proceeded to the couch. She was sitting on her legs with her knees in her lap. 'How do women do that?' he thought. His arm was around her.

"I'm a little nervous, Severus. I haven't been with my husband in a long time."

"We can wait," he said, enjoying the romantic phase of the relationship. "We can take things slow."

"We're going to do it sooner or later," she said. "It may as well be now."

'Ah, yes, a romantic Ravenclaw,' thought Severus. 'I'm sweeping her off her feet.' Then it occurred to him that she had subtly invited herself into his bed. A Ravenclaw, indeed.

Severus gave it some thought. "I'm not ready yet."

'Why aren't I ready?' he wondered. 'She's very attractive.'

'Just her company is enough,' he realized. 'I'm in the phase where just being with her is overwhelming.'

"Are you upset?" he asked.

"I can be patient," she said, arranging herself in his lap.

Severus removed the clips that held her hair. It flowed around her face and across her shoulders. He didn't realize there was so much of it. She had always kept it tightly and severely bound. The flowing hair gave her a different, wilder look. She was an animal that had emerged from the forest. 'She's an animal for me,' he thought ... he hoped.

Time passed as they held each other. They discovered they had missed lunch.

"Let me help you get all these plants back to the greenhouse," offered Severus.

On their way out of the castle, they met the Herbology professor who recognized Draupadi. "You're Mrs. Nott. I regret Professor Snape can't get the plants he needs from the school greenhouse."

Severus detected the defensiveness that he had never noticed before. His buoyant mood because of Draupadi let him say, "It would be too much to expect one person to teach all those students and supply me with every strange plant I might want."

Draupadi joined in. "When I was a student, Herbology was a very popular course. The poor professor was overworked."

"Teaching does take a lot of time," admitted the Herbology professor. "The only help I have are some sixth- and seventh-year students."

They waved goodbye with the Herbology professor inviting them to drop over for tea the next time.

Back at the greenhouse, Draupadi was the efficient Mrs. Nott, placing all the plants in the right spot and making certain the journey had not injured them. When she finished, her demeanor turned soft. She embraced Severus and kissed him. Her kisses were relaxed and loving and inviting. The entire morning rushed up and overwhelmed Severus. "Sweetheart," he said. It was what she wanted to hear. She held Severus and moved against him and moaned. Her hair was undone, and she had a wild look in her eyes.

Severus responded to his friend's demands. Nothing seemed more lovely than Draupadi's face. Nothing seemed more erotic than Draupadi's body. He got an enormous, aching erection. He bunched her skirt up above her smooth, round bum. He slid her panties down. He ran his hand up her thighs and found his friend sopping wet. She looked at him with bright, shiny eyes. She panted, open-mouthed. She looked into his eyes and sighed as he entered her.

His entry into Draupadi touched Severus to the core. He wasn't prepared for the flood of wanting and caring. He was in someone he liked. His friend gave him her kiss of approval. And then the intimate contact drove her beyond being his friend.

She laid her head on his shoulder and looked at him. She gasped and gripped him with the rhythm of their coupling. It became more intense until she moaned and her hands grabbed his shoulders in a tight clench. He felt the contractions of his friend's orgasm...then more contractions. Then her knees buckled and she sagged against him.

He held her as he sat on the ground and lowered her into his lap. The fresh, wild smell of the greenhouse blew through him, and the animal took over. He lowered her onto the dirt floor, she spread her legs for him, and he saw his hard, pale self enter her soft, golden body. He moaned from the feel of her...the look of her...the offering of her. It was forgivable that he lost himself. He moaned as he forgave himself and lost himself and let it build and let it peak and let himself go. It was Draupadi, she was special, and she embraced him and cherished his moment with her.

She held him, happy they had finally coupled.

They recovered enough to notice they were lying in the dirt. They got up and brushed themselves off. Severus kept thinking that he should feel contrite because she was married and guilty because he had been clumsy, but Draupadi looked content and dreamy-eyed, and he felt too good to feel bad.

Severus noticed the wet spot on the pile of dirt. He was musing about its fertility when his lady love said, "My panties feel gritty."

She took his hand and told him they should shower and change.

"Do I hear knocking?" asked Severus.

Customers were at the front door of the greenhouse shop, even though there was a big sign in the window stating the shop was closed all day.

"We were hoping you might be around," they said. It was the Emersons. "We're on our way to a friend's birthday party, and we really wanted to bring her some daisies."

The Emersons looked quizzically at Snape.

"Mrs. Nott supplies the school with potion ingredients," he said.

"Professor Snape is the Potions master. We just got back and were repotting some plants when we heard you," said Draupadi.

"We were trying some pollination techniques," said Severus dryly.

Draupadi kept a pleasant, innocuous facial expression.

The Emersons asked Mrs. Nott if that's how she got such a large variety of plants.

Mrs. Nott said she had just begun experimenting.

After Draupadi had closed the door, she rounded on Severus. "Pollination techniques! I should kick your shins!"

They went to check on Mr. Nott who was dozing in the reading room. He woke on their entrance. "Ah, you're back. Hello, Severus. Did you like all the things Draupadi showed you? She worked for weeks getting ready."

"Good afternoon, Charles. Yes, it was impressive. It was a worthy effort."

Charles Nott beamed at his wife. "I told you he would like it. Severus knows real scholarship when he sees it."

Charles looked at Severus. "I would like to have helped her with it, but I haven't moved much since my fall last spring."

"It's best you recover, sir." Severus appreciated Charles sticking to the story of a fall even when everyone present knew better.

"Charles," said Draupadi, "I have to water some plants, and then I have to shop. Is there anything you need?"

"Ask the store to deliver more sherry," said Charles. He looked at Severus. "It passes the evenings and eases the pain."

"There are potions, sir."

"I take potions all day, Severus. My evenings are my own."

"Yes, so they are, sir," replied Severus. Severus silently cursed the Death Eaters for throwing an old man into combat.

"Keep well, dear," said Draupadi, kissing Charles on the forehead.

In the short moment Draupadi was kissing Charles, the image of her face during orgasm flashed before Severus's eyes. 'I can't do this,' he thought. He hoped nothing showed on his face. To complete his shame, he felt the beginning of an erection.

Draupadi took Severus back to the greenhouse, around to the back door of the house, and up the back steps to her bedroom. 'That's right,' thought Severus, 'I could hardly follow her to her bedroom in front of her husband.'

She stepped into the shower.

"Oh, this feels good," said Draupadi. "Did you ever try to be polite to customers when your panties were gritty?"

"Um ... no," said Severus, thinking life with Draupadi was going to open whole new vistas.

You may as well come in and wash the grit off you, too," she said.

Her plans for getting the grit off included him soaping and rubbing her back. She moaned louder than she had with sex. 'Alright,' thought Severus, 'I massaged the inner girl, and now I'll massage the outer girl. My gods, I hope her husband doesn't hear her.'

'Why is she more beautiful now?' he wondered. 'I thought familiarity was supposed to breed indifference, but I'm enjoying taking care of her.' His caring seeped through his fingertips and had its effect. The massage was interrupted several times for bouts of slippery nuzzling.

Some time after the suds and grit had vanished down the drain, Severus and Draupadi were having tea and biscuits at the shopping square.

"Have you ever thought about a family, Severus?"

"No," he said, in mid-biscuit.

"I think you would be good with a daughter."

"You can't leave your husband and live with me at Hogwarts. How are you going to explain a daughter?"

"My husband drinks. I can tell him that one night...miracle of miracles...we did it."

Draupadi smiled. "Girls take after their fathers."

"You want an ill-tempered daughter?" he said.

"Hogwarts makes you ill-tempered. That gods-forsaken place is killing you. The Headmaster prances around like some benighted know-it-all. You try to take care of the students, but you're the Head of an unpopular House. What's it doing to the kids in the House? They should disband that House and give those kids a chance. How many hours a week do you work to teach a good Potions class? Sixty? Eighty? What's your return? The students hate you because Potions is hard."

It was quiet for awhile.

"Well, it's true," said Draupadi.

Severus, secretly pleased at what Draupadi had said, went for humor: "I get to live in a castle."

Draupadi, not amused, gave him a withering look for his flimsy excuse. Severus, in a move that surprised him, reached over for Draupadi. She sighed and held his hand.

As Severus and Draupadi were having their domestic dispute, Narcissa, with Lucius in tow, arrived in the shopping square to replace her lingerie that had withered away. Lucius was certain they would last longer if they weren't such flimsy excuses for clothing.

Lucius would have preferred to spend the time in mundane London acquiring some programming manuals, and he hadn't noticed that her old lingerie had worn out. He amused himself by imagining Narcissa in really worn-out lingerie...the kind with holes in it...delectable...especially if the holes were strategically located. He knew it was possible to buy new lingerie with these holes, but the customer had to request it specifically. He was certain it would be more fun to produce the holes by ripping the garments off his wife...a do-it-yourself project. He was also running a drama through his head where he discovered a poor, forsaken Narcissa in tattered underwear. He would offer assistance. They would have to re-enact it some evening. His wife was a constant inspiration to him.

Coming around a corner, Lucius received a jolt when he saw the two Grangers at the lemonade stand. His hopes for keeping a comfortable distance were dashed when Narcissa decided she wanted lemonade. He was adjusting his calm façade when there were screams. "Death Eaters!" Without thinking, he whipped out his wand and ran to protect Natalie.

"Get down!" he yelled.

Lucius arrived in time to deflect the second round of spells from two Death Eaters. He was weaving a protective barrier when Severus appeared behind the two Death Eaters and rendered them unconscious. Lucius noticed that Natalie was sitting on the ground with a broken arm, Hermione had a bleeding forehead and was crawling toward her mother, and Narcissa had arrived.

Narcissa took in the scene and made a decision. "Hospital!" she shouted at Lucius. She grabbed the two Grangers and vanished.

Lucius then noticed that Draupadi Nott was with Severus, watching his back. The three looked around the square. People were yelling and running around, but there were no signs of a continuing attack.

Draupadi had a bruise on her face. "Was that one of your students?" she asked Severus.

He nodded yes.

Draupadi continued, "I think the student was injured. You should check on her. Was that her mother?"

Lucius watched a concerned Severus examine Draupadi's bruise.

Draupadi protested, "I'm fine. Nothing is happening here."

Draupadi finally convinced Severus he should go with Lucius to check on Narcissa and the Grangers.

The admissions area of the emergency center was busy with the arrival of all those injured, but Lucius and Severus were eventually directed to the room with the Grangers. The medical people were just leaving. Miss Granger was sitting in a chair with her head bandaged. Mrs. Granger was lying in bed, semi-conscious, with her arm bandaged.

Narcissa smiled at Lucius when he entered the room. A pain sharper than a broken arm shot through Natalie.

Hermione was respectful to Professor Snape, obviously preferring to believe that he was the one who had saved them. She glared hatred at Mr. Malfoy. She was puzzled by Mrs. Malfoy who had insisted the staff take immediate care of Mrs. Granger and her daughter and had ignored Hermione's suspicious glares.

There were screams and commotion in the hallway. The door to their room burst off its hinges.

"Get them out of here!" yelled Lucius to his wife.

Mrs. Malfoy grabbed Hermione and leaped to grab Hermione's mother. 'Gods, she's strong,' thought Hermione. She saw Mr. Malfoy and Professor Snape cut down two Dark Wizards. 'Gods, they're strong,' thought Hermione. That was her last thought before blacking out as a stray spell hit her. Or was it a stray spell?

A pack of demons stormed in behind the Dark Wizards.

Lucius aimed low to slow the advance. It took several steps before the first two demons decided they should stop and hold in their intestines. Severus had jumped to a flanking position. When the horde slowed, Severus fired two silver bolts apiece through the brains of the demons. Lucius breathed a sigh of relief. Then the four demons fell to reveal two Spectres.

Time slowed. 'By the gods,' thought Lucius. 'They're worse than vampires. I thought they were extinct.' Lucius cursed as a nurse stepped between him and the Spectres. She screamed as the Spectres pulled her in and sucked her. Lucius backed away, slashing at them. 'I can't handle two,' he thought. He was aware that silver bolts were striking them. Severus had not abandoned him. The Spectres, recognizing the greater danger, turned towards the Potions master.

Lucius felt rage. Not his friend. "You Sonsabitchin' Spectres! Eat Death!"

Somewhere in the strange, seething cauldron that was now his mind, Lucius realized he shouldn't have said that.

One of the Spectres fell to the floor in pieces under the blinding onslaught of an enraged warlock. Lucius sank to his knees, drained. Lucius watched silver bolts reduce the skull of the other opponent to powder. Not even a Spectre could survive that, and it floated lifelessly to the floor.

Lucius remained on his knees, exhausted. His nostrils were filled with the reek of demon guts, burned brains, moldering Spectre, and the remnants of the nurse. He was dimly aware of the sound of walls collapsing. His spells had done collateral structural damage. He saw a group racing to put out the fires caused by Severus's bolts.

An old saying came to mind: 'Who will protect us from the protectors?'

Lucius saw Severus approach with another question in his eyes: Who would attack a shopping square and then send five demons and two Spectres into a hospital after a mundane lady and her sorceress daughter? And why?

"Congratulations, old chum," said Severus. "You scared the pee out of those Spectres. Did Narcissa take everyone to Malfoy Manor? The hospital staff wants me to stay and help with the potions."

"I should check on them," said Lucius.

Lucius found his wife in the kitchen giving Miss Granger a strong tea.

"Oh, Lucius," said Narcissa, grabbing him. "I should have come back to help. Who was that? Are you hurt?"

"I'm okay. Severus was there," he said.

Narcissa returned to tending Hermione.

"Mum's asleep," said Hermione in a zombie tone of voice.

Narcissa placed her hand reassuringly on the schoolgirl's shoulder. "Drink your tea, dear. We'll go see your mother."

Lucius sat on the couch in the guest room while his wife made certain Mrs. Granger was comfortable. Hermione sat down on the couch beside him. Narcissa left to get bedding for Hermione.

Hermione looked forlorn enough that Lucius put his arm around her. Hermione crawled into his lap, put her arms around his neck, and went to sleep. 'That was strong tea, Narcissa,' thought Lucius.

The room was warm. Lucius was aware that Hermione was sweating, and that made it obvious she needed a bath. It was too much. He tried not to think that Hermione had the same sweet nature and restless, inquisitive mind that Natalie had. He was not successful. He felt his erection grow against her thigh. 'All I need to complete my embarrassment is for her mother to wake up and my wife to return,' thought Lucius.

"Sometimes she acts like she's twenty, and sometimes she acts like she's twelve," Lucius heard Natalie say.

Mrs. Granger was propped up in bed, smiling at the two of them and apparently happy that her daughter had found comfort and security in Mr. Malfoy's lap.

Recalling the recent attack, Mrs. Granger said, "I know she's been in danger at school. She tried to keep it from us, but we could tell." Natalie reflected on the last several years. "It would have helped if she had had a wizard who offered advice and protection. It was one of the things that bothered her father ... that drove him away. His daughter was in a different world, in danger, and he couldn't do a thing."

Lucius became aware of another arena of pain and sorrow and loss. 'The mundane-born need our help. What am I thinking? I'm in shock.'

Natalie seemed to accept everything as a comfortable domestic scene.

'If I'm a surrogate father, perhaps I should warn Hermione about Severus,' thought Lucius. 'Yes, I'm in shock.'

"Oh, good, she's resting," Lucius heard Narcissa say softly from the doorway. "But she's too warm."

Narcissa deftly removed Hermione's cloak and brushed Hermione's hair out of her eyes.

'It's been a crazy day,' thought Lucius, as he imagined Narcissa with a daughter.

Narcissa sat on the bed beside Natalie. "It's late. I think it best if the two of you spend the night here. We can get you home tomorrow morning."

She looked at her husband, "What do you think, love?"

"I'm pinned down. I'm not going anywhere soon," he said.

Narcissa and Natalie gave him a big smile.

'It's amazing what entertains women,' he thought.

Mercifully, Lucius slept most of the night and spent little of it alternating between fatherly affection for the admirable girl in his arms and illicit lust for the admirable female in his lap.

Very early in the morning, Lucius woke as Hermione sat up.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"You're safe. Your mother's here. She's safe."

"I asked where I was," snapped Hermione.

"I'm telling you," said Lucius. "First things first. You and your mother are in a safe place. It's called Malfoy Manor."

Hermione hopped to the floor. "What am I doing in your lap?"

"You crawled in and fell asleep. You were in shock and under the influence of powerful sedatives."

"I must have been," said Hermione.

"You're heavy and you fidget. My legs are cramped, and you drooled on my shirt," said Lucius. "At any rate, here is the lavatory and bath. Your mother has the bed. The couch is comfortable for sleeping even when I'm not on it."

Hermione glared at Lucius. "If you'll forgive me, I must check on my mother, and I have certain things to attend to."

"Of course," he said, turning to leave the room.

"When will you let us go?"

He turned back towards her. "It's not a matter of 'letting you go.' We'll take you home this morning...after breakfast."

He left her glaring at him.

'If I'm a surrogate father, should I warn Severus about Hermione?' he thought.

They didn't leave immediately after breakfast. Natalie had admired the oriental rugs, and Narcissa was showing her the rest of the house. Lucius recalled that Mr. and Mrs. Granger were professionals who probably had both the wealthy and the artistic among their acquaintances. He could hear the two women in the next room arguing about the chandelier. Natalie had circled the room and commented on it, but declared it impractical for her house. The light would get in her eyes while she was reading. Well-placed lamps suited her better.

Lucius interrupted Hermione's boredom and glaring by asking about her sixth-year subjects. Hermione was proudly describing how much she had already read. In her enthusiasm, she complained about not understanding an Arithmancy exercise...the mid-point of the ladder problem.

"Velocity is a vector," pointed out Lucius.

"That's right," said Hermione, lighting up. "It has both horizontal and vertical components."

Yes, the Malfoy Manor had pencils and paper. Hermione couldn't recall all the details of another exercise, but Lucius found his old sixth-year book, and they soon located the brain-buster. "Try solving for the intersection of the two surfaces first," suggested Lucius.

"It's too bad they don't teach Advanced Numerology anymore," said Lucius.

Hermione asked what it was, and Lucius retrieved the book written by Hadley. He read the famous problem:

"One morning the prince was galloping through the marketplace when he knocked over a basket of eggs. The prince immediately stopped and offered to pay. The shop girl, hoping the prince was as charming as he was dashing, said she didn't know exactly the number of eggs but when she counted them by threes she had two left over. When she counted them by fives she had three left over, and when she counted them by sevens she had two left over. The prince, who was as charming as he was dashing, spent a pleasant morning with the shop girl determining the number of broken eggs."

'What a wonderful story,' thought Hermione.

They were getting started on prime numbers when Lucius glanced up to see two women standing in the doorway and looking impatient. "Whenever you two can tear yourselves away," the two women said.

"Oh, Mum," said Hermione.

"I know you're having fun, dear," said Mrs. Granger, "but I have to phone the surgery and tell them I'll be out with a broken arm...the sooner the better."

Mr. Malfoy persuaded Hermione to take the Hadley Numerology book with her. 'Why did I think she was a bushy-haired ugly duckling?' he wondered.

A shock awaited them at the Granger residence. The house had been burgled.

Mrs. Granger phoned the dentistry she would not be in, said she couldn't see that anything valuable had been taken, and decided to wait to phone the police. If something valuable was missing, she would phone the police to have a record of the theft for the insurance claim. The Malfoys waited while the Grangers searched the house. The only things they couldn't find were Hermione's Arithmancy books.

Mrs. Malfoy and Mrs. Granger were bewildered and even disgusted. "Why in the world would anyone steal Arithmancy books?" They clearly thought the thieves would have done better to walk off with the garbage.

Lucius was thinking about the attack. 'It's possible the target was Hermione, but she had been a known threat to the dark forces for five years. The recent change in the Granger household was Mrs. Granger's acquisition of wizard texts. What had she bought? She hadn't bought Arithmancy books. What is going on?'

After they left the Grangers, Narcissa turned to Lucius. "What did we just do, love?"

'We just saved a mundane and her Mudblood daughter instead of capturing them and torturing them,' he thought. 'Let's see if I can explain this without talking about Natalie.'

He bent the truth for a good cause. "Severus was talking to one of his best students and her mother when someone attacked the shopping square."

Narcissa nodded. It was starting to make sense to her. "Of course. Severus protected a student ... and her mother. You ran to help Severus. I ran to help you."

"The student and her mother were injured," he said.

"I didn't think about it," she said. "I grabbed them and took them to hospital."

"Mrs. Granger is a mundane," he said.

"Yes, but her daughter is a witch," replied Narcissa. "I thought she would respond to wizard treatment, and she did."

Reflecting on the recessive nature of magic, Lucius wondered what combination of inbreeding and incest had produced Hermione Granger.

More mundanely, he said, "The hospital was attacked. You took them to the Manor where they would be safe."

"Once they were guests in our home, we treated them like guests," she said.

'Much to Hermione Granger's astonishment,' he thought.

Narcissa was still puzzled. "I think the Grangers were the target. That was a full-scale attack. Are the Grangers that important?"

"I don't know," he said.

"Why would anyone steal a schoolgirl's Arithmancy books?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said.

"Have you met Mrs. Granger before?" she asked.

'I should have known I couldn't keep anything from Narcissa,' he thought.

"I was just remembering," he said. "That day I found that box of old books, Mrs. Granger was in the bookstore buying texts for her daughter. She had a lot of packages, and I helped her with them."

"You're such a gentleman," she said.

'Was that sarcasm?' he thought.

"You must have made an impression on her. She's quite attracted to you."

"Not that I know of," he said.

"Maybe it's because you saved her life ... and her daughter's life."

Narcissa continued. "She was immensely pleased by how well you treated her daughter."

"Guests in our home," replied Lucius.

Narcissa was quiet for a while.

"Perhaps you should have a daughter," she said in a joking manner.

Lucius was not fooled. He had seen the fond and envious looks Narcissa had given Natalie's daughter.

Prime Beginnings and Calculated Ends

Chapter 4 of 9

'I'm balancing yin and yang.'

Chapter 4: Prime Beginnings and Calculated Ends

It was another special Saturday for students to visit the village, and she walked the crowded but lonely streets. Ahead she saw a shock of blond hair talking to a mature figure at an outdoor table. She stood and stared as the scene unfolded. The student was complaining; the mature figure nodded in understanding. The student was gesturing wildly as he related some school farce; the mature figure nodded in understanding. The student took a sip of hot coffee from his father's cup; the mature figure shook his head in amused disapproval. The student joined his friends; his father waved a fond farewell. Desperate for something, even a pale copy of what she had witnessed, she walked over and sat at the table.

"Good morning, Miss Granger."

"Good morning to you, Mr. Malfoy."

"To what do I owe the pleasure of your company?"

"I just thought I'd say 'Hello.' Are you busy? I can buy you a coffee."

Mr. Malfoy didn't need another coffee yet, but he could assure Miss Granger that she was welcome to sit with him and enjoy a cup herself. "How are your studies?" After hearing her woeful reply, he tried to be reassuring. "You're in a slump. Didn't you recently perform brilliantly for the OWLs? A temporary slump is normal. Don't worry about it." He responded to her polite inquiries. "Mrs. Malfoy is doing well. I haven't seen Mrs. Granger, your mum, since the hospital ruckus." She reminded him of his loan. "Yes, I remember you have the old Numerology book. You can keep it longer." She remembered they had been interrupted the last time. "Yes, I can meet you the next special weekend, and we can look at it again." She looked cold. "You're shivering. Do you want to go inside?" She replied that everywhere here was crowded and noisy, but his home was nice, and she hadn't seen much of it, and she hoped she wasn't being too forward. "It's true; you didn't see much of Malfoy Manor when you were there. It's not too forward to suggest that you'd like to see more of it. We'll have to do it discreetly."

Two minutes later, Miss Granger was in a chair in front of a roaring fireplace, Mr. Malfoy had served Miss Granger tea, and Mr. Malfoy was stretched out on the rug.

"Did you ever think of teaching Arithmancy?" she asked.

"It would be one of the easier subjects to teach," he replied. "There's not much to memorize since it proceeds from a few general principles. Not many students take it. The classes are small and well-behaved."

She sat up straighter in the chair. "You have thought about it."

"When I was young and idealistic and thought I had infinite energy. Then I discovered how much time and energy it took to run the family estate and manage the investments. Even for an Arithmancy professor, teaching is a full time job."

He stared into the fire. "I think teaching Potions would kill me."

"Severus ... I mean Professor Snape was different during the summer," she said.

"I liked him then," she said. She blushed. "But I shouldn't say that about an older man."

'Lucky Severus,' thought Lucius.

"I wish he had talked to me and taken me places. I was stuck with two boys in a grim old place. All they could think about was Quidditch."

She put her hands in front of her mouth. "Oh, I shouldn't have said that."

He loomed over her. "You silly girl, I gave you a comfortable chair, plied you with gourmet tea, and you spilled the Order's secrets. Ha. Ha. Ha."

She shrank into the chair, turning pale and looking aghast.

Lucius felt remorse.

"Hermione," he said softly. "I was kidding."

"Miss Granger, think," he said. "My family has known the Black family for ages. I married one of the Black sisters. Is there anything significant about the Black family that I wouldn't know?"

Hermione Granger showed signs of recovery.

Lucius settled back on the rug. 'There's a thought,' he thought. 'I can screw Narcissa for information. The next time she's waving her toes at the ceiling, I'll pay attention to the yelling end. Hmm, seems to be a morning for bad humor. A better idea would be to listen the next time Cissy and Bella have a gossip fest. No, not even the Dark Lord would require that sacrifice.'

He noticed that Miss Granger was on her knees on the floor and looming over him.

"You scared the shit out of me, you bastard." She looked at him. "But it was still a good joke." She smiled, "Mature men are the best."

He was aware of Hermione stretching out beside him, her leg on top of his, her breasts pressing into him, her fingers twirling his hair, and her head resting on his shoulder. She was humming an aimless tune as she fell asleep.

'I've got the brains of the opposition in my arms. I want the brains of the opposition on the end of my prick. No, I don't Get a grip Yes, I do.'

His stomach growled to remind him that he was missing lunch. He ran his fingers through the hair of the schoolgirl.

It was early afternoon when Hermione popped up. "I feel ever so much better. What's for tea?"

'Berries rare as your breasts, scones sweet as your ass, clotted cream from your panties, and cheese ripe as your pussy,' he thought. "The usual," he said.

He brought out tea and sandwiches thinking that it would have been terrible if the Death Eaters had captured Natalie or Hermione. 'Okay,' he thought, 'I'm a sexist pig. I don't like torturing women.'

He watched her delicately consume a large number of sandwiches with her tea while he fought down the urge to talk about her lack of boyfriends in order to coax her into his lap. After dabbing a few crumbs off her lips, she sashayed around the table, placed her hand seductively on his shoulder, batted her eyelashes, and gave him a silky voiced, "You fill me so well; you make me feel complete."

He jumped. She chuckled. "Turnabout is fair play, Mr. Malfoy."

'I've sunk to a new low,' he thought. 'She's a schoolgirl. She's Natalie's daughter. She's a little minx! She's more than my mortal frame can bear.'

After tea, he brought his old Numerology text, paper, and pencils to the reading room. Hermione admired the argument that there were an infinite number of primes. A girl of infinite possibilities, thought Lucius. They struggled through the Euclidian algorithm, establishing the remainder was smaller than the divisor. Ah, the remains of the day, thought Lucius. They were ready for the unique factorization theorem when it was time for her to return to school. A unique day, he thought. He whisked her back to the village. She had had the best time she told him. The next visit, she would bring the Hadley Numerology book, and they could have even more fun.

Lucius, wrung out after a day of fighting down urges for a schoolgirl, had his own thoughts. 'Heaven save me. Wait, my wife can save me. She's good at that.'

Dearest Natalie,

I realize we did not meet under the best of circumstances, but I did enjoy your visit. My husband and I were both entranced by your daughter.

You may or may not know that students are allowed occasional visits to a nearby village. Last Saturday, my husband was there to talk to our son, and he met Hermione. My husband will be busy on the next such occasion, but he suggested that I take you to visit Hermione. Would you be interested?

Most sincerely, Narcissa

One week later was another type of special Saturday, and Lucius had, once again, failed to save Narcissa from herself.

"Ewww!"

"You know you don't like it. I don't know why you insist on sampling the sake every month."

"It's to remind me that life isn't all brandy and chocolates. I'm balancing yin and yang."

It pained him to see Narcissa try it and dislike it. His friend had undergone indignities to obtain their recent supplies. Severus had strolled into a store in a poorer part of London and spotted half a shelf full of sake bottles with the word 'Reduced' on a banner in front of them. Severus had secured the lot.

"What do you do with this stuff?" the surly clerk had asked.

Severus, attempting to be polite in mundane society, had replied, "You warm it to blood temperature and drink it."

The clerk was incredulous. "Are you shittin' me?"

Severus nearly had his wand out for a lesson in manners when it occurred to him that the buffoon in front of him would never know the delights of a sake party.

Pity stayed his hand.

Lucius's attention returned to the present where Narcissa continued her commentary.

"Besides, it's cloudy. There isn't a single star in the sky, and it's going to rain. I'm starting to think these Moon-Viewing Parties are just an excuse for you and Severus to drink sake, grill squid, and eat wasabi peanuts."

"My family warned me about you...that you were hard to fool."

'It's a civilized ceremony,' thought Narcissa, some time later. Lucius and Severus had joined her for a cup of tea and then proceeded to the gazebo, followed by Sasha, the family hound. She could understand the hound...loyalty plus the possibility of tidbits. She recalled the period when Lucius and Sasha went hunting. Her aristocratic nature appreciated the wild taste of the game, and the knowledge that her husband and his hound had brought the animal down added to the flavor.

The hound had arrived several years ago when Lucius had a chance to indulge one of his fantasies. Lucius Malfoy would have simply died if anyone found out, but he had tried to ape the customs of the eighteenth century landed nobility. Chief among those customs was blood sports. Riding a horse looked suicidal but those portraits of the nobleman and his faithful hound plucked at his heartstrings. He thought acquiring a purebred would attract attention, but one of his orchard managers assured him that crossbreeds had all the qualities of the purebreds plus additional stability and stamina.

He had watched and then participated as the orchard manager played the strange mundane game of 'Frisbee' with his dogs. One of the females of a litter seemed quite taken with Lucius. He named her 'Sasha' and brought her home.

Narcissa shrieked. "There's going to be dog hair all over everything."

Lucius cuddled Sasha and told her not to pay any attention to the hysterical lady. Sasha looked at Narcissa with her mournful eyes until Narcissa relented and agreed that Sasha could stay.

Now, the first thing that Narcissa did in the morning was pet Sasha and let her outside. Narcissa spent the evenings that Lucius was gone curled up on the couch with Sasha beside her.

When she was old enough, Lucius introduced Sasha to Frisbee. He convinced Narcissa to try it. With Narcissa, the Frisbee went every which way, but Sasha didn't mind. She would retrieve it and run back to Narcissa with her eyes bright and her tail wagging. Narcissa had to learn not to have so much fun that her arm hurt the next day.

Lucius did worry that Frisbee was too tame and he was not training Sasha to be a mighty huntress. He decided to be philosophical about it. 'I can't have everything,' he thought, 'and Narcissa is having a great time.'

For hunting, he decided that shotguns were too crude and noisy. He would use his wand. And he decided he would be forgiving of Sasha. It was not her fault that he and his wife enjoyed Frisbee instead of training Sasha properly. When he went hunting, the first thing he discovered was that during their first ten yards of flight, big game birds were lower and slower than a Frisbee. Cuddly Sasha was a running, leaping, brown blur...death on four paws. It was much the same with young rabbits.

He didn't dare let Narcissa see Sasha's trophies: the limp bodies of cute and beautiful animals. He snuck them into the kitchen and gave them to the house-elves when Narcissa wasn't looking. They had several dinners of game, and then Lucius professed a lack of interest in hunting. Narcissa thought it a shame because Sasha seemed to enjoy it, but they all went back to mundane Frisbee.

Out in the gazebo, Sasha watched over the proceedings while Lucius and Severus toasted the moon even though it was not visible. They sipped several cups and related to the night.

When they had absorbed a sufficient amount of nature's wildness, Lucius broke the silence. "How's the spying, old bean?"

"Smashing. I told Dumbledore that Voldemort was back and was acquiring followers. I told Voldemort that Dumbledore knew he was back, and that Dumbledore was organizing a resistance group."

Lucius chuckled. "You are a clever man. You are a subtle man. Nay, a humorous man."

There was another interlude of toasting the moon, before Lucius spoke again. "I assume you're the one who told the Order about the old, unused safe-house."

"I told the Aurors," said Severus. "They needed a diversion before they caused real trouble. They spent a week planning the raid."

Lucius agreed. "A raid on an empty house does no harm and energizes both sides. Think of the stories the caretaker can tell: The demons descended upon him."

The two men and the dog watched the lightning and rain.

The drinking party had arrived at the point where they exchanged the small sake cups for large tea cups. The topic of conversation followed a similar increase in capacity. They were considering the differences between nature's law, wizard's law, and mundane law.

Under normal circumstances, Lucius would never let anyone know he thought about the mundanes, but the sake and the wildness of nature blew through him. Lucius had a complaint about the mundanes. "They get too involved with the law. They worry over it constantly. There's speechifying and debating and filibustering. They have a class of people who do that for a living."

"They do pontificate," agreed Severus, "but they have a talent for it. It's a sin not to use a talent."

Lucius allowed his friend had a point. He raised his cup in salutation. "To each his own."

"Been busy?" asked Lucius.

"There's a shortage of potions at the school infirmary."

"There's a drought of draughts?" asked Lucius.

The three of them took in the clouds, the wind, and the rain. It refreshed their souls.

Lucius brought up a delicate topic. "It's sad that you're alone. Isn't there anyone you care for, that you can trust?"

"There aren't many," said Severus, "and they're out of reach."

'That's something new,' thought Lucius. "Has some high-born lady caught your eye, some pureblood that only looks at other purebloods?" asked Lucius.

Severus watched the rain.

"She may be more available than you think, Severus. Perhaps at some soirée, we can introduce her to the aristocracy of the mind."

Severus shook his head no.

"You're leaving me guessing. Even if she's a married woman, we can introduce you." Lucius looked at Severus, but there was no reaction. "Unless," said Lucius, "she's the wife of a friend. Is that the pickle you're in, a pureblood aristocrat, a wife of a friend?" Lucius thought his friend was being difficult. "She may still be available. You're dashing, different. Her husband may not care for her anymore ... be glad to get her off his hands. She's neglected and lonely. You could be doing everyone a favor. Gallant Severus to the rescue."

Severus thought about the aristocratic Draupadi, her brave and crippled husband, and stared into the storm.

'There's a lot of hesitating and secrecy, old buddy,' thought Lucius. 'By the gods, is it Narcissa? Does he want to fuck Narcissa? Who doesn't? Perhaps he's already fucking her. Maybe he really, really wants to fuck Narcissa. Has my friend fallen in love with my wife? I'm going to have to play this one by ear.'

Lucius soared over the moon: 'Narcissa did have a marvelous pussy; its use was known to produce insights.'

Lucius returned in time to hear Severus say, "Ah, but who would care for the greasy bat from the dungeon?"

"That's your school persona. It makes you look sly ... a lurker ... a conspirator. You run a double bluff. You spent the summer as an immaculate, well-groomed gentleman. The social season has just started. We can take you to all kinds of affairs. Why worry about your school persona? Unless Great thundering cats, Severus, you don't fancy someone at the school do you? Did that musty old place finally get a nubile instructor? I hadn't heard."

Severus was quiet. 'I can't tell anyone about Draupadi,' he thought.

"No. Tell me it's not true, Severus ... not a student."

For some reason, Severus saw a vision of smiling, vital Hermione. Before he could stop himself, he blurted out, "I can't help it."

Lucius was silent for a while, recalling Natalie. "Yes, that's true. We can't help it."

"We're minding our own business," said Severus. "Not asking for anything. All of a sudden, we become aware of some girl, hovering around."

Lucius stared into the rain.

Severus continued. "I'm mixing a potion; I think about showing it to her. I'm walking along the lake; I imagine her beside me."

"She only knows you as an instructor?" asked Lucius.

'What's happening,' thought Severus. 'Why is my mind filling with images of Hermione? What has Lucius conjured up?'

"I saw her last summer. She told me I looked handsome. Then she blurted out that I smelled good. That embarrassed her."

Severus gave his friend an accusing look. "I can see your brain cells turning over from here. You're asking what students I could possibly meet during the holidays. You're figuring out who she is."

Lucius was staring at the rain. He was seeing a bushy-haired figure, but it was a figure more mature than the one Severus was seeing.

Sasha, with the instincts of a faithful companion, saved the evening by mooching grilled squid from Lucius and then from Severus. They scratched her ears, and the world returned to normal.

"Did you learn anything from Crabbe and Goyle?" asked Severus. "I assume you treated them to the usual evening at the pub."

"They're supposed to be suspicious of me, but they can't turn down a round of drinks," said Lucius. "We go to a remote tavern where I supply the place with the good stuff for Crabbe and Goyle. It goes down smooth, really smooth."

"And?" said Severus.

"It's crazy, completely crazy," said Lucius. "They were the ones who robbed the Grangers. They were told to look for secret Arithmancy stuff."

"So they swiped a schoolgirl's Arithmancy books," said Severus. "For Crabbe and Goyle, that's better than average."

"It gets crazier. At the beginning of last summer, I found a box from the Hadley estate in the basement of the bookstore."

"The famous Arithmancy professor?" said Severus.

"Yes, and the same day I met Mrs. Granger shopping for her daughter."

"That's pretty thin," said Severus.

"Well, don't tell anyone, but I met Mrs. Granger again for a session of kite flying. Goyle tracked us, and I fed him a story about spying on the Grangers."

Severus sighed. "You planted ideas in his head, old chum. No good can come of that."

"According to Goyle," continued Lucius, "the Death Eaters scoured the bookstore and found another box from the Hadley estate. They're certain it's valuable, but they can't make heads or tails of it, and they've hidden it. They didn't tell Crabbe or Goyle the hiding place."

"Paranoia runs deep," they agreed.

Severus tried to sum it up. "You found some old Arithmancy stuff at the same time you began associating with the Grangers. From their point of view, the only reason to prize those dusty old manuscripts is because they contain spells of earth-shaking power. Arithmancy is gobbledygook to that crew, but Hermione Granger is a genius who can figure it out and rule the world."

'Paranoia runs deep, indeed,' they thought.

The sake party entered its last stage, and Sasha came into her own. The wild night air and the confessional conversation had stripped the two men of their facades, and they were two mellow souls, but the noble and steadfast Sasha provided the glue that held everything together. Mellow they might be, but they had prepared for their descent into depravity. Under the watchful eyes of the hound, Lucius and Severus brought out the hard-boiled eggs. Her ears pricked up as they were cracked and peeled. Of course she participated.

Dogs like the moon, too.

It is only a small shift from thinking about cracking and peeling a hard-boiled egg to thinking about Narcissa. After the two men left the house for the gazebo, she read a while and then retired. As she lay there she thought about the two men getting pickled...pickled enough that they would discuss which one could have her. She imagined them settling it like gallant gentlemen: They would flip a coin. They would flip a coin to decide who would have a crack at peeling her. 'Or who would peel me and have a crack,' she thought. Both were masters of disguise and concealment. She wouldn't know who it was.

Narcissa was sleeping peacefully when someone entered her bedroom and took the covers from the bed. She was waking up when someone blindfolded her and tied her hands behind her back. 'It's happened,' she thought. 'Someone has won the estate in a game of conquest. I'm the lady of the estate and part of the prize.'

Whoever it was grabbed her ankles and pulled her to the edge of the bed. She was face down with her legs spread. 'Do you like what you see?' she thought. Her nightgown had slid up past her panties. 'Do you want what's in them?'

Someone ran his hands up the back of her legs with his thumbs on her inner thighs. He did it again and again. He did it calmly and lightly. It wasn't the caresses that affected her. It wasn't the caresses that were making her sigh. It was the calm assurance behind them. Someone knew she was an aristocratic lady, and she belonged to the conqueror. Someone knew he could have everything if he treated her with kindness and consideration. If he treated her well, Cissy would offer her charms. If he continued to treat her well, Cissy would offer her allegiance. Her heart was optional, but it was possible.

Someone was treating her well. He caressed her lightly until she accepted the inevitable. She was face down with her feet off the bed. She wiggled towards him until her calves were off the bed with him between them. She wiggled towards him again until he was between her thighs. She was obviously offering herself. She wiggled again until she was pressing her warm, soft self against him. 'I'm valuable,' she thought. 'You want to keep me.' She was blindfolded and her hands were tied behind her back, but she was not gagged. He wanted to hear the noises Cissy Black made.

A rough voice told her to spread her legs wider. She knew he only wanted to see her offer herself. She opened her legs wider.

He did hear the noises Cissy Black made when someone parted her folds and worked his way into her depths. He did feel the way Cissy Black yielded when someone entered her. 'I can't take this too seriously,' he thought. 'She's wiggling to save herself. I can enjoy the way she wiggles, though. Wiggle for me, sweetheart,' he thought. 'Let me see if I can last through the pretend phase of her wiggles. She's a conquered aristocrat. She'll yield.'

'Yes,' he thought as he felt her become slick with sweat and her moves become slower and more sinuous. Her noises became higher in pitch. He felt her muscles as she groaned and writhed on his invasion. They were locked together in a desperate struggle. There were the last cries and spasms of a defeated province. Her struggling ceased. She lay under him...invaded and taken...limp with her surrender. He tasted sweetness.

He came into Narcissa like the tide: sweeping over the beach, sloshing like waves, riding higher and higher, pulsing in the ancient rhythm, covering the landscape with foam.

Narcissa thought it was over. She had surrendered and she had been taken. It was time for her conqueror to hold her and comfort her and let her bond with him. She felt him slide out of her. Too quickly for her to react, someone untied her hands, placed her on her back, and retied her hands over her head. He climbed back on the bed. 'Did I do well enough that he wants me again?' she thought. 'I'm safe. He'll keep me as his lady.' Then she realized it might not be the same person. 'Not two of them,' she thought, but before she could close her legs someone was between them.

'It's a terrible trick,' she thought. 'One of them had possessed her while the other watched.' She blushed with shame. 'One of them had invaded her and overwhelmed her until she moaned and writhed for their viewing pleasure. They had calmly observed her most intimate moments.'

She felt the other one entering her.

'It's the first one's turn to watch,' she thought. 'What does he like? Does he like seeing a cock part my hairy slit and plunge deep inside me to reappear wet and glistening? Does he like the vee shape of my thighs? Does he like the other view...the soles of my feet, my hips with the crack between them, my pink pucker, the shaft moving in and

out of me? Does he like my sighs and squishy wet noise? Does he like watching the one on top of me have fun?

'I'll show you fun. Want to watch a pureblood? Watch my legs go up. Watch me groan as your friend slams into me. Don't you wish you were the one driving me wild? Don't you wish you were the one making me lose control, making me yell and thrash as you had your way with me? Wouldn't you like to be the one between my legs as I arch my back and moan just before I yield, just before I do it? Yes, get jealous. Watch the lucky one on top of me as I wrap my legs around him and pull him into me. Watch as I make him lose it and squirt into me. Don't you wish you were your friend?'

'Your friend on top of me wishes he was you. He wishes he was watching this, watching his friend drive a lady wild, watching his friend get the ride of his life, watching his friend make a lady moan and squirm, watching his friend gush into her, watching her as she realizes she's going to have an orgasm.'

Narcissa shone. Her weapon was her lust-enhanced beauty. Her advantage was her surrender. Her victory was experiencing sex as never before and taking her captors with her. They romped like the first and last couple on earth. Their sex shot through them, leaving nothing else. They collapsed. Surely, Narcissa had prevailed.

The rope and blindfold disappeared. Narcissa was alone in her well-lit bedroom with Lucius.

"Oh, sweetheart," she said, wrapping herself around him. "That was wonderful."

"Are you okay?" he asked.

She held him until her heartbeat returned to normal. "Let's shower together, love."

Later, between fresh sheets, she held him and ran her fingers through his hair. 'I have the best husband,' she thought as she fell asleep.

The First and the Last

Chapter 5 of 9

'Spying covers a multitude of sins.'

Chapter 5: The First and the Last

"Aren't you coming, Hermione?"

"Go ahead, I'm going to be late," said Hermione, uncertain whether to go or not.

She had planned to meet Mr. Malfoy and work on Numerology. Then the letter arrived that Mrs. Malfoy would bring her mother to the village. 'What's Mum doing with the Malfoys?' Yesterday, a letter from her mother said she couldn't make it, but she and Narcissa had persuaded Mr. Malfoy to meet her.

'Persuaded?' thought Hermione. 'Oh, don't put yourself to any trouble, sir.'

'It's their fault I'm confused,' she decided. Half her wardrobe lay strewn across her bed, and she couldn't ask any of her dorm mates for advice since they were already giving her strange looks. She wasn't certain what she was dressing for. It certainly wasn't to entice Lucius Malfoy. She finally decided that she should look mature for a session in Numerology. Luckily, the Numerology book was small and hid easily in her purse. Her dorm mates didn't need to see that fashion accessory. Looking in the mirror, however, she decided she had achieved the desired mature effect, and the Numerology monograph put the finishing touch on the ensemble.

She made her way to the village, determined to be polite but formal as befitted someone unwanted but mature enough to take it in stride.

"Oh, Miss Ganger, my apologies for the mix-up, you must feel that no one wants to see you," said Mr. Malfoy, seeing her to his table and ordering a coffee for her. "I can understand if you're unhappy with us."

"It's unfortunate circumstances," she said. "It's no one's fault."

"I'm glad you're here, Hermione, very glad you're here. If you're not angry with me, we can relax at my home and try some Numerology."

Hermione looked up from her coffee and smiled. "Oh, yes."

As Lucius and Hermione discreetly made their way to the Malfoy Manor, there was another discreet meeting. This one in the castle dungeon.

"Severus, I've been thinking about things."

"From your tone of voice, you've come to a sad decision about our relationship."

"I'm not sure you could understand," she said.

Severus made an intuitive leap. "After you rescued the Grangers, how did everyone get along at the Malfoy Manor?"

"Very well."

"How did Lucius and Hermione get along?" he asked.

"You'd have sworn she was his daughter," said Narcissa.

"Have you been thinking how nice it would be to have a daughter, how well she would get along with Lucius, how she would warm up the Malfoy Manor?"

"Yes."

"But you want to be certain that Lucius is her father."

"Yes."

She paused. "We could still ... once more ... if you wanted to."

"No, your heart wouldn't be in it. All the other times your heart was in it ... at least partially ... at least I thought so."

'He's giving me up pretty easily,' she thought. 'He has a new cookie. I wonder who she is. It can't be that chit, Draupadi. She's married. Hermione was fawning on him at hospital, but she's a student. Who is it, Severus?'

"Do you wish to leave now, or did you want to stay for one final refreshment?" asked Severus.

"You're being such a gentleman that I'm inclined to stay, but you might want me to go."

"Not at all. Have a chair, and I'll bring out the caviar and champagne." He arranged everything on the table. "Besides, who else would I serve caviar and champagne to?"

'Not to the cheap Draupadi or the tasteless Hermione,' thought Narcissa.

As Severus played the gracious host, Lucius did likewise.

Hermione was holding Lucius's hand and walking from the gate to the house when he asked if she would like a broom ride.

"Yes," she said because he was being friendly and because he sounded enthusiastic. 'What am I doing? A broom ride? Will I agree to anything he says?' She also thought the ride would be cold in her mature outfit of blouse and skirt. 'But I'll have a short ride,' she thought. 'It'll get the blood moving to my brain, and then there'll be plenty of hot tea, and I've picked out the algorithm I want to work on.'

Inside the broom room, Hermione felt warm and removed her cloak. She noticed that Lucius appreciated her mature study outfit. She slowly unfastened his cloak. It felt mature to do so. She was taking care of him, keeping him from getting overheated. She placed her hands on his solid chest, and then laid her head against him. He lightly placed one hand on her back and the other on her hair. She moaned. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him. She felt her breasts rub against him.

"Are you sure you can like me?" Hermione asked Lucius. "I'm only an inexperienced girl."

He put his hand on her cheek. "Do you think I'm an expert? Do you think I don't stumble and fumble?" He looked at her bright shining eyes. "It's not the fumbling or finesse. It's who you're with."

Hermione hadn't known she could want anything this much...that reason would be blotted out and consequences forgotten. She simply wanted.

A narrator of sensitivity would close the veil on our inexperienced heroine's earnest efforts.

Hermione did not rush anything. She let her lover relax and adjust to her. She let him achieve peace with a world that included Hermione. Slowly enough that he was barely aware it was happening, she wrapped herself around him in a total embrace. She let him draw in deep, relaxed breaths until he could smell only her aroma. She held him until he could not remember the feel of any other woman.

Narcissa did not rush anything. She began by deciding that sitting in different chairs while eating caviar on toast and sipping champagne was too formal. She moved over to Severus's lap. Now she could feed him tidbits as she had done many times in the past...as a mistress should. Besides, it was comfortable in his lap even on a melancholy occasion.

Narcissa was running her hand through his hair. She demanded tribute since she was between him and the goodies. For each sip of champagne, he must kiss her lovingly. For each piece of toast and caviar, he must nuzzle her and confess her beautiful.

"Are you sure you like me?" asked Narcissa. "I'm such a pure-blood, rich bitch."

"You're more understanding and loving than you realize," he told her.

Narcissa hadn't known she was this susceptible...that she was this eager he have her...that it was what she really wanted.

A kind writer would draw the curtain on the departing pair and their anguish.

Narcissa felt a welcome familiarity. Her lover let her relax, let her brush her lips across him, let her brush him lightly with her breasts, let her hold him in her arms, let her fill his nostrils with her aroused scent, let her fill his lap, let her show her softness and willingness, let her part her thighs in invitation, let her be the only woman he could think of.

Hermione felt a welcome relief when Lucius explored her with his hands. She hadn't known that she had been aching for his touch, that his touch would soothe and reassure and comfort her.

Narcissa sighed with pleasure when Severus caressed her. She hadn't realized how much she missed his touch, how much she ached for the feeling of his hands on her.

Hermione was glad when Lucius's hands found her breasts. She kissed him as his welcome touch ran through her entire body. Her nipples pressed against her bra and made small peaks in her blouse. She pressed against him as his hands ran down her legs, under her skirt, and up her thighs. She became warm. She became aware of a tension that was starting to ask for release.

Narcissa nibbled Severus encouragingly as his hands cupped her breast and his fingers found her nipples. She became flushed. She wanted him to rip off her bra. She rubbed her blouse-covered but erect breasts against him as his fingers traced their way up her open legs. She knew she was starting to writhe.

Hermione helped Lucius unbutton her blouse and remove her bra. She pressed his mouth to her breasts. She made small noises. She moved her hand down to hold him. She wanted to hold him closer. She unbuttoned his trousers. She thought it was the most marvelous thing she had ever held. She moved down to kiss him. The intimate contact made her ache as she had never ached before. Hermione Granger tugged her panties off, placed her hands beside her head, and spread her legs for Lucius Malfoy.

Narcissa removed her blouse and bra. She made a low sound in her throat when Severus kissed and tongued her breasts. She ran her fingers through her lover's hair as he made her feel special. She was on her knees beside him and opening his trousers. She engulfed him with her warm, wet, tactile lips. She felt an overwhelming, aching need as she rose and tugged him to the side of the bed. Narcissa Malfoy slid her panties down, lay back on the quilt, and opened her thighs for Severus Snape.

Hermione moaned as Lucius began his entrance. She had hoped it wouldn't hurt; she had hoped it would feel good; but she had no idea it would be this good. Hermione groaned again and again as Lucius gently worked his way inside her. She had been afraid he wouldn't want her. She had been afraid he would be dominating and brutal as he ravished her. But Lucius did want her. He was being gentle and loving and considerate. He was watching her carefully. He was concerned about her. When he was all the way in, Lucius paused to hold her.

Narcissa sighed as Severus parted her folds. She couldn't believe how good it felt. She had been afraid he would be angry and brutal. She was afraid he would bang her in an impersonal manner. But he was making love to her. Narcissa moaned for him as he slid into her with practiced ease. When he had mounted her, he paused to look into her eyes and run his fingers through her hair.

Hermione was recovering from the shock of entry. She became aware of his skin against hers, the feel of his legs between hers, her breasts pressed against him, her breath mingling with his, his fingers in her hair. The best was his affection. 'It's more than moving parts,' she thought. She ran her fingers through his hair, his lovely hair, and kissed him with the sweetness she felt...kissed his loving face.

Narcissa lay gasping with the pleasure of being entered. She enjoyed the possessive look in her lover's eyes. 'He really wants me,' she thought. She wrapped her arms and legs around him and held him close as she moved for him.

Hermione was on the gentle plateau of sex. Everything was heightened: her skin against his, her legs around his, her breasts against him, her breath mingling with his. She had no idea how pretty she was.

Narcissa was in the middle ground of pleasure. She was only aware of Severus pressing against her and filling her. She had no idea how lovely she was as she moved like a sinuous animal.

Hermione's gentle pleasure was coming to an end as deep desire spread through her. She held Lucius tighter, became slick with sweat, and grunted as his sex had its way with her.

Narcissa left the pleasure plateau. She was squirming for the wild look in her lover's eyes. She was panting with lust as his sex took possession of her.

Hermione groaned and thrashed for Lucius.

Narcissa whimpered and writhed for Severus.

Hermione was flushed and sweaty and smiling helplessly.

Narcissa was flushed and sweaty and smiling helplessly.

Hermione cried out at the explosion in her brain. Her back arched as her entire body clenched Lucius again and again.

Narcissa gasped as a white flash blanked out her mind. She gave a choked sob as her entire being rippled and squeezed Severus.

Lucius held Hermione until her contractions subsided. Then he put her legs in the air, held her hands beside her head, and watched himself slide in and out of her. 'Where did a schoolgirl get such a lovely shape?' he thought. He took in her adoring gaze. He felt her get slicker for him. He heard her squishy noise. 'She likes it that I'm holding her and screwing her,' he realized. "Take me," whispered Hermione.

Severus waited until her spasms stopped before untangling himself from Narcissa. 'How can an elegant woman have such a nice figure?' he wondered. He arranged her with her feet in the air and her hands beside her head. He reveled in her loving looks. He felt her get slimy for him. He enjoyed her sloppy sounds. 'She wants me to hold her and screw her,' he mused. "Yes, darling," sighed Narcissa.

The bushy-haired girl was irresistible. 'I'm fucking Hermione Granger,' thought Lucius as he squirted into her. 'Gods, she's incredible. I want to keep her.' He sank down on her and held her.

The elegant lady was irresistible. 'I'm fucking Narcissa Malfoy,' thought Severus as he gushed into her. 'Gods, she's great. I want to have her.' He lowered himself onto her and cuddled her.

It was the first time and it had been wonderful. Hermione wore Lucius's shirt. She sat misty-eyed in his lap sharing a cup of hot chocolate. Lucius held her. She didn't want to leave.

It was the last time and it had been glorious. Narcissa wore Severus's shirt. She sat misty-eyed in his lap sharing a snifter of brandy. Severus held her. She didn't want to leave.

There was no reason for Hermione to leave. When she finished her chocolate, she fetched the textbook from her purse, and she and Lucius settled into the reason for her visit: Druid Numerology.

"I found this great chapter on prime numbers and coding," she said.

'Spies and kids and secret codes,' thought Lucius.

The day passed quickly for Hermione with Lucius letting her intellect wander and treating her like an adult. 'If he were a student,' thought Hermione, 'he would be too proud to copy my homework. And he wouldn't need to.'

Before she returned to school, Lucius had an adult conversation with her.

"Your friends are going to worry about your spending time with me," said Lucius. "We need to tell them something besides Arithmancy. Astonishingly enough, some people would find it hard to believe that you're having fun."

"We're having a wonderful time," protested Hermione. 'A balanced program of mental and physical exercise,' she thought.

"I know I am," said Lucius.

"What about spying?" he asked.

"Spying?"

"Spying covers a multitude of sins," said Lucius. Lucius let Hermione think it over before he said, "Let me give you something worthwhile, something you wormed out of me with your feminine wiles: Alastor Moody moves like a ghost, but we've discovered how to track him."

Hermione was intrigued. "Really?"

"We watch the rats and alley cats," said Lucius. "They know his aura. They've learned that if anything twitches he fries its ass. Moody is at the center of an ass-saving exodus."

"Cool," said Hermione. "Let me think. What can I give you?"

"You don't have to give me anything. I'm protecting you from your friends."

"No, I want to be fair," she said, hugging him.

"I don't know if this is worth anything or not, but the Order ..."

She paused.

He held her hand reassuringly. "It's okay, love. I know you're in the Order of the Phoenix, and they meet at the grim old place."

"Last summer, I brought the Arithmancy book you gave me there, and while we ... er, I was in the kitchen ..."

She paused again.

"Molly Weasley's in the group, and of course everyone meets in the kitchen," he said.

"It's going to be hard finding something you don't already know about us," she accused him.

"It's another secret society. They're all alike."

She looked skeptical.

"Mrs. Nott bakes the best chocolate-chip cookies," he informed her. He had almost blurted out that it was Narcissa, but decided that bragging about his wife's cookies with Hermione in his lap would be in poor taste...one cookie at a time.

"You're getting me off the topic," she complained. "They were all in the kitchen when I brought in the Hadley Numerology book. They were upset when they heard I got it from you, and they wanted to make certain it hadn't been jinxed. We found the pages of a manuscript hidden between the pages of the book."

"I didn't know that," he said.

She gave him a satisfied smile. "Everyone got excited about the manuscript. They thought it was a description of an old Druid ritual."

Hermione frowned. "But I probably haven't given you anything useful. Everyone looked at it for a few days, decided it was in a secret code, and put it in a box in a kitchen cupboard. They haven't looked at it since."

"I'm not very good at this," complained Hermione.

"Nonsense, you traded innocent information about a worthless document for valuable information about tracking an Auror. You outfoxed me. You're Mata Harione."

"You're sweet," she said.

It didn't seem possible for her to snuggle any closer, but she managed. 'Damn,' thought Lucius. 'Let's trade more secrets.'

'Severus missed that episode with the documents,' thought Lucius. 'Severus and I were busy covering our butts with the Death Eaters because we had protected the Grangers during the shopping-square raid. We both had howled in outrage. "Who was the numbskull who sent Dark Wizards, Demons, and Spectres after the Grangers!? If they had succeeded, there wouldn't have been anything left of the Grangers but a grease spot! You can't torture a grease spot for information! Who's responsible? I'll personally eviscerate the son of a bitch!" The Dark Lord finally calmed us down. He agreed that our pretended friendship with the Grangers was valuable. We both believed the Dark Lord was the son-of-a-bitch numbskull. There's a reason we're constantly outwitted by school kids.'

After she left the Manor and arrived at the common room, Hermione discovered that Lucius was correct. She had been spotted talking to Lucius Malfoy, and the demeanor of her interrogators said they weren't going to accept any story as flimsy as working on Arithmancy.

"Yes, I let him chat me up," she told Harry and Ron. "I played the innocent schoolgirl impressed by a big, bad Death Eater. If I let him continue to impress me, he's going to spill some secrets."

"What about you spilling secrets?" asked Ron. "And he's dangerous. He's going to try to get something from you, Hermione."

"That's ridiculous, Ron," said Hermione. "You know the Order doesn't tell us kids anything."

Ron was adamant. "He's not going to tell you anything unless you tell him something."

"Honestly, Ron, what do you think Mr. Malfoy and I would do? Have a rational discussion about the information we'd trade? Did you think I would make an agreement with Lucius Malfoy and expect him to keep it?"

"Ron's not stupid, Hermione," said Harry. "He knows nothing like that happened."

"We only want you to be careful," said Ron and Harry.

"And stay away from Lucius Malfoy," said Ron.

Hermione thought about giving them the information about Mr. Moody and the alley cats. 'But what if that lets Mr. Moody ambush Lucius? I can't let that happen. After all, my first duty as a spy is to protect my source of information. The Order of the Phoenix expects professional behavior from me. I can't let anything befall my source. I'll show them that even if I'm a schoolgirl, I have what it takes.'

The Death Eaters, like Ron and Harry, were worried about a member of their group. The raids on the Ministry and the shopping square had the Ministry abuzz. If they ever realized that Mr. Nott had been injured the same time the Ministry raid occurred, he could be arrested on suspicion and thrown into a prison that was essentially a torture chamber. It would overwhelm an old and crippled wizard, and he would tell his captors anything to be released. Partly out of compassion and partly out of self-preservation, the Death Eaters were sending Mr. Nott into hiding on the continent. This evening was a combination farewell party and fund raiser for his trip. The attendance was large and the contributions generous. He was a brave and loyal man. His friends had spent the last several months helping him tidy up his affairs and place them in the hands of his business-like wife. Mr. Nott was looking forward to basking in the sun in a more benign climate.

Severus was there to mingle with the group and wish Mr. Nott a happy voyage. Severus thought it petty to think about his relationship with Draupadi in the face of Mr. Nott's tragic injuries, but he was thinking Mr. Nott's leaving changed everything. Draupadi would be a woman alone, not a wife with a husband at home. There was no predicting her reaction. Severus had been formal, even distant, with her all evening.

He was alone at the refreshment table when Mrs. Nott approached him.

She was not happy. "Are you enjoying ignoring me?"

"Good evening, Mrs. Nott."

"Don't you 'Mrs. Nott' me," she said.

She paused. "Did you have fun the other day?" she hissed.

Severus offered her a cup of punch.

"Don't try your polite manners, either," she raged at him. She stood quietly for a while before she said, "I didn't want it to be with someone I liked."

Severus was still processing that piece of information when she spat out more.

"I've never loved my husband, and he has no use for me, but I thought it would be with some gross old man who groped me ... maybe with some young stud as I had one last fling."

"I gave myself to you, and I loved every minute of it," she said. "I don't know what to do now." She gave him a disdainful 'I hope you're proud of yourself' look and rejoined her husband.

Severus watched Draupadi rejoin her husband and persuade him to leave. 'Perhaps she'll have a good romp with him,' he thought. A sharp pain shot through him as he saw her leave with another man...even though the other man was her husband.

Severus made his way to the bowl of spiked punch. He could use some pain relief. Someone was by his elbow.

"Are you angry with me?" Draupadi asked him.

"No ... yes ... no," he said.

"Do you want to see me again?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "Very much." He racked his brain for ideas but the only thing that came to mind was the feeble, "Have you looked at the plant life north of here?"

"Maybe this Saturday," she said, glancing at her husband taking his leave. "I have to run. I'll be in touch."

Severus tried not to stare at the classy lady crossing the room to join her husband. He would quit the party as soon as he could gracefully manage. He was beyond what spiked punch could do for him.

Severus joined the group of well-wishers saying goodbye to the Notts. He considerably helped Draupadi with her cloak. "Meet me at your back door in one hour," he whispered.

She turned to look at him one last time as she and her husband left.

An hour later, Draupadi was leading Severus to a warm place in one of her greenhouses. She placed him in a comfortable chair and sat in his lap with her head on his shoulder. Severus thought about an old man groping her. He stroked her hair and cuddled her. He thought about her having a fling with a young stud. He stroked her hair and cuddled her. He saw her to her back door and left. 'I'm a wimp,' he thought.

As he climbed into his bed he thought that Draupadi surely regarded him as a wimp. 'I am a wimp,' he thought, 'and I'm going to lose the lady.'

Next Saturday, they would spend the day looking for plants in the countryside north of the school.

Pride and Passion

Chapter 6 of 9

'Hermione Granger was not having a good day.'

Chapter 6: Pride and Passion

Hermione was strolling along the forest path, which was now a jungle path, which was now a savannah path. She was a queen, a lion queen, but she paused often to rest her hand on the head of her companion: a snake, a large snake, a ferocious snake that she should fear but didn't.

They were in the shade of a copse of trees when the snake put a coil around her. Hermione knew it was dangerous, but she put her arms around the snake and embraced it. The snake completely encircled her. She should have felt helpless, she was helpless, but she felt cherished. She kissed the snake, her warm and cuddly snake who gave her warm and cuddly kisses. The snake put its tongue between her lips as if she was his lioness, and her mouth sighed, yes. Its coils fondled her breasts as if she was his queen, and her nipples rose, yes. Its length caressed her thighs as if she was his lion queen, and her legs opened for him, yes. She coiled around her snake, told it she was his, and asked it to possess her, yes.

The snake took Hermione in the strangest way. It unraveled his coils from her, admired her bushy mane and her intelligent eyes, and kissed her deeply. For the longest time, Hermione had thought that no one would want a lion queen, that no one would dare approach her, that she was doomed to a life of regal loneliness. Now she was being admired as a lion queen. She was being taken as a lion queen. Her snake wanted a lion queen. Her defenses fell, she fell open, and she accepted him entering her.

Her snake possessed Hermione in the strangest way. He made love to her...gentle and urgent love that told her that he admired her, he wanted her, he could not resist his lion queen. She could not resist. Hermione was a lioness...clinging, moaning, sweating, yelling, loving, rutting. Hermione was a kitten...purring when the iron grip of orgasm had finished with her. She was curled comfortably in her lover's coils...her fierce snake protecting her. But she was a lion queen, and woe betide anyone who threatened her snake.

Hermione slowly opened her eyes. She, her nightgown, and the sheets were wet and sticky. She sat in bed looking at the clouds and the moon and the sky. She knew what the dream meant: she was becoming attached to Lucius, and she could not afford to do that. He was the enemy. She wrote him a letter that she could never see him again. To signal the affair was truly over, she returned the Hadley text on Druid Numerology with the letter. She cried the rest of the night.

'Like mother, like daughter,' thought Lucius as he consigned the letter to the flames. He flipped through the Numerology text before shelving it, but there was no chapter on decoding the human heart.

The next several weeks passed strangely for Hermione but very well for her friends. She could gather them closer by helping with their schoolwork. She let them copy her notes without protest. Faced with the demands of upper level classes and involved with Quidditch, the boys did not question their good fortune and ask what was wrong with Hermione.

It was the end of a Potions session, and it struck Hermione that it would be kind to tell Professor Snape that he had conducted a good class. 'Dare I?' she wondered. She felt light headed at the thought. 'What would he do?' She dawdled picking up her things because she wanted to wait until they were alone to tell him, but other students were even slower, and she had to rush to her next class.

Her Charms essay was large enough that Ron and Harry could have a separate half. To disguise the plagiarism, she refrained from pointing out their mistakes. 'I'm pathetic,' she thought, 'but I need the company.'

She arrived at the next Potions session a wreck. 'I only want to tell him that he's teaching well,' she thought. 'There's nothing wrong with that.' Her nervousness had its effect, and she nearly botched the preparation. "Hermione, don't add it now," Ron had barked at her. She thought Snape was glaring at her. 'I can still say something,' she thought. 'I can apologize and thank him for his patience.' She dawdled again, but when she looked up, Snape was gone.

Hermione spent the rest of the day certain she had ruined her chances with Professor Snape. Late the next afternoon, she was on her way to the library.

"You're letting them walk all over you," Ginny was telling her. "You're on your way to the library to look up a bunch of stuff for them, aren't you?"

Ginny had met Hermione in the corridor, and Ginny had persisted in walking with her on the way to the library while telling Hermione she should let the boys fend for themselves. Hermione didn't want to hear it.

They were at the library door when Ginny said, "You're not their mother."

Hermione turned in shock to look at an angry Ginny. She was about to tell Ginny that it wasn't her business when Professor Snape walked out of the library.

Hermione had been certain the pain from Lucius would overwhelm everything else. She was surprised her heart was pounding and she could barely speak. "Professor Snape ... Professor Snape ... I ..."

"Yes," he said.

Hermione managed to croak out, "I want to thank you for your good Potions classes."

Hermione felt hot and flushed. Ginny and the professor were staring at her. She turned to run into the library.

"Miss Granger," said Snape.

She turned to face him, wishing Snape and Ginny would just vanish, wishing the two of them would forget this had ever happened.

"I suppose I should thank you for your kind remarks," said Snape.

He paused. "It is gratifying when a good student appreciates a professor's efforts."

He continued on his way. Hermione was floating a foot off the floor, and Ginny was giving her friend a puzzled look.

Hermione gazed wistfully upon the departing Potions professor. She remembered how dashing and friendly he had been last summer. She knew that if he were a student, he would be too proud to copy her work.

"The library is so stuffy in the late afternoon," Hermione told Ginny. "Let's walk down to the lake before tea."

Too stunned by the prospect of what might be happening to comprehend it, Ginny accompanied Hermione to the lake.

Hermione's mood was joyful as she and Ginny walked to the lake, but it slid from joyful to moody as the week ended and Professor Snape had paid her no special attention. During Friday's dinner, she kept waiting for him to notice her. She wondered if she dared speak to him after dinner, but when the meal ended, he had vanished.

The next day was a Saturday the students could spend in the village. Hermione had dressed carefully...mousey brown was appropriate. She was at an outdoor table, hid in the glare of the sun.

'I'll sit here and watch everyone else have fun,' she thought.

Hermione saw Lucius Malfoy, and anger welled up inside her. He had let her dump him, practically tossing her aside. How dare he trample her feelings like that? 'That bastard, I'll give him the You-Stole-My-Virginity glare.'

"Right," said her inner voice, "while you weren't looking. You were rather busy."

"Shut the fuck up," Hermione told her inner voice, "I am preparing my A-1 glare."

Before she could execute same, however, Mr. Malfoy was joined by a lady friend. His wife sat down and put her arm across his shoulders in a possessive manner. Hermione's insides went through a wringer. 'That's unseemly, you old hag,' she raged. She looked elsewhere...not able to bear the sight of such brazen behavior. 'There are schoolchildren around, you hussy.'

She saw Professor Snape. It would be simple courtesy to walk over, greet him, and offer to share a table and coffee with him. Before she could act on her gracious impulse, he was joined by a lady Hermione recognized as Mrs. Nott. They were talking together in an animated manner. 'Sure, monopolize the conversation, why don't you?' thought Hermione. 'There's no reason to give any one else a chance to be polite and sociable.'

Hermione was certain a mature lady like Mrs. Nott should be able to flirt more subtly and not make such a spectacle in public. 'Why, she's practically drooling over him. What's she going to say next? "Come over and see my wild pussy willow; it only grows in one spot."' She saw Mrs. Nott take Professor Snape's hand. That was too much. 'Why don't you grab his cock and be done with it, herb whore?'

Hermione Granger was not having a good day.

Hermione would have been even more distressed if she had known that Professor Snape was considering a family life with Draupadi. He wanted to wait a year to see if she could take all his moods.

"I already know all your moods, Severus," she had said. "And living apart for a year isn't a real test. You don't know how irritating a woman can be until you're stuck in the same house with her."

Severus had no reply to that.

"And you're missing the romance phase of our relationship," she accused him. "You're missing the part where I'm a giddy little girl who's madly in love with you."

'Damn the school strictures and living arrangements,' thought Severus.

Severus recalled arriving at Draupadi's house last night. He had been apprehensive and stayed through the Friday dinner at school before leaving for her home. Draupadi expected him, but he had no idea how she would react. He was no longer competing against a real, present husband but against an idealized, absent husband.

When he arrived, Draupadi had sat him in front of the fireplace and brought him a brandy. He had silently admired, and resented, the trappings of old wealth the Notts had.

"Tell me about your week, Severus."

"I'm only a Potions professor," he said, noticing more valuable objects in the room.

Draupadi shook her head. "Even criminals use technology, Severus."

"I'm not following you," he said.

"I watch too much mundane entertainment," she replied. "The stories are about some super hero. Of course, he's after a super villain. It wouldn't do to have our super hero handing out parking tickets."

Severus wasn't following all of that, but he caught the drift.

"Well, there's the super villain flying around in his special, plush airplane," she continued, "and he's concocting these clever, diabolical schemes."

Severus nodded. He knew about airplanes.

"But none of his schemes are as clever as the airplane."

Severus nodded. He was beginning to get her point.

"At the climax of the story, the super hero gets in his airplane, and he saves the day by parachuting out the back of his plane in a super sports car. The hero is as brave as brave can be, but nothing he does is as marvelous as the plane, the parachute, or the car."

She could tell that Severus, not a devotee of mundane entertainment, hadn't understood all the details of the story. She tried again.

"When I was a little girl, I liked to read 'Toby, the Brave Wizard.'"

Severus nodded. He had liked the story, too, but he wondered what she was going to do with it.

"Toby undergoes all these trials and hardships to get the healing potion to his parents, but it wouldn't have done any good if the potion didn't work. Toby is a hero and saves two lives, but the Potions master who invented it saved hundreds and thousands of lives."

He nodded his understanding.

Severus, too, had read 'Toby, the Brave Wizard' when he was a boy, but he was a bit embarrassed that it had been one of his reasons for becoming a Potions master.

Draupadi moved closer to Severus. "I'm not certain heroes are anything special. They're the ones left alive on the winning side. We romanticize them because we want to believe that courage and kindness count. But they're just the people lucky enough to survive a few adventures."

She paused. "You won't try to be a hero, will you, Severus?"

"Not a chance," he said.

Draupadi had moved closer to Severus. He was thinking about the absent, idealized husband. She snuggled. He put an arm around her.

"You don't have to be so damned careful," she said.

Severus froze.

"I'm not fragile. And you don't always have to control yourself."

"You and Lucius. Lucius and you. You never lose your cool. You never make a move that isn't planned...thought through and planned."

"Lucius?" he asked. "Are you and Lucius ...?"

"How can you say that? How can you say that!" She was not calming down. "And don't sit there rationally planning what you're going to do next...how you're going to handle the crazy lady."

"If I thought going crazy would help, I would consider it," he said.

"Oh, sure, be an aloof prick. That should work well. That really touches my heart."

"It touches your temper," he said.

"Cold, sarcastic bastard. Why did I have to fall for you?"

"You are right," he said. "I act too aloof. But you already know that."

"That doesn't make it easier to take," she said.

"I'm not certain how to do this," he said. 'I better learn how,' he thought. He put his arms around Draupadi. She relaxed as he held her.

He wondered how stable Draupadi was. 'She's already considering having a daughter with me, and she has unpredictable outbursts.' His thoughts wondered to Miss Granger. 'What did she want? How stable was she?'

'Oops,' he thought. 'Better think about one lady at a time. Perhaps Draupadi's outbursts are a good sign. Is she romantically attracted to me? Are her emotions in control? That could be a good thing.'

Focusing on Draupadi wasn't difficult. 'She's a noble lady who's shown time and again that she's on my side,' he thought. 'Maybe she cares for me and wants the same from me.'

She stood, took him by the hand, and led him into her bedroom. Severus unclipped her hair and let it frame her face and flow across her shoulders. 'How is it I'm always struck by how beautiful she is?' he thought.

"I ... I shouldn't," she said.

'That's a reversal,' he thought, but he felt sympathy for his Draupadi. "That's true. You shouldn't let me hold you."

"I've never ... I didn't think ..." she began.

"You've never been in a passionate relationship," he said. "You planned a quiet, ordered life. You picked a proper husband. You raised a son. You've been a model wife and mother."

"Oh ... I can't help it," she said, embracing him.

"You didn't think anything would intrude," he said, stroking her hair, "that you would never meet anyone who cared for you?"

"Do you care?"

"Very much," he said. "I would leave you alone if I could. I would leave you your perfect existence."

"It's not that perfect," she said.

Her existence had not had wild, heart-pounding embraces. It had not had total focus on one person. 'How is it I never knew how much I wanted him?' she thought.

She was not prepared for a world that contained only two people. She was not ready for a world where only the moment existed. She had no defenses for his wanting her. She had no resistance to pressing against him and offering herself to him.

Severus was reminded that Draupadi was a practical soul. She took off his shirt and then took off her blouse. She paused to kiss him. She took off his trousers and then took off her skirt. She paused to kiss him again ... a practical soul with a romantic streak. Their shoes and socks followed. She sat him on the bed, stood in front of him, and unfastened her bra. She sighed and held his head as he paid attention to one breast then the other...golden, pert breasts with brown nipples. Severus thought them perfect.

Practical, romantic Draupadi removed their final garments. Severus coaxed her on top of him, and then he intruded on her existence ... an intimate, invasive intrusion ... her existence seemed perfect to him.

This was the Draupadi Severus wanted, a Draupadi free to move and do anything she wanted, but who chose to be wrapped around him and caressing him, wrapped around him and caressing him most intimately.

He was kissing her. It didn't matter that he was clumsy. He was kissing her as if she was lovely and talented and loving and she was the one he wanted.

He was pressing into her. He couldn't help himself. He needed more of that warm, welcoming intimate caress. Her looks of pleasure drove him on. Her animal sounds tore away his reserve. She was class and beauty and sex. He had to have her.

Talking to Severus...arguing with Severus...had lowered Draupadi's defenses. 'I'm getting too much,' thought Draupadi. 'I wanted him to want me and give me sex, but he's lustful for me and making love to me. I like it, and I can't get enough. I'm going to lose control the way I did the last time. I want all of him. It's too much, and I can't think anymore.'

She was a tigress mating. He gave her the gentlest of kisses and caresses. She was hot, sweaty, and undulating. He gave her the gentlest of kisses and caresses, held her firmly, pushed into her, and let his sweating, grunting Draupadi squirm. Her heart was pounding. She was contracting on him. She was contracting on him again. She was lying still, breathing heavily.

A little later, she noticed that he was limp and sliding out of her. 'I drove him over the edge,' she thought, pleased with herself. 'I got him excited enough to come inside me.' She felt complete ... and a bit smug.

In something of a daze, Severus and Draupadi showered and returned to bed. Under the covers, she snuggled next to him. She had never spent the night with anyone before. She found it awkward but thought she could get used to it.

In the morning, Draupadi was at a loss for what to do but decided to fall back on routine. She would fix morning tea and then breakfast.

Severus woke when Draupadi stumbled out of bed. He went to the kitchen where she poured him his wake-up tea.

"You toss and turn," he said grumpily.

"Well, you snore," she said in reply.

"You're all knees and elbows."

"You swipe the covers."

They kissed each other affectionately. 'Okay so far,' they thought.

"You're going to stay tonight, too, aren't you?"

"If you can stand it," he said.

Draupadi sat and stirred her tea. "This might work," she said. "You wake up grumpy. We squabble. We kiss and make up. We go to our separate jobs feeling we're not alone in the world. In the evening, we tell each other what happened at work. Then we go to bed where we toss and turn and snore and rut and wake up refreshed and ready to do it all over again."

"You paint an irresistible picture."

"Later, there'll be the pitter-patter of little feet," she said.

"There'll be the pitter-patter of little feet as she digs up valuable herbs and breaks potion equipment."

"There, you see," said Draupadi happily. "You're getting used to the idea already."

Severus admired her logic but felt he was being outmaneuvered.

He didn't know how to explain his biggest fear: He would be like his father. She would want him to have recovered, but it wasn't that easy. His father was the only role model he had. He didn't know how to do it any other way, and that way was terrible. The worst part was that the child Severus thought it was all his fault.

"Oh, I almost forgot," said Draupadi. "My husband hid something in the back greenhouse. He may be spying on us."

"Did he have help?" asked Severus.

"Four other Death Eaters. I don't know why it took so many."

"Did you ask him about it?" asked Severus.

"He told me it was important documents. The Death Eaters don't trust their safe houses anymore because of a raid at the beginning of summer."

"I heard about the raid," said Severus.

"I think they're overreacting, and I don't like Death Eater stuff in my greenhouse, but my husband said these were special documents that no one could figure out. They're afraid the stuff is super-powerful. What a load of baloney."

'It's strange how things work out,' thought Severus.

"Have you thought about the new plants and how they're changing the field of Potions?" she asked.

"This early in the morning, no."

"I'm serious," she said.

"You want me to write a Potions textbook. You want me to have a daughter. You're full of things for me to do."

"Not all at once," she said. "And if you don't do it, I don't think it will be done."

It was quiet for awhile.

"Well, it's true," said Draupadi.

"Maybe when the damned war is over," said Severus.

"The 'damned war' is going to tear everything to pieces, and you know it. People hope the Potter kid will zap Voldemort, and it'll be over, but it's not going to be like that. Besides, Voldemort might zap the Potter kid."

She drank her tea. "I'm sorry, Severus. I want us to be together. Everything's in the way."

She paused, looked at him hard, and said, "Maybe you don't want us to be together."

"I've been alone for a long time. I'm still adjusting," he said.

"You adjusted pretty fast last night," she said.

She continued. "And I know you're involved in the war. I don't know what you're doing, but I know it's dangerous."

"Hogwarts is becoming a dangerous place," he said. "We're seen as a bunch of idealistic scholars and students who are not going to yield to the dark side ... or to the Ministry of Magic either."

"You're doing more than that," she said.

She sighed. "I'm sorry I'm yelling at you."

In a motion that seemed natural, Draupadi moved over to Severus and was sitting in his lap. Her hair was normally tied back tightly, but it was now loose and wild. He could smell its fragrance as the strands irritated his eyes and nose. 'This is great,' he thought. 'It's calming and relaxing.'

While he was holding her, Severus recalled that Draupadi had been aloof at school and ignored the immature boys; she had been aloof to romance and had married for convenience and wealth; and she had been aloof to her husband and his being a Death Eater. But the world and her emotions were not going to let her remain aloof.

He broke the silence. "I didn't intend to spend the morning squabbling with you."

She held him. "I don't care whether we squabble or not. I want to be around you."

'Perhaps Draupadi's right in her aloofness,' he thought. 'Failure to develop the new healing potions will cause more suffering than the war. The war is against a simple evil fought with physical courage and supported by comrades. Developing potions is a contest with nature. It's isolated, intellectual courage, and I don't know if I can do it anymore.'

Draupadi considered the morning's conversation and summed it up. "The war is taxing the system. We're sliding downhill."

Severus thought Draupadi was all too correct.

She brightened. "We can have some more tea, and I'll fix porridge. I need new gardening gloves. Will you come with me? We can buy a pair for you, too."

That is how Draupadi came to meet Severus in front of a shopping-square store in full view of Hermione.

Hermione's thoughts about Lucius weren't any more comforting. She could imagine him beginning his Saturday morning with one of his defense exercises. The house-elves would enchant croquet balls and send them at Lucius.

"I suspect they enjoy it," he had confided to her.

He had told her that he would fend them off while standing, and then he would mount his broom and conduct a mobile defense. Hermione was imagining him returning to the broom room where Narcissa had watched him from the doorway. Hermione pictured Narcissa having a reaction to his display of power and coordination. Just imagining it, Hermione was breathing heavily and pressing her thighs together. Hermione could see Narcissa removing the cloak from his warm body as Hermione had done. Hermione imagined Narcissa laying her head on Lucius...a Lucius reeking of wild wind, morning dew, and male exertion. Hermione moaned just imagining it. Narcissa's knees must have buckled.

Hermione winced as she thought about Lucius leading Narcissa to the same couch that she and Lucius had shared. Hermione thought about Narcissa in the grip of those strong hands as they flowed over her blouse, over her hips, and up her legs...as his lips nibbled her, devoured her, and sought her essence. Hermione thought about Narcissa's blouse and bra landing on the same spot Hermione's had landed, of Narcissa's panties dropping to the floor the same place Hermione's panties had dropped.

Jealousy ripped through Hermione as she realized she had only experienced the gentle side of Lucius. Narcissa was stretched out on the same couch that had experienced the taking of Hermione, but the coils of the snake held Narcissa's hands above her head, the coils of the snake spread Narcissa's legs, and the coils pulsed with the power of their entry into Narcissa. Hermione looked at Narcissa's lush hair and imagined it spread as wide as her thighs. Hermione could vividly see Narcissa's weak struggles and hear her hapless sounds as the snake undulated inside her. Hermione observed Narcissa's elegant legs and imagined their final thrashing. Hermione could imagine Lucius enjoying Narcissa's spasms and then withdrawing from her while still erect...leaving Narcissa aching to be completely possessed. That cruel, cruel man.

In the shopping square, Hermione watched Narcissa cross and uncross her legs and swing her feet. 'Ache, do we?' Hermione watched her persuade her husband it was time to go home. 'Have urgent business, do we?' Hermione pictured Narcissa's lovely face in ecstasy. Hermione knew Narcissa would surrender quickly. Once home, Lucius would press her against a wall, and Narcissa would barely have time to whimper before she unraveled in his coils.

The spoon clinked against Hermione's teacup.

Duel of Titans and Union of Opposites

Chapter 7 of 9

'And where was your famous snarky self?'

Chapter 7: Duel of Titans and Union of Opposites

"We're alone and on the loose."

They nodded. The Winter Holidays had begun with a bright Saturday morning, and Severus had met Lucius for a late breakfast to celebrate the beginning of two weeks without students. Several days earlier, Narcissa, Draupadi, and Vivian had left for the continent to visit Mr. Nott and Mr. Parkinson over Winter Solstice. Despite the benign climate, Mr. Nott's health was failing, and the trip promised to be stressful. Narcissa had accompanied Draupadi for moral support.

"Are you still looking at the Hadley manuscripts?" Severus asked.

"Everyone made such a fuss that I became curious. I don't know if he was on to something or not, but it's interesting reading."

"It's something for the long winter nights," said Severus. "The only piece you don't have is hidden in the grim old place. How did you find out about that anyway?"

'A little bird told me,' thought Lucius. 'A little bird who flew away.'

"I overheard a conversation," he said. "It was vague, but I could guess what it was about."

"That's extraordinary luck," said Severus.

The morning was beautiful, but Severus couldn't stay to enjoy it. It was time to relieve Alastor Moody of guard duty at the grim old place.

"Too bad you can't come along," said Severus. "I plan to clean the place to pass the time, and you know more about it than anyone in the Order."

"That's rich. But I've seen more than enough of that place."

Severus left, thinking about Lucius finding secret places in the house to meet Narcissa. 'Wonder if there are traces after all these years? Did Lucius court her older sisters first? What had that house seen?'

'Enough of those cookies,' he thought. He would be alone, and he would proceed directly to the kitchen cupboard and procure the Hadley document waiting in a cookie jar. Lucius and Severus had waited a long time for the opportunity of Severus being alone in the house. It was a chance to photograph the documents without attracting attention.

Severus arrived to find Miss Granger talking to Alastor Moody. "She doesn't think anyone should be alone in this house," said Alastor. "But nobody stayed with me last night."

"They didn't let us out of school until this morning," said Miss Granger, looking at Snape as if it were his fault.

Alastor Moody took his leave.

'The best laid schemes of wizards and imps,' thought Severus.

"Do you think we should clean and order the library, sir?" Hermione asked brightly.

"I was thinking of cleansing some of the place," he said, "but I didn't realize you were going to replace Mrs. Weasley, the cleaning tyrant."

Miss Granger looked abashed. "I'm ... I'm sorry."

He relented. "Perhaps you just meant to be companionable."

She nodded.

"Well, unlike previous times, you are now an adult witch, and you can use your wand to defend yourself against this house."

"You remembered my birthday, sir?"

He nodded. He wasn't certain about his motives for checking when Miss Granger became an adult.

"Your being an adult should make everything easier," he said, "and Molly did neglect the library. The dark side of manuscripts is not her strong point."

They soon fell into a pleasant routine of working together. They did triage. Innocuous books were left on the shelves. Suspicious books were stacked on a library table. Obviously malignant ones were stored in an abandoned room protected by their spells. They would examine the third group later and very carefully.

Severus's complaint was that Hermione had worn her school uniform. The shirt looked too tight. 'She's going to pop a button.' He kept getting glimpses of her legs. 'I'm turning into a disgusting, dirty old man,' he thought.

"There're some books behind the couch," she said.

Before he could stop her, she was on the floor and making her way under the couch. 'Don't wiggle like that, girl,' he thought. Then she was backing out with her skirt sliding up. He groaned.

"Ouch," she said.

He quickly pulled her out. The fingers of her left hand were trapped in a book, and it was wrapping tendrils around her wrist. He pointed his wand and stopped its encircling.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"It's painful, but I don't think I'm hurt."

"The pain is good. It means it's not injecting a narcotic into you," he said.

He carefully pointed his wand, freezing and breaking off the tendrils one by one. The book was trying to back away. He held it, touched it with his wand, and whispered a spell. Hermione didn't catch the words to the spell, but it still made her shudder. Disturbing thoughts came to Hermione. 'He's almost a Dark Wizard. What am I doing around him?'

The book opened, and she snatched her hand away. Hermione thought she could hear the book whimper as he waved his wand to bind it. He tossed it into the protected room and took her to the kitchen.

"Tell me what spells you're using," she said as he examined her fingers.

'Admirable lady,' he thought. They went through the examination and healing spells.

"You'll have some bruises," he said.

"Will you kiss it and make it better?" she asked.

How could he refuse?

"I'm sorry I was careless," she said.

Severus had learned from Draupadi that these occasions were not a good time to snap at someone. He said, "It could have happened to either one of us. You were right: There should be two of us when we're cleansing this place."

Hermione was feeling much better.

Later, she insisted she be the one to climb the ladder to retrieve the books on the top shelf. Severus tried not to look. 'Is she doing this on purpose?' he wondered. She was on top of the ladder and stretching out with both arms and legs to reach some books.

"You could be more modest."

"You shouldn't look."

"I have to know what you're doing on top of the ladder."

"A properly mannered person doesn't notice certain things."

He waited till she had come back down the ladder before saying, "You'll be glad to hear that this properly mannered person didn't notice there's an indiscreet tear in your undergarment."

She blushed, ran to the lavatory, and reappeared a moment later. "There is not!" She was fuming. "A gentleman would never have said such a thing And he certainly wouldn't laugh."

She gathered her anger. "You ... you ... " She fired a hex that hit him in the toe. He hopped around the room.

"The word you're looking for is 'uncouth,' love." He fired a hex that frizzled her hair. She gasped. He wisely fled the room.

"You can hide, but you can't disappear!" she yelled, flinging a constrictor spell after him.

He ducked into a broom closet and recited the counter-spell before his trousers squeezed his testicles to jelly. He realized they were acting like little kids, but for some reason, it was fun. It was more than fun. He couldn't stop.

'Turnabout is fair play,' thought Severus. As Hermione stalked past the closet, he poked his wand through the small crack in the door and aimed both high and low. He vanished into the woodwork.

Hermione was three rooms away when the spell intruded upon her consciousness. The writhing of her bra straps had her nipples hard and her breasts perky. The rhythmic rippling of the elastic in her panties had her longing for relief. She leaned against the wall for support as her counter-spells calmed her garments. She rested a spell to calm herself. "I'm going to give that hairy-assed bastard such a hard-on," she swore.

She heard the stairs creak and ducked into the second floor lavatory. She pressed into the wall with her heart pounding as if the hound of hell were after her. She waited until the hound's footsteps had faded. The landing on the third floor was ideal for an ambush. With an athleticism propelled by romance, she jumped on the banister and rode it up to the landing. She leaped to the floor at the top.

"Bravo," she heard a smooth voice say. "You have to be slick for that trick. Should I look for splinters?"

That was too insufferable to deserve a reply.

"Unlike you, sir, I have given some thought to our predicament. It would not do to have an opponent sneak upon us whilst we are preoccupied." She waved her wand for a plethora of wards and alarms. "We must guard against intrusion even by those the house believes a friend. The enemy is infinitely subtle, sir."

'Someone is infinitely subtle,' Severus was thinking, but before he completed the thought, Hermione's spell had his cloak flying.

A sweep of his wand fastened her shoes and then her socks to the floor. She stepped out of them and waggled her toes at him. "Oh, most efficacious, sir."

It occurred to her that he was a professor. She waved her wand. His shirt went flying.

He remembered she was a student. He waved his wand. Her shirt went flying.

'I'm in real trouble,' she thought. His trousers went flying.

'I've got to control myself,' he thought. Her skirt went flying.

They were breathing heavily. 'We can't do this,' they thought. They were in each others arms. 'Gods, she's gorgeous.' 'Gods, he's handsome.' They waltzed towards the nearest bed.

She reached down to check. 'I did give the hairy-assed bastard such a hard-on.' She pressed herself against him. 'Oh, please, please, don't let him think I'm a little girl.' She kissed him desperately. He unhooked her bra and fastened on her breasts. 'Oh, gods, yes.' She couldn't help it that her back arched. 'If he laughs at me, I'm going to die.'

She lifted her hips and pushed her panties down. 'If he's teasing me, I'm going to kill him.'

He interlaced his fingers with hers so that her hand was on top of his, and then he moved his hand over her. Everything would be mutual. Their fingers felt the elasticity of her breasts, the curve of her ass, the smoothness of her legs, and the shape of her face. He let her feel that her body was wondrous. He let her coax his hand to her sex. Their fingers traced up from her wet slit to her nub. Her hand left his to embrace him.

His hand continued to trace her sex. Over and over his fingers caressed her. She sighed. She was a girl in his arms. She flexed the small of her back in time with him. Her face became angelic. She rolled her hips. Her face became intense. She breathed in short gasps. She pressed against him. She gave a quiet, "Oh." She was breathing heavily and slowly going limp. He held her.

She rolled over on her back and parted her legs to invite him in.

How could he refuse?

He entered her gently. He stroked her until she moved with him and then he whispered that she should make love to him. Once again, her face became angelic as she rolled her hips, and then her face became intense as she pressed against him.

She signaled by smiling at him and squeezing him with her thighs. 'Oh, sweetheart,' he thought.

Severus eased into her shelter and rode out the storm in Hermione's pussy.

For the longest time, she had been afraid he would never notice her. Now he was nestled between her legs, inside her, and embracing her. He was resting lightly upon her. She felt other-worldly. As reason returned she came to a decision: If he was sarcastic about this, she would hex his balls off.

He kissed her and eased out of her. He was wet and glistening. 'He's still erect,' she thought. 'I did that. I should be careful what I wish for.'

"I want to have you like a lioness."

How could she refuse?

Hermione arranged herself on her knees and elbows. Her super rational mind observed that arousal changed perspective. A far corner of her mind noted that she should be embarrassed to present her cute round ass and sexy furry slit, but she was happy and eager to offer them to her lover. Romance flowed through her, and she was certain he would like them and want her.

He liked them. He wanted her.

He brushed her hair aside to see her face.

'He doesn't want it to be anybody,' she realized. 'He wants it to be me.'

'Oh, Severus,' she thought. 'It feels so good when you hold me, when you part me and enter me. Do you like it? Do you like sliding deep inside me? You're so gentle, sweetie. Do you want me? I'll give you anything you want. Oh, Severus.'

She felt him grip her possessively. She looked back and smiled. Severus held Hermione's cute round ass and came inside Hermione's sexy furry slit.

'Oh, yes,' they thought.

"I'll be right back," she said in a tone of voice that said he'd better be there when she returned.

He would wait. She was only a girl, she didn't have the wildness of Narcissa, she didn't have the intensity of Draupadi, but she was sweet.

'She's too sweet,' he thought. He had heard her carry on about friendship and bravery at the grim old place. 'Well, I'll be careful what I say to her. I'll be careful how I act.'

She bounded back from the lavatory, hairbrush in hand. Somehow, her hair had become tangled. She sat on the bed, facing him and brushing her hair. She had pulled the quilt over her legs to hide the fact that she was dripping and creating another wet spot. She reasoned it was part of sex and she would be mature about it.

She gave him a wistful look. "Would you dress for me the way you dressed last summer? Would you be handsome for me ... for a foolish girl?"

"You're not foolish."

"I've thrown myself at a professor...at a man who possibly hates me."

"Is your opinion of me that low...that I would ravish a woman I did not like?"

"I don't know what you think of me."

"Then I've kept my feelings well concealed, as a professor should."

Severus moved to put an arm around Hermione. "Do you mind?"

"After what we've done?"

"That was passion," he said. "This is affection."

"That was affection, too," she said. She paused. "You don't think I'm a foolish girl?"

"No. If it was foolish, we're both foolish."

"How long before you get tired of a little girl?"

"I'm certain it will be you who turns away from me," he said.

"Don't underestimate how foolish I am," she said.

On the sidewalk across from the grim old place, Lucius was feeling foolish. They had agreed that Severus would photograph the documents and hand them to Lucius. 'It's my fault,' thought Lucius. 'I let myself be delayed. Severus probably photographed them immediately and then discovered that I wasn't here to receive them.'

After Severus had left to relieve Alastor Moody of guard duty, Lucius ordered another cafe-au-lait. He looked up to see Natalie Granger and another lady coming toward him. They were obviously shopping. He was aware that Natalie was walking close by and that he could greet her, but he didn't know if she wanted a public greeting from him. What if her friend noticed and her friend was the suspicious, gossipy type? He didn't look her direction.

He noticed her walking back. She didn't turn to look at him. He felt disappointed. She and her friend talked for a while and then were joined by a man. The three seemed very friendly. 'Perhaps her lover,' he thought. The three of them left. 'She didn't try to greet me,' he thought. He felt empty, stricken.

'I've ruined everything. I should have greeted her anyway. She thinks I snubbed her.' Suddenly, the café-au-lait lost its flavor.

He paid his bill and wandered around the shopping square. He was standing in front of a sporting goods store not seeing anything in the window display.

"Lucius?"

"Hello, Natalie. Are you shopping for the Holidays?"

"I'm trying to. I'm at a complete loss even though Mr. and Mrs. Brown were trying to help me. I met them last summer and ran into them again today. I wanted to buy something magical for my daughter and her friends. She's staying at the Weasleys. They ... Mr. and Mrs. Brown ... they made lots of suggestions. But they made so many I got confused. I don't know what to get."

She caught her breath. "Are you shopping for the Holidays?"

"I was here earlier to help my friend celebrate the beginning of two weeks without students. He's the school Potions master."

"I think I remember him. He was there last summer when the Death Eaters attacked."

"Yes," said Lucius, wondering how he could keep Natalie talking to him, how he could convince her to spend time with him. He knew it was great to be around her, but the memories were nothing compared to actually being with her.

"It sounds like you haven't had any luck finding presents," he said.

She shook her head no.

"My apologies if I'm prying, but for whom are you buying gifts?"

"My daughter's going to be at the Weasleys through Christmas. I was thinking of something for her, her two best friends, and the Weasley family." Mrs. Granger sighed, "I'm trying to think of something besides a book to give my daughter."

Lucius had ideas, but he didn't want to mention them too fast. He wanted to spend time with Natalie. He felt like a pathetic conspirator.

"We can send an owl, a letter, to Molly Weasley asking for help," he suggested. "Don't mention my name in the letter. The Weasley family and I are not on good terms."

"That's too bad," she observed.

After sending the letter, Natalie wanted to treat Lucius to a tea and biscuit. She was glad to hear he was willing to wait for Molly's reply and help her shop. Several hours later, after the gifts were bought, wrapped, and sent to the Weasley residence, Natalie had learned that Lucius was temporarily alone. He agreed to let her take him to dinner that evening. She told him it was the least she could do for all his help.

That is how Lucius came to be on the sidewalk across from the grim old place, knowing he was late, feeling guilty, suffering from the cold, but not really caring.

Lucius saw the Potter kid and the Weasley kid. He saw them vanish into the grim old place. 'Where's Miss Granger?' he wondered. A few minutes later, he saw Severus.

"I'm sorry. I couldn't get loose," said Severus, joining him. "Miss Granger was in the house."

Lucius didn't think Severus sounded sorry about anything. As they walked away from the grim old place, Lucius told Severus that it didn't matter since he had been delayed.

'He has a spring in his step,' thought Severus. 'Wonder what the delay was?'

"We've got to get the kids out of there," said Lucius. "What'll we do?"

"I know," said Severus. "We'll send an anonymous owl that Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle have Ginny Weasley on her sixth butterbeer at the local tavern, and it looks like they're going to take her upstairs."

"That's preposterous," said Lucius.

"They don't have to believe it. It just has to scare them enough that they'll act on it."

"Utterly preposterous," muttered Lucius. "A Malfoy doesn't have to get a girl drunk."

They sent the owl. Three kids appeared in the street, looked around furtively, and sped towards the local tavern.

Later, Severus appeared with the photographs.

"They won't be suspicious?" asked Lucius.

"Nothing's missing. There's nothing valuable in the house."

"Right," said Lucius. "Leaving the house is innocent since there's nothing to guard."

Lucius took the photographs to his study at home. He and Severus had gathered all the documents.

Natalie and Lucius ate lightly and shared only one bottle of wine. He talked of inconsequential incidents: broomsticks out of control, spells from splintered wands, and potions from mislabeled ingredients. He promised to take her for a ride on a broom. She promised to act like a witch for the occasion.

"I really like you, Lucius," she said, standing on her doorstep.

"I like you, Natalie ... very much."

Once inside, Natalie skipped the coffee she had promised him, flung herself into his arms, and dragged him to her bedroom.

He held her lightly and nuzzled her and caressed her with his lips. "Oh, yes," she sighed.

Natalie, not used to the magic world, had forgotten the wizard photograph of her daughter on her night table. The photograph's first reaction was fear for her mother's life. The second was concern that her mother had gotten involved with an inconsiderate wizard who would not appreciate her mother's understated beauty and inner qualities.

The photograph was surprised by the looks of admiration Lucius was giving her mother and by his gentle stroking of her temples and hair. Then Lucius told her mother that he wished there was a place in the wizard world for her.

The photograph, seeing her mother in a new light, became conscious of the lines in her face. But Lucius was kissing them as if he approved of her mother being a mature woman. The photograph saw her mother sigh and embrace Lucius. The prim side of Natalie's daughter came forward: 'If he keeps this up, my mother's going to start purring.'

The photograph saw her mother kiss her wizard gently and press lightly against him. It sighed as she kissed him affectionately and press firmly against him. 'Oh,' it thought as she kissed him passionately and pressed insistently against him. The photograph had never seen the sinuous moves of an aroused lady. 'My mother's giving Lucius Malfoy an erection. She wants to and she likes it.'

The photograph saw her mother break away to catch her breath then return to sucking the breath out of Lucius. It saw the wizard's hands move from Natalie's waist, over her hips, down her skirt, up her legs, across her panties, and onto her round, full, middle-aged bum where they squeezed her, pulled her close, and made her moan. 'My mother wants his hands on her,' thought the photograph.

The photograph saw Lucius release his grip and change to stroking Natalie's hair and admiring her sparkling eyes while Natalie smiled and unbuttoned her blouse. It saw him say, "Lovely," as he kissed her on the forehead and the blouse fell to the floor. He said, "Very lovely," and kissed her on the forehead again when she unbuttoned her skirt and let it fall to the floor. It saw Natalie sit, take off her shoes and socks, remove her bra, and stretch out on the bed while Lucius undressed and joined her. His lips and tongue tended the elegant features of her face. Natalie was glowing. She guided him to her breasts. The photograph saw her mother run her hands through his hair and tilt her head back with pleasure.

The photograph of the young girl did not realize what was going to happen until her mother removed her last garment. The photograph, with the moral certitude of the young, could only think that her mother was being naughty. It could not comprehend that Natalie wanted a full adult relationship with everything that Lucius could give her.

The photograph saw her mother moan as Lucius's fingers gently explored her until she was thoroughly wet. It saw his fingers make the gentlest of motions as he caressed her mother's sex. 'He's not doing anything special at all,' it thought, 'but he's making her roll her hips.' It didn't think her mother would ever let anyone do that to her

It saw her mother breathing with open mouth, holding Lucius with a loving grip, and looking at him with shining eyes. It watched her mother rolling her hips in time with his finger movements, gasping as her hip movements became intense, and gripping Lucius possessively. Her mother was flushed and still. The photograph wasn't certain what had happened, but the photograph was breathing heavily. It had no idea her mother thought Lucius was a true gentleman who was treating her kindly.

Neither Natalie's daughter nor her photograph had seen anyone between a woman's legs. Now, it saw Lucius Malfoy between her mother's legs. It stared wide-eyed. The photograph of the young girl was not prepared to see someone mount and enter her mother. It saw only a blurred image. It missed the loving nature of his entry and the grateful sighs and inviting embraces of her mother. It did not see the shock of their first time.

The photograph tried not to watch Lucius slide in and out of Natalie, tried not to see her mother's eager welcoming, but the penetration of her mother was too compelling. The innocent photograph stared. The prim and proper photograph was disappointed when Lucius changed to staying inside and riding her soft, round mother. This disappointment vanished when the photograph saw Lucius drive her mother wanton. It watched in fascination. The photograph did not know anyone's mother moved like that.

The photograph saw Natalie's moves become more and more excited. It saw Natalie hold Lucius tighter as her moves became frenzied. It saw her look at Lucius and smile.

And then.

Natalie slowly and rhythmically gasped and gripped Lucius, her face tensing with the ecstasy of it. 'So that's an orgasm,' thought the photograph. 'My mother's beautiful,' seeing her the way Lucius saw her. 'If I were a wizard, I would make love to my mother just to see her do that.'

The photograph saw Lucius return to moving in and out of Natalie. It saw her mother move to give him more pleasure. 'She's enjoying herself,' thought the photograph; 'she wants him to take great pleasure in her.' The photograph saw Lucius take his pleasure in her mother. It saw Lucius hold Natalie until their breathing returned to normal.

The photograph saw that her mother was calm and peaceful. It saw her mother constantly touching Lucius and his gentle response.

The photograph heaved a sigh of relief. A first thought was consternation that the Central Dogma prevented the direct transfer of this reassuring information from the photograph to the daughter. A second thought was that this might be for the best.

The photograph could hear their voices after they left the bedroom, but it was disappointed. It wanted to see the two have tea, return to rationality, hold hands, and become a couple.

"Let's take a bath," said Natalie. She filled the tub.

Lucius jumped back when she started the whirlpool feature.

"It's not going to electrocute you," she said.

"Electrocute?"

Natalie explained the dangers of electrocution and all the safeguards the tub had. After hearing about all the safeguards, Lucius was even more reluctant to climb into the tub. 'Is this safe sex?'

After the tub, they were in the parlor on the couch. "Talk to me, Lucius."

"About what?"

"Anything. You've lots to talk about. Start with you're a Death Eater and I'm a mundane if you like."

He tried to remember the beginning. "We wanted wizards to have some basic rights."

He gathered more thoughts. "There might be two strands to it. One is the old fear of persecution from the mundanes. It might seem unreasonable that we've had it for so long and that it's so strong, but it's there."

"The mundane world has thousand year old fears and hatreds, too," she said.

"And it might not be unreasonable," he continued. "You and the people you know belong to affluent Western European society. You're not in contact with the majority of the world's population."

She more than agreed with him. "Our society may be more fragile than we realize. If it collapses, most people will look for someone to blame. You should see our tabloids. Most of us aren't that sophisticated."

She paused. "I hate to admit it, but your fears may be justified."

"What else was there?" she asked.

"Wizard society is unjust," he said. "People can be thrown into prison without a trial. The Minister isn't elected. He arises out of some bureaucratic struggle. The taxes are a mess. The Ministry is bloated. It focuses on trivial items that are easy to regulate and ignores important items that are hard to regulate."

"Without a trial?" said Natalie, stuck on the first thing he had said.

"For a long time, my family and others worked on a proclamation that purebloods would have to appear before a court of their peers in order to be convicted," he said.

"A Magna Charta," she said. "But isn't it a bit late for that?"

He agreed. "Several hundred years ago, it would have been a step forward."

'This is the world my daughter is mixed up in,' she thought.

"This is the world your daughter is mixed up in," he said.

"There are compensations," he continued. "Your daughter is accepted as a witch, she has friends, and her talent is recognized and being trained."

'She was a top scholar in the mundane world,' thought Natalie, 'but she was lonely, isolated, and confused because she was different.' She recalled the incidents where her daughter's tormentors were hurt and her daughter said she hadn't done anything. Her mind was more at ease now that she knew her daughter had done something but it wasn't really her fault. No one had told her daughter that her thoughts could hurt and she had to be careful.

"The first eleven years can be rough," said Natalie.

"It's barbaric that we do nothing until they're invited to Hogwarts," he said.

'I'm listening to a very conflicted Death Eater,' thought Natalie. 'I should talk; I'm his mundane mistress.'

"Does wizard society move slowly? It must be frustrating. Did Voldemort offer some progress?" said Natalie.

"Yes," said Lucius.

Lucius stared into the fire. "We attract the talented who have been mistreated. Brutality breeds brutality. The capable find a way to strike back. We attract the privileged who are afraid of losing their advantages. They're able to hide and protect the violent among us. We reinforce each others worst impulses."

"But you want to do something good," protested Natalie. "Wizard society needs your help."

Lucius shook his head ruefully. "I wouldn't say 'yes' to either one."

"You're tired," said Natalie. "You need to rest."

She arranged herself with her arm around him and her head on his shoulder. "Do you want to stay the night?"

"It's comfortable with you," he said.

Natalie tried thinking about wizard society. She felt depressed. 'It looks hopeless, and I don't know enough.' She thought about her wizard. 'We both know there're a lot of things...terrible things...he's not telling me.'

Nevertheless, her wizard was back, at least for a while.

Lucius was waiting for Natalie, who was brushing her teeth. 'I've never slept with a mundane before. I've never kissed a mundane before.' He watched her nightgown move. 'Energetic teeth brushing, lady. I'm getting an erection. What is there about Natalie?'

'Does he really want to spend the night with a mundane? Do witches do something special at night? Hermione doesn't seem to. I'm nervous, but I've got to quit brushing before I take the enamel off. Try to be calm. Leave the dim night light on so we don't stub our toes, and climb into bed with him.'

'Everything's okay so far. It's kind of exciting and comfortable being in bed with him. I've already had sex with him, and he talks to me, so we're just two adults in a relationship. He's holding out his arm for me. Of course, I'll cuddle while I sleep. I like the way he feels and the way he smells.'

'Oh, Lucius, is that erection for me? Do you want me again so soon? Do you mind if I hold it? Let me kiss you, honey. I'll make you rock hard. My goodness, he's already between my legs, and I'm still lying face down. I hope you like my round middle-aged ass. Oh, you're sliding in so easily. I didn't realize that I was ready for you, that I wanted you so much.'

As a medical student, Natalie had seen the clinical movies of a penis inside a vagina. The first time, she had been shocked. The second time, she knew that when the penis spread the walls of the vagina, the female felt pleasure. The female was likely to be moaning. Both times she had watched the movie, Natalie had seen the vagina walls become slick. She now knew the vagina and the woman were welcoming the man and his penis. The second time she watched the movie, she knew there was a sloppy wet noise. She was moaning and slopping as Lucius spread her vagina and pressed again and again into her soft, round ass.

The first time she watched the movie, she had some idea what it meant when the vagina walls had their convulsions around the penis. The second time she knew it was only part of what was happening. She was enjoying his attention, his pressing into her, and his stroking her vagina. Then she was feeling good and gripping the sheet while her vagina walls convulsed around Lucius's penis. She lay flushed and sweaty and panting as he kissed her neck and shoulders and told her she was lovely.

It was almost embarrassing to watch the movie when the penis moved faster and then spurting inside the vagina. Natalie now knew that if it was the right person, the female enjoyed the penis spurting into her vagina. She also knew it was a primitive moment with the male becoming an animal. Natalie noticed that Lucius was holding her wrists and had moved his legs on top of hers. He was not going to let her go anywhere. His rhythmic spreading her vagina walls while pressing into her soft, round ass became urgent. He stopped. She knew his penis was spurting into her vagina.

It was an ordinary domestic routine...part of their relationship. Natalie knew that the routine might be short and temporary, but his affection and companionship would last and make life livable.

Lucius was still breathing hard when he nuzzled her and told her she was his sweetheart. He rolled off of her and lay on his back. Natalie embraced him.

'We should get cleaned up,' they thought. Then they passed out in each others arms.

Hermione, too, was finally sleepy.

Earlier in the day, her alarms warned her and Severus about the arrival of Harry and Ron, and her wards kept them in the foyer until Severus ensconced himself in the kitchen and Hermione came downstairs to release her spells.

"Honestly, Hermione," the two boys said.

"We're in the most danger when we think we're safe," she told them.

Harry and Ron looked at Professor Snape. He shrugged. What did they expect him to do about Miss Granger's obsessions? He politely left the school kids to their conversation, promising to be back by tea. The two boys were trying to convince her to spend the rest of the day and the night at the Weasleys when the owl arrived about Ginny.

"That's preposterous," they said as they dashed to the rescue. They found no trace of Ginny, Malfoy, Crabbe, or Goyle at the tavern.

They dashed back to the grim old place. Professor Snape returned an hour before tea.

"I bet Professor Snape would like to be alone without any students around," said Ron. "You should come with us."

"Yeah," said Harry. "You don't have to stay here. There's nothing valuable here. You'll have more fun at the Weasleys."

"It's a shame to leave someone alone in this grim old place," said Hermione.

Unable to change her mind, the two boys decided to bring Hermione and Professor Snape some dinner from the Weasley household.

After the boys left, he noticed she was standing on the other side of the table and glowering at him. 'But I behaved perfectly in front of the two boys,' he thought.

"And where was your famous snarky self?" she asked.

"Excuse me, o snippy one," he replied. His experience to date had taught him that he had best gear up fast when the female was in one of her moods.

"You didn't help at all," she said. "Maybe you'd rather I went to the Weasleys. After all, you've already had your way with me."

She plopped herself into a chair and looked thoroughly used and abused. "You could sit and read by the fire, enjoying your own company and thinking smug thoughts." She paused. "Was I fun?"

"It's not that way," he said, moving around the table to sit beside her.

"I wasn't fun?" she asked.

Severus gathered some thoughts. "If I had spoken in favor of your staying, they would have known something was going on. I would have sounded too eager. There's no way I can keep how much I like you and want your company out of my voice."

She was skeptical. "They're not that perceptive."

He gathered more thoughts. "It's possible they're not, but I was being cautious. Other people are perceptive, and I have to practice being careful."

She softened. He reached over, took her hand, and said, "This is going to be hard for us."

They heard Ron and Harry return, and Hermione went to greet them.

"Are you sure you want to spend the night in this terrible place with him?" Ron tried to whisper.

Severus was in the doorway. "Let me assure you, Mr. Weasley, that I am a competent guardian."

'Not bad,' thought Hermione. 'A little chat can do wonders.'

"I have placed warning signs on all the rooms that an innocent young lady should not enter," said Severus.

'What?' thought Hermione.

Ron and Harry looked pleased. Then they glanced at Hermione to see how she was taking this.

"Furthermore, I have sealed all rooms containing delicate artifacts that an inexperienced enchanter might harm," he continued in a tone of voice that said he expected agreement from Ron and Harry. "You two know full well the damage that can come from unbridled curiosity."

Ron and Harry reluctantly nodded agreement.

Hermione bridled.

"It may be Winter Holiday," held forth Severus, giving the boys a professorial glare, "but that does not release a faculty member from his obligations to a student."

"Yes, sir," they both said. They were thinking they could leave Hermione at the grim old place. It would be a good idea to be someplace she wasn't.

Severus saw them out the door in an imperious manner. Then he turned to face Hermione with the smirk of a job well done.

Hermione dashed to the front parlor and flung her self onto the couch. Severus entered a bit later.

"You beast," she said.

He sat on the rug in front of the couch and started a fire in the fireplace before replying, "You mean 'snarky beast.'"

"I admit," she said, "that you drove them off and convinced everyone who heard you that you have no regard for me whatsoever."

"There's going to be hell to pay for this, isn't there?" he asked.

"Absolutely," she replied.

"Well?" he said.

"Remus and Arthur aren't due until Monday evening," she said.

"You looked up the schedule?" he asked.

"I have tonight, tomorrow, tomorrow night, and most of Monday to get even."

She ran her hand through his hair. "When Remus and Arthur arrive Monday evening and notice how little has been accomplished in the library, they'll agree that it's almost impossible to get any work done with you around."

Severus and Hermione dined on the ham sandwiches and cherry tarts from the Weasleys...partial compensation for onerous guard duty. They shared a brandy, and she introduced him to the mundane game of Scrabble. Severus resigned himself to playing against a smart school kid who knew lots of short words.

Hermione began. "SEDUCED," she announced. "Double word score plus bonus for using all my letters: 72 points."

"SCORN," said Severus. "Double word score: 14 points."

"SNARKY," announced Hermione. "Double letter score for 'K' and double word score: 36 points."

'She's cute when she's vengeful,' thought Severus.

"Are you staying here tonight?" he asked her.

"Yes."

"Do you want to sleep together or alone?" he asked.

"Together, of course."

Severus suffered through the game. Hermione put the board away in triumph. Then realization dawned.

Everything had propelled them to this moment; nothing had prepared them for this moment.

'I'm going to sleep with a professor,' she thought

'I'm going to sleep with a student,' he thought.

'Omigod,' they thought.

Severus had an idea. "Care for a bubble bath before we turn in?"

Hermione, postponing the great unknown, agreed. Before climbing into the tub, she once again waved her wand for a plethora of wards and alarms that would let no one into the house. "Lest we be caught unawares by an infinitely subtle enemy."

Severus positioned himself behind Hermione and offered to wash her back. His soaping her gradually turned into massaging her shoulders. He kept up the gentle massage of her shoulders until she was moaning and moving sinuously in time with his massage. He tended her neck, and then moved to her back where he continued until her head hung forward and she was purring and smiling. He soaped her all over, rinsed her with the shower attachment, and dried her. He led a relaxed, pink and steamy Hermione into the bedroom.

The moment was too intimate, and he said more than he should. "You're a beautiful lady. You can attract any dotard you like. You're an intelligent and capable woman. They will not stay with you."

"What about you?" she asked. "Will you stay?"

He kissed her on the forehead. "I'm deciding I like lionesses."

'He's sweet for a ferocious wizard,' she thought.

Once in the bedroom, she received encouraging kisses on her nose, her eyes, her lips.

'Oh, no, now it's the moment of truth when he sees I'm nothing special.' But his lips traced the shape of her face. 'He's making me feel good, making me feel I'm a mature woman.' She liked it that he was in no hurry. She liked it even more when he looked her in the eyes and said, "You're lovely, darling." She had a small embarrassed grin when he brushed her hair behind her ears and said, "Very lovely."

She was beginning to ache. She lay on the bed, pulled him to her; and guided him to her breast. 'It's nothing special,' she thought. 'He's just kissing my breast. Now he's kissing the other one. It feels wonderful. I like his hand on my legs.'

She moaned for him as his finger gently explored her sex and she became slick. His fingers made the gentlest of motions as he caressed her. 'He's not doing anything special at all,' she thought. 'He makes me feel great.' She rolled her hips. 'I didn't think anyone could do this to me.' His fingers drove everything out of her mind. 'Does he like me?' She gripped him as she had an orgasm.

Hermione was surprised how demanding she had become, how her lips and mouth engulfed him, how she was on her back, how she asked him, how she opened for him, how she pulled him in, how loud she was.

She let him move and arrange the pillows so they could lie side by side. 'This isn't passionate,' she thought until she felt the iron grip beneath the gentle way he was holding her, until she felt the demanding nature of his gentle thrusts into her, until she realized he was absorbing her every sound and move as he gave her sex. She realized she was making love to him. She was coupling with him. She was moaning and squirming on his dick as the professor took his student. She felt the unbearable pleasure that makes little girls scream. She was holding him in the quiet afterglow, still surprised that anyone could do this to her.

Severus had one more gift for Hermione. He rolled on top of her, lifted her legs into the air, mounted her, and let her watch him. 'He's arranging me so that I'm presenting myself to him,' she thought. 'He likes that. He's telling me I'm a lovely and classy lady. He's looking at me as if he thinks I'm beautiful. He's happy he's with me. He's glad he's in me. He's letting me see that he wants me, a mature woman...proud and independent and loving. He's letting me watch him lose control. He can't stop. He's holding me and pounding into me. He's letting me watch as he gasps and squirts and has me.'

Hermione reached up, pulled Severus to her, and clung to him. 'Bond with me, sweetheart,' she thought. 'Hold me.'

In a comfortable modern house on the outskirts of London, Lucius held his sleeping lady. 'I have a mundane lover,' he thought, 'but holding myself aloof would lead to pride, and scorning Natalie would be a terrible sin.'

In a quaint old house in the middle of London, Severus held his sleeping lady. 'I've seduced a student,' he thought, 'but people who are always virtuous are boors, and rejecting Hermione would be an unpardonable act.'

'Virtue, thy name is moderation.'

Large Factors and Small Moments

Chapter 8 of 9

'He achieved the fabled unity of mind, body, and spirit.'

Chapter 8: Large Factors and Small Moments

"Hi, Uncle Lucius. Are you still working on the accounts even though Mum's gone?"

Lucius looked up from the computer terminal to see Pansy standing in the doorway. Vivian, Narcissa, and Draupadi were still on the continent, and Lucius thought he could crack the Druid code under the guise of helping with the Parkinson accounts. He had spent an hour bookkeeping to cover his real purpose.

Hadley had determined the number the Druids used to encrypt their records, and according to Hadley, the Druid code could be cracked by factoring this number into its two prime components. Lucius had written the factorization code and was trying it on small numbers that he could easily check.

He had forgotten that Pansy was home for the Holidays. She entered the room and sat in a nearby chair.

Lucius sighed. "What was that saying about the best laid plans of wizards and imps?"

"I remember last summer when you would come over and help Mum with the accounts."

"Uh-huh," he said, preoccupied.

"Mum's something of a bitch, but I think she likes you."

"I wouldn't know," said Lucius, still preoccupied.

"I remember that whenever you helped Mum with the accounts, she was happy the next day. She would go around humming and housekeeping and be really nice to me."

"Okay," said Lucius. He wished she would go away since he didn't want to reveal what he was doing to anyone.

"I think you did more for Mum than the accounts," said Pansy. She had stood up and was walking over to him.

Lucius hid the factoring program and called up a bookkeeping program. It filled the screen. Pansy was behind him with her hands on his shoulders.

"I tried spying," said Pansy. "I could hear Mummy moaning, but I could never find the two of you."

"You have an overactive imagination," said Lucius.

"Mum was always nervous the days you were to come over. It was funny to watch her primping. It was a bit nauseating at her age. How could you stand to take her anyway?"

"I keep telling you that you have an overactive imagination. And you shouldn't talk that way about your mother."

Pansy was still behind him and pressing her breasts into him. "You can confess. I know you had her. Did you mount her like the bitch that she is?"

'I've got to get rid of her,' he thought. 'I know. I'll gross her out. That'll send her running.'

"It's easy enough to show your mother wouldn't want any part of me," said Lucius. "Surely, you've inherited the refined Parkinson taste for clothes, furnishings, and sexual partners. Suppose I move this chair back from the desk and give you room to sit on my lap. The very thought will repel you."

Lucius moved the chair.

Pansy eyed his lap. "It doesn't look that repelling."

Pansy sat in his lap. "It's actually very comfortable, Uncle Lucius."

'It'll take a bit more than I thought to gross her out,' he realized.

"It may feel comfortable now, but what if I did those things you're accusing me of doing to your mother? What if I ran my fingers through your hair and told you I liked it?"

"Do you really?" she asked.

"Yes, you've always been a petty girl."

"What else did you do to Mummy?" she asked.

'I hate to be crude, but I've got to get rid of her,' he thought. He said, "If those crazy things you're saying are true, then after sitting in my lap for a while, your mother would begin to feel like a little girl."

'This won't take long,' he thought. 'It better not take long,' he thought.

It didn't take long. Pansy put her arm across Uncle Lucius's shoulders. Then she leaned against him, placed her other arm around him, and sighed. Lucius massaged her shoulders until she relaxed. Then he placed his other hand on her hip and encouraged her to snuggle against him.

"Mmmm," went Pansy contentedly.

Lucius continued to go for shock value. "Do you really think I held your mother the way I'm holding you? Do you really think your mother cuddled the way you're cuddling?"

"Yes," said Pansy, kissing her Uncle Lucius. "I think you made Mummy do the pussy dance."

Lucius revised his plan for shocking Pansy.

"Was she fun?" asked Pansy.

"I still say you have an overactive imagination," he said.

"Mummy was really sweet after you visited. I was always glad when you came and did the accounts for her ... when you did her and she came."

"What would you think if your mother talked about you the way you talk about her?"

"How would she do that?" asked Pansy.

"She would ask me if you had fun sitting my lap."

"She wouldn't do that," said Pansy.

"Yes, she would. "And she would ask if you kissed me on the cheek like a little girl or if you gave me a proper kiss like a young lady."

"Like this?" said Pansy.

"One doesn't count. And she would ask if they were quick pecks or slow and sensuous."

"Like this?" said Pansy, her breath mingling with his.

"Your kisses are okay, but you don't brush your breasts against me. I'd have to tell your mother you're timid and chaste."

"I'm not timid," said Pansy, putting forth a more earnest effort. Her kisses were getting longer, her nipples were getting harder, and her breathing was getting heavier.

'I'm starting to enjoy this,' he thought.

"Uncle Lucius," she whispered.

"Yes."

"I have a confession to make," she said.

"Yes."

"I'm almost the same size as Mummy. When I heard you were coming over, I borrowed her underwear." She paused, "But my breasts aren't as big."

'I should be better at this by now,' he thought. Neither Narcissa nor Natalie was voluptuous. He was constantly reassuring them.

"You're very attractive, and your breasts are nice."

"You're trying to make me feel better."

"No, I'm being honest." He ran his fingers over her temples and through her hair. "You're attractive. You're smart. I like holding you. I've always liked you."

This time she was nuzzling him with real affection. "Do you really like me? Do you think I'm pretty as Mummy?"

"Oh, yes," he said, hugging her. 'Yes, very much,' he realized. 'I wish she would stop carrying on about her mother. But I have to go with what's in her head if I want to have a go with what's in her panties.'

"Let's see," she said, unbuttoning her blouse.

Lucius noticed two pert breasts in a loose bra. "Lovely," he said. He kissed Pansy on her forehead, on her nose, on her lips. She held him as he nibbled down her neck, across her shoulder, and down to a nipple which had slipped out of the loose bra. He heard her gasp as he took first the nipple and then more of her breast. 'Gods, this is nice,' he thought. She was moaning.

He moved to her lips. "You're pretty, and you taste good," he told her.

His lips began their journey down her neck. She impatiently pushed him to her other breast. He tended it until he could taste her.

'I want her essence,' he decided. He waited for an opening.

"Ohh," she said. "Is this what you did to Mummy?"

He returned to nibbling her lips. Her breath was sweet.

"Do you honestly think I did this?" He placed his hand on her knee.

She continued her affectionate, inviting kisses and parted her thighs.

"And this?" he asked. His hand was feeling its way up her leg.

She was giving him a soft-eyed look. Her legs were parting for him. His hand was at the junction of her thighs. It was soft and warm and moist.

She stood, lifted her skirt, and sat down with Uncle Lucius between her legs. He saw a familiar black silk garment.

"Recognize Mummy's undies? I bet you've been in them."

'That's the spirit, girl,' he thought.

He continued. "Do you honestly think I did this to your mother?" He placed Pansy's hands in his lap and let her unfasten his trousers. Pansy was flushed and wide-eyed as she pulled out his cock.

"Do you think I made your mother stand up?" Lucius lifted Pansy to her feet as he had lifted her mother.

"Do you think I pulled your mother's panties aside?" He pulled her mother's panties away from Pansy's furry center. Her furry center was slick, as slick as her mother's had been.

"Do you think I put my dick in your mother?" He placed his cock at Pansy's entrance.

"Do you think your mother moaned?" Pansy moaned as Uncle Lucius parted her flesh.

There were the intimate sounds of Pansy penetrated by Uncle Lucius.

"Tell me you did Mummy," gasped Pansy.

He caressed her face with his fingertips, parted her lips with his tongue, and murmured, "You're lovely, Pansy."

"Were you nice to Mummy, too?" said Pansy.

She pressed her breasts against him and squirmed in his lap. "Did you make Mummy wiggle, too?"

Her moves become more and more intense.

"Do you think I held your mother's cute ass and watched her squirm?" Lucius held Pansy's cute ass and watched her squirm.

"Do you think I watched your mother's face as I had her?" Lucius watched Pansy's face as he had her.

"Do you think your mother moaned and wiggled for me?" Pansy moaned and wiggled.

Pansy cried out.

Pansy Parkinson...like her mother before her...did the pussy dance for Uncle Lucius.

He held her while she recovered. She was still curious. "Is this how you did Mummy?"

'I was hoping she had forgotten about her mother,' he thought. He said, "Partly. I always ravished her a bit because she was such a fetching bitch."

Pansy looked quizzical.

"I would stay inside your mother, move to the rug, and perch on top of her with nothing between me and the hard floor but her delectable self."

"Let me stay inside you, Pansy. We'll move to the rug like this. You feel delicious."

"I would tell your mother she was a lovely, classy lady, and I would move inside her until I felt her get slick again."

"You're a bright and pretty girl, Pansy. You're getting wet for me again."

"I would look at your mother as it dawned on her that she would have another orgasm."

"Yes, Pansy, you're going to have another one, sweetie."

"I would watch your mother try to resist. She was a bitch that liked to remain in control. She wasn't that eager to wiggle for me."

"You're trying to resist, too. You don't think it's fair that I can make you and your mother wiggle."

"But your mother was a primal bitch. I was the most powerful male around; I could mount her and have her. Your mother would be an unfaithful wife for me."

"You're mounted, Pansy. You're going to yield like your mother."

"You moan like your mother, Pansy."

"Your mother's a lovely lady. She's beautiful when she's moaning and wiggling."

"You're lovely, Pansy. You're beautiful when you're moaning and wiggling."

"Your mother came for me."

"Come for me, Pansy."

"Yes, sweetheart, just like your mother."

"After your mother came for me, she lay there looking demure. She lay there like a wife who wanted to be unfaithful...her soft eyes asking me to take her, her spread legs inviting me to come inside her."

"You look as demure as your mother. I'm going to take you, sweetheart."

"I had fun between your mother's legs. She was unfaithful for me. I came inside her."

"It's fun between your legs, Pansy. I'm coming inside you, Pansy."

Pansy sat upright, thoroughly disheveled. "Wait for me. I'll be right back."

Ten minutes later, she reappeared, freshly scrubbed and clothed. "I'm so glad you waited for me," she said. She joined him on the couch. He held a happy and affectionate girl as she gradually drifted off to sleep...snuggled against her Uncle Lucius. He arranged her comfortably, fetched a blanket for her, and returned to his program...leaving one of his better laid plans sleeping on the couch.

'All this to factor a large number,' he thought. 'No wonder Arithmancers do their best work when they're young.'

He finished and tucked the results into a pocket. 'At last,' he thought, 'we can decode the Druid message.'

He looked at Pansy still sleeping on the couch. 'There's no reason to be unkind,' he thought. 'She's a bright and lovely girl. She's good company when she's relaxed and not trying to act superior.' He would read and wake her in a little while. When he sat in the chair next to the couch, however, the noise of the old chair woke her.

"How are you?" he asked.

She was fine. She wanted to play the lady of the house. "You simply must stay for tea."

He let her work out their new relationship by letting her play the hostess. He considered leaving and avoiding the complication, but he didn't want to commit the sin of neglect.

She prepared the tea in the usual manner. Nothing unusual was happening between them. They talked about her school courses, his latest investments, and the quirks of using a computer for accounting. They were two adults leading normal lives.

"Lucius," began Pansy. "Lucius ...," she faltered.

'Our re-enactment of her mother's seduction was too hard on her,' thought Lucius. 'I've let my base nature have its way, and I've done damage. Can I make amends?'

Pansy looked vulnerable instead of angry. Lucius reached over and held her hand. She folded her hands around his and held it in her lap.

'Pansy is the true aristocrat of the family,' Lucius reminded himself. 'She's the heir of the Parkinson line.'

"Let me show you," she said. She unbuttoned her blouse. On a silver chain hung a jade ring.

Lucius caught his breath. Narcissa had given Pansy that ring for her seventeenth birthday. It was a sentimental trinket. It was suppose to glow when a lady found her soul mate.

'Why is she wearing it?' thought Lucius. 'She can't be serious, not after the terrible thing I just did to her.'

Pansy looked expectant.

Almost involuntarily, he said, "That's wonderful, Pansy," and then he kissed her hand.

Pansy, sitting still, seemed to glow and writhe as the serpents on the ring were said to glow and writhe when the soul mates were together.

"Will you walk with me in the garden?" asked Pansy.

He accompanied her as they strolled through the brown and barren winter landscape.

'Narcissa, Natalie, and Pansy,' thought Lucius. 'People can imagine them acting formal, they can imagine them in a rage, but very few can imagine them intimate. And they tend not to be intimate. Their pairing is a rare thing, a precious thing. It is a worthwhile thing, but it is a delicate thing.'

'How breakable ladies are,' he thought.

"Will you bring Sasha the next time?" asked Pansy.

"Sasha likes to visit you," he said.

"I haven't seen her in the longest time. I miss her. Can you come back soon?"

"I can bring her over tomorrow," he said.

"Wonderful," said Pansy. "If you come over early, we can take her out in the fields."

Pansy had hunted with Uncle Lucius and Sasha. Pansy had squealed with delight.

'The limp bodies of beautiful animals don't bother her. She knows I'm doing her mother, and it doesn't bother her. There's not a bourgeois bone in her body,' thought Lucius proudly.

They found a stone bench warmed by the sun. She crossed her legs, pointed her knees at him, and put her arm around his shoulders.

'When I come over tomorrow,' thought Lucius, 'she will dress for sport, her strong body will carry her into the hills and valleys, her eyes will light with fire as I master the game, she will squeal as my bolt penetrates its body, and her aristocratic soul will be satisfied as it thrashes and goes limp. Then, on the spot, she will undress for sport, her strong body will carry me into her hills and valleys, her eyes will light with fire as I master her, she will squeal as my bolt penetrates her body, and her aristocratic soul will be satisfied as she thrashes and goes limp.'

Lucius felt something stirring. He wanted to stir Pansy. His sudden lust for her jarred his mind. As incongruous as it seemed, he reflected on his relationship with Natalie. Natalie's husband could return at any time, and she could decide to stay with the father of her daughter. If she made such a decision, she would stay with her daughter's father even if Lucius was the love of her life, even if the love of her life begged her to stay with him.

Lucius knew that under such circumstances his declarations of love and devotion would only strengthen her resolve. His declarations would give her all she wanted and needed from him. His only hope of keeping Natalie was to never make the mistake of needing her.

A deep chasm of pain opened before Lucius. 'Damn. Why can't things ever be right?'

He sobered. 'The universe doesn't care, old bean. I'm just passing through...beset by conflicting demands and unintended consequences.'

'Pansy offers hope,' he thought. 'If I were cold-hearted, I could take the high road, but I'm emotional, weak, and vulnerable. There's a mismatch between me and the universe.' Lucius ran his hands through Pansy's hair. She snuggled. 'She's pretty,' he thought. 'She's stable and loving.'

In his thorough fashion, Lucius considered the cataclysm of all three women remaining attached to him. 'Narcissa wants a daughter. She'll be busy and tired, and she'll appreciate my not making extensive demands. Natalie's in a demanding profession. She'll want lots of evenings with only conversation and cuddling. Pansy's still a student who's only occasionally available, and when she graduates, she'll only have a young girl's desires. By the time Pansy's matured and on line, Narcissa and Natalie will be older and glad to slow down.'

He reviewed his plan. 'It's not perfect, and there'll be rough patches, but it maximizes everything for the girls. That's great. They're all wonderful, and they deserve the best I can give them.'

He sobered again. 'Most likely, Narcissa will become involved with a daughter, Natalie will return to her husband, and Pansy will find someone her own age.'

'I could take up a hobby,' he thought. 'Or I could join Mr. Parkinson on the continent. Perhaps it's more amenable to a romantic soul.'

He sighed. 'It's a long journey, and there's nothing at the end, but good company can make it worthwhile.'

He brightened. 'I should definitely look for some good company. The present company is great, better than I could hope for, but I can't expect it to last.'

His thoughts were interrupted. "I'll wait for you," said Pansy.

Pansy stood and offered Lucius her hand. "I know you're involved with other people, Uncle Lucius, and I know I'm just a young school girl, but I'll wait for you. Someday, we'll be together."

'I can't dismiss this as nonsense,' he thought. 'I was a year older when I decided I would wait for Narcissa.'

Pansy seemed to float back into the house holding his hand.

Pansy and Lucius ended the walk in her room. She had taken him to her inner sanctum where she removed everything except the jade ring on its silver necklace. She was perfectly dressed.

Pansy started to say something, but Uncle Lucius put his finger to her lips. Then he kissed her, just a soft caress as if she were something precious. She wanted him to do it again. She decided she could try it. She gave him a slow, soft, intimate caress with her lips. Surely, Uncle Lucius would be kind and forgiving of a young lady's first efforts. Yes, he was. His lips were close, inviting. She tried again. He didn't seem to mind at all. He seemed to like it. She felt both calm and tingling. When she tried it again, his tongue parted her lips. She was taking calm deep breaths. She opened her mouth for him when she kissed him again. The rest of the world was vanishing.

A small part of her mind wondered if Mummy had done this.

He touched, kissed, and admired every inch of her. He was between her legs. His tongue touched a special part of her. Her determination to act the proper lady joined her discarded lingerie. His tongue stripped her...she was properly his lady.

As he entered her, he achieved the fabled unity of mind, body, and spirit. "Go for it," they told him.

She danced and danced. She looked at him and saw he cared. The ring lay between her breasts, covered with sweat and warm from her body. The serpents glowed and intertwined, but not as much as Pansy glowed and intertwined. Like a true lady, she let him stir her twat. Like his true lady, she let him stir her soul. She let him intertwine the two. She knew unity with her Lucius. She knew another existence.

She felt her spirit soar and Lucius capture it.

She opened her eyes to discover everything was still except her heavy breathing and pounding heart. But Lucius was holding her, and that let her return gently. He let her return safely with her lady-hood and her affection intact.

She held her lover, now her partner. She felt her world change: all her other concerns seemed smaller.

Observing the proprieties, Lucius had a final cup of tea with Pansy. It was important that she finished the afternoon with him as a true lady. During tea, Pansy sat on the couch beside him and put her arm around him. She was both possessive and relaxed. It was Lucius's nature...his weakness...to take care of rare and beautiful things. A Pansy who wanted him as her lover was a rare and beautiful thing.

Once home, Lucius proceeded to his study where he locked himself in and spread the Hadley Druid documents over his desk. At last, with the code broken, they were making sense. He thanked the gods for his friend Severus. Severus had tricked the kids out of the grim old place and had photographed the documents the Order had hidden in a cupboard. Severus had slipped a potion to Draupadi and had made a midnight raid to photograph the documents the Death Eaters had hidden in her greenhouse. Severus had commented the potion made her less restless, whatever that had meant.

Lucius sighed. Hadley had done all the important work one hundred years ago. Arithmancy was not for people who wanted their reward in this life.

A few hours later, he had to put the documents away and meet Severus for a Death Eater gathering.

It was two hours before midnight on Winter Solstice when Lucius and Severus parted after a bonfire ritual conducted by the Dark Lord. They were both glad there was no captive to torture.

Lucius arrived on the front porch of the Granger residence apprehensive about the reception he would receive. He knocked and the porch light came on. Then Natalie was in his arms and pulling him inside.

"Oh, Lucius, it's freezing. Have you been out in the cold? Let me take your cloak. Sit right here. I can start a fire in the fireplace for you."

"I see you have a Yule tree," he said. "It's small, but it's pretty with the white lights you have on it."

Natalie busied herself with the fireplace. "I thought a tree would cheer me up, but it just made me more depressed. I'm sorry. I shouldn't talk like that." She started the fire, stood up, and looked at the tree and Lucius. "I'm glad I have it now. You belong in front of a fireplace and a Yule tree." She kissed his forehead. "There's something primitive about you."

She called out from the kitchen. "Do you like eggnog? I'll make two strong ones. Let me turn the rest of the house lights off."

In the intimate light of the tree and fireplace, Natalie sat next to Lucius sipping her eggnog. She set her drink aside to put her arms around him and her head on his shoulder. When he didn't protest, she moved into his lap. She sipped from his glass.

"Oh, Lucius, you're so warm. I feel warm with you." She sat comfortably in his lap. "I've been cold a long time."

She hadn't wanted to say it, but it slipped out. "Lucius, I need this."

'Something else that's rare and precious,' thought Lucius.

As Natalie was turning her house lights off, Severus was lighting his rooms in the dungeon. The professor part of him hoped that Hermione was home or in her dorm or at the grim old place. The rest of him hoped she was here. When the lights came on in his parlor, he saw she was asleep on his couch and she had decorated the tree. Draupadi had brought the tree and decorations days ago, but the two of them had spent the time taking care of Draupadi's growing amorous appetite. Severus, having lived lonely, appreciated instead of resented Draupadi's demanding nature. Draupadi's stern exterior contrasted with her private passion...a secret ravisher.

He covered Hermione with a blanket and turned the parlor lights off and the tree lights on. He sat on the rug, leaning against the couch where Hermione slept, admiring the tree that Draupadi had brought and Hermione had decorated.

'I didn't want to have an open affair with a married woman so I fill the hole in my life with a student,' he thought. 'I've made things worse. How will this end with Hermione? Will I become a father to her? Is this a fling? Will we become lovers? Events could turn. We could become the deadliest of enemies...our previous affection feeding our cold hatred. At the moment, I'm reveling in her company instead of protecting her as a student. I'm a selfish, evil man.'

As he sat musing, Hermione sleepily reached out a hand and ran her fingers through his hair. "You're back. Was it terrible?"

"No. Luckily, no," he said.

"I'm glad," she said, moving closer to him, moving within kissing range. A minute later, she paused and lifted the blanket to invite him to join her. They lay side by side.

He let the warmth and the aroma of Hermione seep through him, driving out the cold and the stink of the Death Eaters. 'I need this,' he thought, 'after all those years with no one to drive out the cold and the stink. Her warmth is special, warmer than fire. Is this the best part of the relationship? Is the best part her smiling at me over her morning cup of coffee in the Great Hall? Is the best part waking up with her in the morning? Could we spend tonight together? I think her dorm's empty. No one would know.'

As he soaked up Hermione's warmth, Severus thought about married Draupadi. 'Will she decide to be true to her ailing husband? Will she decide her relationship with me is a sordid affair?'

Severus thought about volatile Draupadi. 'I need fortitude to withstand her passion and maintain a relationship with her. Poise and coping ability don't come from failure and denial. They come from the knowledge that you are potent, and the knowledge that you are potent comes from concrete demonstration.'

As he soaked up Hermione's warm affection, Severus wondered why she had chosen him. 'The school's too small,' he thought, 'and we don't have an influx of talented exchange students. She never met anyone compatible in her own age bracket. She's a scholar, and it would do her good to meet someone creative who's equally intelligent, but who regards scholarship as a second-rate activity.' The strangest idea came to him. 'She needs a male version of Draupadi.'

'I wonder how Draupadi and Hermione would get along. Luckily, I'll never have to worry about that. Hermione will mature and change and leave within a year or two. And I've made enough enemies on both sides that my chances of surviving the war are slim.'

Natalie, ensconced in Lucius's arms, was having primitive urges: the pagan ritual that would get them through the longest night. She wanted to perform the rite in front of the sacred fire and the ceremonial tree. She nuzzled her wizard to tell him she was available. He lightly stroked her hair. She pressed against her warlock to let him know she was eager. He encouraged her.

Hermione, warmed by Severus, was feeling a seasonal need: the civilized practice of exchanging gifts. She needed the exchange in front of the hearth fire and the domestic tree. She kissed her wizard to see if he wanted a gift. He kissed her back. She pressed against him to let him know she was ready for an exchange.

Natalie felt wanted as Lucius tore off her clothes and placed himself between her thighs; Hermione felt cherished as Severus removed her garments and arranged himself between her legs.

Lucius placed his tongue on Natalie. She yelled.

Severus licked Hermione. She yelled.

Lucius did not use any finesse whatsoever. He applied his tongue over and over while his lady love yelled and squirmed. He did not relent in the sacred rite. He bound his pagan with his primitive art. He did not know a woman could yell so long and become such an animal. 'By the gods, she's feral,' he thought. Her cries reached a crescendo. Her fingers were grabbing his hair, and her thighs were squeezing his head. He had exercised the rites and offered the goddess her due. He held a flushed, limp, grateful Natalie.

Severus was crude and straightforward. He licked her sensitive spot again and again as his mistress yelled and rolled her hips. He did not stint in the exchange. He drove his companion senseless with his domestic gift. He did not know a girl could be so loud and go so wild. 'By the gods, she's primitive,' he thought. Her cries peaked. Her fingers pushed him into her, and her legs pressed against him. He had performed the exchange and received a goddess for his gift. He held a smiling, relaxed, happy Hermione.

Lucius prepared for the second part of the rite. He waved his wand and a mattress appeared for Natalie. She was on her knees and elbows before the sacred flame and magic tree. 'Give me what I want, sweetie,' she thought. Her sweetie began the rite: holding her, spreading her, entering her, mounting her, servicing her. It was simple and right for Natalie.

Severus continued the exchange. A pile of rugs appeared for Hermione. She was on her knees and elbows in front of the homey fire and decorated branches. 'Anything for you, darling,' she thought. Her darling accepted her gifts: gripping her, parting her, joining her, completing her, pleasuring her. It felt easy and natural to Hermione.

Lucius knew Natalie had a beautiful face, cute ass, and sexy slit. He presided over the primitive rite by brushing her hair aside to see her beautiful face as he held her cute ass and caressed her sexy slit. It was obvious that it satisfied his soul to take his loving, classy lady. It was everything Natalie wanted.

Severus believed Hermione had a pretty face, lovely ass, and inviting slit. He ended the exchange of gifts by holding her hair back to watch her pretty face while he gripped her lovely ass and gushed into her inviting slit. It was clear that it soothed his spirit to have his affectionate, spirited girl. It was everything Hermione could ask for.

Well, not everything she could ask for.

"It's not midnight yet," said Hermione. "Let's use the Prefects bath. I can scrub you down with all their special soaps. We'll take our wands and make the water swirl around us."

"I have a perfectly good tub right here."

"Oh, come on, love, you've always wanted to use the Prefects bath, haven't you?"

"No."

"Yes, you have. Now's your chance. Don't you want to get in a tub with me?"

"That's not a fair way of putting it," he said, but he grabbed his wand and followed Hermione through the corridors. He hoped no one would spot them. 'This is not safe sex.'

It was Winter Solstice, and the goddesses were content.

Natalie held Lucius, believing every woman needed a primitive warlock.

Hermione cuddled Severus, knowing every girl deserved a kind wizard.

'T was the night of the solstice, but creatures were stirring.

Lucius was tossing and turning and muttering. "Don't touch the jewel. Don't touch the jewel."

Natalie put her arm around him.

"They're on both sides of us. We can't get out."

She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Hang on, Severus, I'm coming."

"Sir Lucius, at the ready," she quipped sleepily. Then she woke enough for rational thought: 'A jewel radiating danger? An army surrounding them? Snape the very model of ferocity needing rescue?'

This could not be good.

Hermione was all entangled with her leg between Severus's and her hair in his face. Then she tossed away and was curled up on her side of the bed. Then she was sprawled across him with her limbs blocking his circulation.

'Damn,' thought Severus. 'I get the restless ones.'

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Author and Beta Note: And so, dear reader, our intrepid pair has gathered all the pieces. Can they, in one short final chapter, put the puzzle together, decide the fate of the jewel, ward off the opposing sides, resolve their relationships, and experience personal growth? How about four out of five ... three out of five ... well, how about surviving?

Prelude and Fugue

"Long may the poets sing of this majestic deed!"

Chapter 9: Prelude and Fugue

"I don't want to go prowling around a creepy old graveyard full of ancient curses."

"What kind of wizard are you?"

"The sensible kind."

"Do you know anyone brave enough to watch our backs?"

There was a silent pause.

"Narcissa," suggested Severus.

"Draupadi," suggested Lucius.

"What would happen if we asked them to go with us and hold our hands because of a creepy old graveyard?"

"We'd never hear the end of it."

"That means it's just us two intrepid warlocks."

"Yeah."

After his last session at the Parkinson residence, Lucius had felt quite refreshed. 'It's amazing what a little Arithmancy will do for you,' he thought. Once the number was factored, the code was easily cracked. Now, on a cold night in late January, the two of them were trudging towards a famous gravesite. They would recite the incantation and retrieve the Druidic jewel. Once again, they rehashed their reasons for destroying it.

"We're not going to give it to what's-his-name?"

"You've got to be kidding."

"We don't trust the other side either?"

Severus gathered his thoughts, "Potter was abused until he came to Hogwarts. His life there hasn't been easy. I haven't seen any signs of a catharsis. He's a plastered over fault line ready to crack...especially if his friends get killed."

Lucius had heard the Potter story.

"Weasley is the youngest son in a poor family. He has high-achieving brothers and a talented sister. He lives in the shadow of a famous friend and a brilliant witch. He could make a grab for money and power."

Lucius knew the Weasley family.

"Granger has been holding the group together, but she's realizing she's an isolated and lonely swot. If she cracks, there's no one to hold her together."

Lucius had experienced the Granger instability.

'I wasn't completely truthful about Hermione having no one,' thought Severus, 'but I can't tell anyone about us, not even Lucius.'

The closer the goal, the more obstacles appear. As they traversed their dark path, the two were questioning their mission. Suppose they were not able to destroy the artifact.

"All it takes is the ability to factor large numbers, and we can release all this power."

"The ancient Druids must have believed that when we became this technically advanced, we would be highly evolved. Evil would be non-existent or under control."

"You don't think they miscalculated things, do you?"

"Are you worried that we'll be blamed if we discover the stone a few years early and release its power into the world?"

There was a pause for deep thought.

"Hermione Granger is the one who wanted to explore Druid secret codes and Numerology."

"Then it's not our fault."

"We're good to go."

The pair trudged through the dark and endless night.

Lucius wrapped his cloak tighter. "It's colder than a witch's tit in a Nebraska blizzard."

Severus shook his head. "You and your fancy literary references."

More trepidation appeared as they approached their goal. Lucius and Severus had stopped to check out some open ground before crossing it. It gave them time for philosophical speculation.

"We're betraying both sides."

"It's like screwing your wife's best friend."

"It's natural. Your wife's best friend is compatible but different."

"It affirms our wife made a good choice for a friend. It's a compliment to both of them actually."

They nodded agreement. 'Wives and their best friends should be happier about it,' they thought.

Lucius and Severus were not the only ones on a mission that fateful night. Mr. Goyle, who had never trusted Malfoy, had followed the duo until their destination became clear and then notified the Death Eaters. Miss Tonks, who had never trusted Snape, tracked the pair to their rendezvous with destiny and then roused the Order of the Phoenix. Mr. Moody, who had never trusted either Malfoy or Snape, had alerted the Aurors, but he didn't trust the Aurors enough to tell them which wizards were involved or what he thought might be happening. The Aurors, who didn't trust Moody, sent him home before laying their ambush for the untrustworthy pair.

Even two wizards completely focused on their goal and totally obsessed about a creepy old graveyard had to notice that something was up.

Lucius and Severus looked at each other. "We're being followed," they whispered.

A voice ahead of them boomed out, "All right, whoever you are, surrender! ... Do it now and live! ... You can't be dumb enough to take on eight Aurors!"

"He doesn't know us very well," muttered Severus.

The two prepared their disguises.

"You take the two behind the column and the two behind the garden wall. I'll take the two in the alley and the two on the balcony."

There were two jumps and two flashes of light. There were another two jumps and another two flashes of light.

"I hope the Aurors Guild has good medical benefits," said Severus.

"I never thought I'd say it," said Lucius, "but I'm losing my taste for this."

They arrived at the correct spot in the creepy old graveyard.

"Have you noticed that it doesn't make any difference, but it's a full moon anyway?"

"That's the way these things happen," they agreed.

They recited the reappearance-incantation, and the artifact lay gleaming before them.

"Wow!" they said.

"Good thing we're not tempted by its power."

"It scares me shitless."

"Yeah, me too."

Before they could complete their mission, our two hardy souls noticed that, once again, they were not alone.

In the near distance, there was a rustling and a slithering. Dark forms moved toward them through the brambles. Over these skulking forms, a darker form appeared in the sky.

"Oh, look," said Severus. "They brought a dragon."

The forces of darkness who Hades awaits had sneakily brought Helmut the waste maker. Foul darkness was unleashed into the world when his splotched egg had broken.

"I think the other side has a ringer, too," said Lucius.

From over the rolling hills came the steadfast advance of the wizard world's finest. Above them, the brave shape of an eagle shone in the star light. It was Montcliff pride of feathered warriors. His hatching from a splendid egg had given new hope to the just.

Helmut breaker of butterbeer tables and Montcliff keeper of spirits had spotted each other.

Helmut whose soul knew only cruelty ascended into the cruel night doing Cuban figure eights and finishing with a hammerhead with full membrane spread. There was hooting and rude noises from the side that loved deceit.

Montcliff forever faithful soared into the moonlight and displayed an outside loop followed by a stoop that sent a sonic boom rolling across the country side. There was hearty applause from the side whose faith was clear.

Seeing the other was not going to withdraw, the aerial combatants screamed their fury. They were like to rend the world with their cries. And that is why Severus and Lucius whose stalwart natures had never before faltered did that which they did. It caused them to miss the historic battle for the Druid's jewel. And much happened that night upon the embattled surface of England our own fair jewel.

McNair the essence of foul play snuck behind the trio that brought hope to the world and flung a wicked weal-raiser that missed them by inches. May the gods always grant such clemency to those who fight for justice. Remus whose heart thumped for truth appeared behind him and aimed a perfect skin-peeler at McNair the misbegotten sneak.

But misbegotten fate deflected that harmonious blow. When he heard the audacious spell whiz past his ear, McNair that bastion of misdeeds blew such a blast from the bastion of his ass that it caused the righteous to grin from ear to ear.

"Well done," applauded Ginny connoisseur of cunning curses.

Elsewhere on the plain of strife, two champions wrought of stern stuff faced each other.

Bellatrix whose twisted tongue was forever harsh to the friends of good made her unkind greeting. "Well, well, it's the bushy-haired one."

Hermione whose sweet lips could pass no lie spoke with fair speech. "I don't like you."

Truly, no love was lost between them. Their crossed spells which would shrivel the courage of valiant men knocked Bellatrix whose foul plans had not yet come to fruition down the gully. We now know whose soul was the purer.

Hermione that upright pillar of fortitude spent a golden minute smoothing her auburn curls back into place. 'Now, where was I?' the child of faith thought when her fair locks were once again the springboard for romance.

Spotting Avery descendent of blackness, Ron whose soul could abide no falsity spun a splendid spell that raised blisters. Avery whose name was baseness was wont to complain. "It hurts like hell."

The denizens of the air had not been idle. Montcliff bred to bravery had out flown Helmut in whom evil flourished. The feathered friend of mankind had snatched the jewel.

Crabbe and Goyle that dastardly duo where dwelled no decent desire dealt a dolorous dispatch that dinged Montcliff darer of decorous deeds direct in the gizzard.

"The chicken burped up the stone," cried the two miscreants who would never be missed.

Luna whose being wept mercy found inspired vengeance and flung a double-barreled ball-buster. Foremost was she amongst wizard kind with that dexterous blow. The two who were never true lay clutching their bits and writhing in the dust.

"A right good stroke," said Harry that child of light.

With a shriek of triumph, Helmut whose heart was a stranger to courtesy dived for the shiny object of desire where it lay upon the flat rock.

The heroic trio whose spirits were united hurled a hefty hex. They nigh on cracked the firmament with their valorous whoop:

"VoldemortEatShit."

Helmut bringer of sorrow was knocked ass over teakettle. Back at the nest, many a tear would be shed and many a clutch of eggs would lay barren, for the mighty triad whose steadfastness had not wavered had blown the dick off that foe to civility.

Long may the poets sing of this majestic deed!

Screaming his agony, Helmut source of strife tumbled into the last remaining upright stone which fell and crushed the Druid's gift.

There was a flash all the colors of magic.

The orbit of the moon changed by a measurable fraction.

Enchanters braver than the narrator would have quailed before the release of such power. And that is saying something.

The stars were shining brighter, and the woods were becoming darker.

A few minutes later, Lucius and Severus peeked from their muddy ditch and surveyed the battle plain honored with the unconscious forms of those whose moral fibre had not deserted them. They looked at each other.

"By Jiminy."

"I think we saved the world."

"Yeah."

Lucius and Severus toured the landscape that had witnessed stirring deeds worthy of a bard. Would such an illustrious wordsmith soon grace our lives. They wiped everyone's memory of the recent events and sent them back in heaps to their respective safe places.

"Their Masters will be displeased."

"Voldemort will be unhappy. He will torture them, but their physical agony will be short."

"Yes, you're right. Dumbledore will be understanding and withhold information from them. Their mental and psychological anguish will linger."

They nodded agreement. "To each his own."

Severus remembered that he was supposed to meet Draupadi and attend a production of her favorite play: 'Peter Pan and Wendy.' He was late and they would miss the first act. If that wasn't bad enough, Draupadi would require extra attention, and he would not be in his office when Hermione finished her Prefect patrol and appeared for a cuddle and reassurance. 'Oh boy, am I in trouble,' he thought.

Lucius remembered that it was Saturday night and Narcissa had expected him to be home hours ago for a cocktail and some conjugal bliss before he went out to spend the rest of the evening with 'the boys.' And it was late enough that he would not make it to Natalie's home on time for supper as he had promised. Her soufflé would be overcooked, and she would be tapping the floor with her foot. 'Oh boy, am I in trouble,' he thought.

Much later, when the witching hour was over and they were asleep, a restless warlock knocked on the door of another restless warlock.

They placed the bottles on the table, poured the amber liquid, and raised their glasses.

"We screwed up everything in our screwed path."

"We screwed everything in our screwed-up path."

They nodded agreement.

~~ END ~~