

Blood is Thicker Than Water

by Mandela

Narcissa is not the trophy wife she appears to be. She has her own agenda, and nobody will get in the way of it without paying the price. Based on Doomspark's Black Widow Challenge.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of 2

Narcissa is not the trophy wife she appears to be. She has her own agenda, and nobody will get in the way of it without paying the price. Based on Doomspark's Black Widow Challenge.

Author's Note: I've been trying to write something about Narcissa Black Malfoy for ages, the character utterly fascinates me. And no, I do not think she is the doormat she is so often made out to be in fanfiction. The way I see it, she is just as wealthy, cold, calculating and manipulative as Lucius—perhaps even more so.

This fic is in response to Doomspark's Black Widow challenge.

With a cold, calculating look in her eye, Narcissa Malfoy scanned the contents of the brief letter she'd received earlier that evening. She was barely able to decipher the messy scrawl; slowly she made out bits and pieces of the letter, her expression darkening as she did so. Scowling she crumbled the letter in her hand, tossing it into the fire. For a few moments the flames took on a blueish hue as the paper was consumed.

The plush, imported Persian carpet muffled the sound of Narcissa's heels as she stalked across the study. Her talon-like nails barely missing scratching the teak table as the agitated woman snatched up the bottle of brandy, sloshing a large amount into a glass. Narcissa was not really one for drinking, but this occasion called for it.

Gently massaging her temple with one hand, Narcissa slowly sank into the nearest lounge chair. This was becoming much more complicated than she had planned, and she was not pleased about being caught unaware. The woman downed the entire glass of brandy in one large, unladylike gulp, setting it down forcefully on the coffee table. Luckily neither Lucius nor Draco was home—Lucius was working late at the Ministry again, while Draco was still off at school. If either of them uncovered her little scheme, even if they were willing to cooperate with her, it would put everything in jeopardy.

It had started out simple enough. Narcissa needed a favor done, and for the right number of galleons, she'd found a willing accomplice in the Ministry. Her double agent had accepted the offer quickly, as she knew he would. Even the most staunch Ministry supporters would think twice before refusing such a large reward. And this man was, from what she had gathered, no big fan of the Ministry.

Six months ago, she'd accompanied Lucius, along with other high-ranking Ministry officials, including the Minister of Magic himself, on a visit to Azkaban. Certain members of the press were invited to come along as well, some sort of celebration and big media piece on the six month anniversary of Voldemort's defeat. Cornelius Fudge, who'd somehow managed to get himself reelected, had taken them on a tour of well-known Death Eater's cells. It was then that Narcissa saw her.

Bellatrix Lestrange. A highly violently, dangerous criminal, Fudge had pronounced her. Although she was not a woman ruled by her emotions, it took all of Narcissa's self control to keep her from giving even the slightest hint that it was her older sister locked up in that cell. None of the others in their group associated Bellatrix Black Lestrange, the raving madwoman, with Narcissa Black Malfoy, the calm, composed wife of a Ministry official. Lucius himself did not even seem to notice or make the

connection; if he had, he had not said anything to Narcissa about it later.

The image haunted Narcissa throughout the whole tour. She'd always been the slimmest of the three Black sisters, but now Bella was so gaunt and emaciated that Narcissa looked huge compared to her. Her skin was sallow, bags hung under her eyes. She was only forty years old, but she could have easily passed for sixty. Seeing her sister, like this, after all these years, Narcissa felt her stomach clench. The knowledge that somehow, through bribery, threats, you name it, she would get Bella out was the only thing that kept Narcissa from becoming physically sick right then and there.

Immediately Narcissa had contacted someone— anonymously, of course— in the Ministry who was willing to assist her. She knew that the Ministry was packed with spies, informers and double agents, but to be honest, she hadn't expected it to be quite that easy. She'd been able to confirm that her mysterious accomplice held a rather high position in the Ministry, high enough to carry out her plan. Still, that was all the information she was able to gather. She couldn't exactly ask Lucius for help. He'd been able not only to get himself out of serving time in Azkaban for his Death Eater activities, but to retain his prominent position at the Ministry. He and Narcissa had made the decision that Lucius, at least on the outside, would remain clean and law-abiding until this new hunting down remaining Death Eaters phase passed.

But enough reminiscing. Thinking back on the cause of her present situation did nothing to improve it. This...man, whomever he was, was taking everything too far. Initially, Narcissa had paid quite a handsome fee to get his services. Recently, however, his price had grown exponentially. Narcissa had never lacked for money, and even with the man's abominable rates it hardly hurt her purse. Still, Lucius was getting suspicious. Her withdrawing large amounts of galleons, even from her own private accounts, was not going unnoticed.

Picking up a quill, she began penning her reply.

Ares-

He'd always signed his letters Ares, after the Greek god of war. *How fitting*, Narcissa mused, scowling. Well, this was war.

It seems by now you must have amassed a large sum of money, siphoned from my personal accounts for the work I have hired you to do. However, your head has swelled to quite ungainly proportions in recent weeks. In past months I was willing to pay a little extra provided I received my money's worth. Unfortunately for you, it appears your well of information is drying up rapidly, and I have no patience to tolerate fools who waste my time and money.

*Perhaps I need to clarify my instructions. Read this well, if I have to tell you again it will result in dire consequences. You **will** send me new, pertinent information in your next correspondence. You **will not** even dare to demand a raise, nor presume that I will comply so willingly. I need to act, and act quickly. If you are not in control of the situation, then you useless to me. Expendable. It will not be difficult for me to find you, and I assure you, once I do you will suffer for having lead me along on this wild goose chase of yours.*

You have three days to determine whether or not a transfer can be made. Do not fail me.

-B

Satisfied, Narcissa folded the letter, sealing it tightly. The owl that had brought Ares' letter hooted dolefully, and Narcissa attached her reply to its leg, smirking to herself as it soared off into the night.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of 2

Narcissa is not a woman to be crossed. What she wants she will have, and she as no moral qualms as to how she acquires it.

Author's Note: I apologize for not updating my other stories, but the plot bunny for this one was gnawing on my ankle all day until I finally got this bit down in writing.

It was quite fun to write, I must say. Even if the content isn't too fun. Enjoy!

Narcissa had gone to bed that night feeling particularly vengeful. Her sour mood had been noted by the old manor's various occupants, both human and non-human alike. As such, the house elves made it their business to keep away from their ornery mistress. Despite the fact that she was pleased to be left alone, their absence and their presuming that she wanted them hidden only served to further enrage the woman.

The next morning, however, found Narcissa's mood to have improved greatly. Outwardly, her appearance remained just as it had always been for the past nineteen years. Inwardly, she was filled with an almost malicious satisfaction, knowing that today she would begin her hunt for her less-than-pleasant informant. Even if he did perform the necessary duties, a lesson was needed most desperately. He would have to learn that one *never* takes advantage of a Black.

Breakfast was uneventful; Narcissa sat silently, carefully rehashing details of her plan mentally as she nibbled at her eggs. Lucius remained quiet as well, reading a copy of the *Daily Prophet* over his cup of coffee. His wife's silence went unnoticed. At one point Narcissa herself realized that she must look a bit odd, staring intently at her poached eggs. But, to her satisfaction, Lucius had not even glanced up once. The woman allowed herself a small, self-satisfied smile. She really was quite fond of him, much in the way one of was fond of a cat or other adorable yet innocent household pet.

Rising, Lucius set down his paper, strode over and gave his wife a chaste peck on the cheek. Both mumbled polite goodbyes as two house elves hurried over having fetched Lucius' cloak and staff. Giving one last nod to his wife, Lucius apparated with a loud CRACK! For a few more minutes, Narcissa remained lazily in her chair sipping her tea, not wishing to risk being caught by her husband if he happened to apparate home for something he'd left behind.

After five minutes had passed and her tea was growing cold, Narcissa stood up. Her walk no longer had the same, meandering laziness to it. Now she strode purposefully out of the room, hurrying up to her own personal chambers.

An elegant yet modest set of work-robos was chosen from among her enormous wardrobe. She'd be playing a part, and it was very important that she look it. Gently she withdrew a carefully warded box from the depths of the walk-in closet. Opening the box, she selected a tiny vial and swiftly downed the contents. Quickly she disposed of the empty vial, storing the box back where it had come from. The potion wasn't strictly legal in Britain, and neither her husband nor her son knew about it. The less that

knew, the better, she had reasoned.

As the potion took effect, her skin began to darken rapidly until she'd taken on an almost Mediterranean skin coloring, a sharp contrast from her normally pale complexion. A simple spell turned her blue eyes brown, a similar one darkening her hair until it was almost black. She barely bothered to look in the mirror, knowing that her so-called disguise had worked perfectly. Heaven knows how often she'd put that spell to use over the past twenty-odd years; she could practically do it in her sleep.

Narcissa twisted her hair into a loose, casual braid, nothing like the elegant and sophisticated chignons she wore normally. Finally, she gazed at her reflected in the large, antique mirror. The woman staring back at her looked nothing like the woman who'd entered the room only minutes before. Satisfied, Narcissa smirked. She'd been most pleased at how easily this transformation was completed. And, of course, at its phenomenal rate of success.

"Lucia Ferretti," she drawled, affecting a convincing Italian accent. Again, the woman smiled to herself. She did have a flair for acting who would have guessed? No one, apparently. The connection between dark-skinned, demanding Lucia and pale, subservient Narcissa was almost impossible to imagine.

Summoning her purse and cloak, she was on the verge of apparating when she remembered a crucial detail. Mentally berating herself for almost forgetting, she took her Narcissa's wand and placed it carefully in a draw in her vanity table. She removed a second wand from the drawer before closing it with a sharp snap. The drawer would not open again unless it was her own hand that did the opening. Now she was ready, Narcissa decided, placing Lucia's black-market wand in her robe pocket. Running around with Narcissa Malfoy's wand was not an intelligent move if she was to be masquerading as Lucia.

Confident that she was virtually undetectable as Narcissa, the woman apparated with a sharp CRACK!

Narcissa apparated to her normal point of discreet arrival a rarely used woman's toilet on the seventh floor. There were few women working for the Department of Magical Games and Sports, and thus it was rare that there would be anybody in or around the area to notice her arrival. Withdrawing a previous note from 'Ares', she tucked the paper into her robe pocket then carefully transfigured her purse to resemble a briefcase, donning a pair of sturdy reading glasses as well. Showtime.

Throwing the door open, she strode out into the hall making a beeline for the lift. Nobody questioned her she remained extremely confident in what she was doing, and no one cared to embarrass themselves by challenging her presence. If she wasn't meant to be there, she'd probably look more lost and confused, they all reasoned.

Narcissa rode the lift down to the second level, the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. She exited the lift with a number of inter-office memos, but thankfully no other people. Trying to look as official as possible, she marched into the room. Most of the workers barely gave her a second glance. Being methodical was the key, and she carefully kept a mental list of the orders she visited the various desks.

"Good day," she began, starting with the leftmost desk. The harried looking wizard behind it barely glanced up. "Mr uh, Festle. I've been sent to collect your weekly report." Narcissa knew from Lucius that workers in all departments submitted a bi-weekly report that was filed away somewhere. Festle nodded, still not glancing up from the report he was filing.

"Take it," he said simply. "It's the topmost one." Narcissa nodded, carefully taking the report and placing it in her briefcase before moving on to the next desk.

"You're weekly report, please," she said. This time another wizard, a Mr. Brookes, glanced up sharply.

"What for?" He asked suspiciously, staring at the woman.

"The Minister's office has instigated a new policy to test the efficiency of its workers. Once a month a random collection of a sampling of reports will be compiled and brought to the Minister for reviewing," she lied coolly, unflinchingly. The man gulped clearly his report was less than perfect. "Your report, please," she repeated. He nervously gave her the report.

Narcissa continued this charade for another risky half hour, making an appearance at no less than twenty-three desks. Each time she'd glanced downward as she'd collected the report, and each time she'd been disappointed. The handwriting did not match the scrawl so commonly used on Ares' letters. With a sigh, she turned to the next and last desk. Lucius' desk was to the right of this man's, and Narcissa couldn't risk confronting him face to face.

"Good day, Mr. Butler," she said, repeating the same sentence once more. "You're weekly report, please." The balding wizard looked up, giving Narcissa an appraising look, almost as if he recognized her. Narcissa's stomach muscles clenched, would he give her whole charade away? Thankfully, he looked away after a moment. Shuffling through a pile of papers in a draw, he withdrew a wrinkled, coffee-stained paper, shrugging sheepishly as she frowned at the messy report.

Narcissa was carefully placing the paper in her briefcase when something caught her eye. The slant of the lowercase 'e' was familiar. Closer scrutiny though not close enough to attract Mr. Butler's unwanted attention revealed what Narcissa had been looking for all along. Though somewhat neater than his previous letter, this handwriting was undeniably Ares'.

"Thank you, Mr. Butler," she said silkily, slipping the paper into her briefcase. "Have a good day." Barely able to keep a satisfied smirk off her face, Narcissa turned on her heel and strode towards the door. She'd gotten what she was looking for.

"What was that about?" Lucius questioned, depositing a stack of reports on Butler's desk, watching the exiting Narcissa's back.

The bald man shrugged. "Collecting reports or something." Making sure the woman was out of earshot, he cracked a grin and winked conspiratorially. "Quite a looker, wasn't she?"

Lucius shrugged, a finger lazily running through his own silvery-blond locks. "I suppose so, if you like brunettes."

Narcissa, robed in black, sat comfortably in an armchair in the Butler residence. The man was a bachelor, she'd noted, and from the looks of things he didn't plan on changing that any time soon. To her revulsion, she'd discovered that Mr. Butler also had quite a penchant for dirty magazines. Frowning distastefully, Narcissa had incinerated the entire collection in Butler's dilapidated fireplace. He wouldn't be missing them.

A key clicked in the lock, and the door slowly swung open. Narcissa tensed; she'd been awaiting this moment all day. Butler stumbled into the room, weighed down by a small, yet hefty package. *Probably more of those vulgar magazines* Narcissa thought, wrinkling her nose. Butler was concentrating hard on not dropping his bundle that he did not notice Narcissa who'd reverted back to her normal appearance until moments later when he'd deposited the package on a small side table and had a chance to quickly scan his apartment.

"Oy!" He exclaimed, trying not to let his fright show. "Who the bloody 'ell are you?!" Narcissa calmly withdrew her wand from her sleeve, and Butler's eyes widened in fear. "W-what do you want?" He stuttered, seeing that glint in her eye.

"I don't want much," she said simply, advancing on him. All pretenses of being macho vanished; Butler was visibly cowering before her. "Good evening, Ares."

"Who"

"CRUCIO!"

Butler screamed, falling to the floor, writhing in pain. Narcissa, who had placed a silencing charm on the room beforehand, watched the little display for a moment before finally ending the punishment. Butler gasped, panting.

"You see," she said softly, circling him. "I am no fool. I will not pay exorbitant fees for something that I do not need. You are dispensable," she informed the man, who stared up at her blankly. Or at least, he would have stared blankly if his eyes weren't full of fear. "I have found a more useful way of obtaining what I need. Goodbye, Ares."

Butler started to protest, but it did nothing.

"*IMPERIO!*"

The man stared at Narcissa in horror. "Accio glass!" A dirty glass from one of Butler's cabinets flew into her hands. Reaching into her robes she removed a small vial, pouring the contents into the cup. Then, slowly, she returned the vial to her robes, allowing Butler to catch a glimpse of the skull and crossbones on the label. He struggled to his feet in an effort to run from the woman. However, he did not get very far.

"Drink up," she ordered, handing him the cup. Try as he might, Butler was weak. He could not resist the Imperious Curse, and quickly downed the contents. He gagged, once again writhing in pain. A moment later he collapsed with a thump, dead as a doornail.

Narcissa smirked coldly, ending the curse. The wand the fictional Lucia's, not her own was broken in half and cast into the roaring flames of the fireplace where it was consumed along with Butler's secret pornography cache.

"Thank you for your time," she said softly, disappearing with a pop.

Author's Note: Narcissa is quite the evil little bitch, it seems. But that is my theory about her characterization. She isn't about to let anybody walk all over her. She'll get her revenge, but subtly. She certainly isn't as weak-willed and subservient as people generally seem to portray her. Of all the 'dark' characters we've met, it seems that she (Not Lucius, not Draco) is the most likely to be the most ruthless one in the family (with the exception of Bella and her husband).