

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Harry goes and meets with Narcissa at long last.

-x-X-x-

“Are you sure about this? Isn’t it dangerous?”

It wasn’t difficult for Harry to come to a decision on how he wanted to investigate Narcissa Malfoy. Sure, he could have easily slipped into the Malfoy Estate, making his way past the wards and seeing what there was to see... but where was the fun in that?

If Narcissa was involved in everything that was going on, and it certainly seemed like she was based on Bellatrix’s involvement and her previous antagonism, then it stood to reason that she would practically salivate at the chance to get him in her clutches. Presenting himself at Malfoy Manor for a private meeting would be too good of an opportunity for her to pass up.

Of course, not everyone agreed with that take. Especially not Fleur, who Harry admittedly hadn’t been taking with him very much recently.

“It’ll be fine, Fleur. I will be fine. You have faith in me, don’t you?”

Fleur huffs.

“You know I do; Lord Hallows. However... do you have faith in yourself?”

Harry can’t help but raise a brow at Fleur’s pointed question... but Fleur doesn’t back down. She stands her ground and huffs.

“If you really thought it was perfectly fine, then why aren’t you taking me with you? I’m your personal assistant... it makes perfect sense that I would accompany you on such an important meeting. Lady Malfoy wouldn’t be at all surprised by it, I’m more like an accessory than a person.”

Hah. Trust Fleur to cut straight to the heart of the matter. Indeed, Narcissa was likely to raise any sort of complaint or make any stink if he did choose to bring Fleur with him. Except...

"There's every possibility this will turn out to be a dangerous trap, Fleur. The reason you're not coming is because it will be easier for me to reverse the trap if I'm not having to worry about you at the same time."

Fleur clenches her jaw, clearly not having expected him to just outright say the quiet part out loud. Harry grins crookedly back at her, shrugging his shoulders. It's the truth, after all. He can handle anything Narcissa or Bellatrix throws at him, of that Harry is confident. They can't kill him, not permanently at least.

But Fleur... Harry can't guarantee her safety. He's done everything possible to protect her of course, but part of that includes keeping her out of obviously dangerous situations.

"So you agree that it's dangerous, but you're going anyways..."

Harry rolls his eyes. Fleur's concern and worry was both amusing and heartwarming at first, but it's starting to border on annoying. She means well though, he knows that much.

"I can't just leave Narcissa Malfoy be anymore. Not when I've discovered evidence that points to her being involved in the 'curse' that has killed all of Magical Britain's wizards over the course of the last eight years. So yes I'm going to go and I'm going to try to get to the bottom of things. And you're going to stay here because if for whatever reason I don't come back, you and Dee can go and tell Amelia and Penny everything that's happened as a final failsafe."

That doesn't make Fleur any happier... but Harry is using his no-nonsense voice now. Or maybe his 'Lord's Voice' or something. Regardless, the part veela stiffens up, her nostrils flaring as she slowly nods, finally accepting that he's not asking... he's commanding.

“Understood, milord.”

Though she doesn't just leave it at that.

“You'd better come back safe and sound though. My mother and sister both still want to meet you to thank you properly. Not to mention, you still have open cases. So you aren't allowed to die, understood?”

Harry grins, able to hear the care and concern in his assistant's voice, even as she badgers him a bit with all his 'responsibilities'. They both know Harry sets his own schedule in truth, but he also understands that Fleur is mostly just expressing her worry in the only way she can now that he's put his foot down.

“Sounds like I have a lot on my plate, Ms. Delacour. I'll be sure to deal with some of that when I get back.”

Then, because he can, he takes ahold of Fleur and pulls her into a deep, tongue-filled kiss... one that she almost immediately melts into, moaning as she kisses him back. Of course, when her hands start to wander down his front, Harry terminates the kiss and pulls back, giving Fleur a grin and a wink. No, he's not going to let her distract him with her body. Not this time.

The last thing Harry sees is Fleur's pout and eyes filled with longing as he departs. A moment later and he's apparated outside of the Malfoy Estate, arriving just outside of its wards. Technically, he's a little early... but then, that was sort of the point.

Rather than immediately making his way to the front door, Harry pauses outside and activates half a dozen diagnostic spells... the same spells he'd used to check out Ginevra's wards the other night in fact. His eyes glow as he looks over the Malfoy Wards with a far more critical eye than he did those ones. He's not just looking for loopholes after all; he's looking for the trap.

Funnily enough, he finds the former but not the latter. The same mistake in Ginevra's wards exists in Narcissa's wards as well, the sort of loophole that one could drive a Bellatrix-shaped truck through. Harry snorts at his own internal

joke, even as he fails to find anything in the wards that might be meant to ensnare or trap him specifically.

Narcissa *did* know he was coming, after all... he'd sent word ahead yesterday and they'd hashed out today just after lunch for their meeting. She'd had plenty of time to prepare for his arrival, especially if she really was working with her sister. And yet... he saw nothing.

That didn't mean there wasn't still something further in though. It just meant that the trap, when it finally was sprung, wouldn't come from the wards. That was one avenue Harry wouldn't have to concern himself with.

As the time of the meeting approaches, Harry finally stops his studying of the Malfoy wards with a sigh, deactivating his diagnostics and shaking his head in amusement... and maybe a little bit of nostalgia.

He remembers one lifetime, a few worlds back, where he and his godfather had chosen to become thieves, specifically thieves that broke into Death Eater estates and took everything that they could get their hands on. The 'Death Eater Bandits', they'd been called. Now that had been quite an amusing life.

But now, rather than sneaking into Malfoy Manor with his godfather at his side in the dead of night, Harry is walking right up to the front door as an invited guest. He does so with a straight back and casual stride. He doesn't have to feign his confidence, not truly. He's fairly certain he knows exactly what he's walking into, after all.

Just as he's reaching the doors to Malfoy Manor, they slide open to reveal a familiar House Elf standing just inside.

"Ah... Lord Hallows has arrived. Dobby will escort Lord Hallows to the Mistress. Right this way, please."

Dobby looks... surprisingly good for a version that has never escaped the Malfoys. For one, he's not wearing the rags that Harry has always associated with him, instead having on something far cleaner. He even stands without a

hunch. Had the lack of Lucius and Draco really been that good for him? He didn't seem to be nearly as much of a nervous wreck... and he'd survived all this time as well.

In the end, Harry doesn't think about it too hard. There are always going to be differences between timelines. Ginevra, for instance, was different in a lot of ways from the Ginnys he'd known before her. Dobby could be different too, in the end.

They arrive at a sitting room shortly after that, where Narcissa is indeed waiting for him. The Lady of House Malfoy sits primly, dressed finely in robes that go all the way up to her neck. She looks quite... poised as she perches on the edge of her chair, tea and snacks in front of her.

"Lord Hallows. Welcome to my home."

She doesn't rise to greet him, nor offer her hand for him to kiss the knuckles. It's a decidedly frosty reception, one that has Harry grinning a bit, even as he moves to sit down as well. He of course checks for any traps first, a quick and surreptitious look with magic swirling around his eyes so Narcissa can't see... but there's nothing there. The couch he ends up sitting on is just a couch, in the end.

"But of course. When the Lady Malfoy invites you to her home, you must accept, no?"

Narcissa's eyes flash at that, her lips pursing as she barely refrains from scowling at him. After all, Harry had rejected her initial overtures from before the Wizengamot Meeting. And then he'd made her wait after the Wizengamot Meeting as well, dragging his feet. So to say his words were... contradictory now would be a bit of an understatement.

But then that's the point. Harry is enjoying pushing Narcissa's buttons. Needling her, if you will. He wants to see just how far he can push things before she snaps.

“... I am not your enemy, Lord Hallows. Nor are you mine.”

That response though... that surprises Harry a little bit. She can't be serious, right? Does she truly expect him to believe that? He doesn't even bother hiding his incredulity, even as he takes a cup of tea and sips from it liberally, not at all worried about drugs or poison. He's magically protected himself against such things.

Seeing his incredulous expression, Narcissa huffs.

“While it is true that we have been... antagonistic to one another so far, that is simply politics. But the reality of the situation is something I think you'll be able to agree with. Our true enemy... is the goblins.”

Ah. Now he sees where Narcissa is going with this. Interesting. Harry feigns disinterest to see how she'll react to it, shrugging and smiling politely.

“My own interactions with the goblins haven't been that bad.”

Lying through his teeth, of course. But he's still a little surprised when Narcissa immediately calls him out on it.

“Don't lie to me, Lord Hallows. I have sources. I know things. I know that whatever happened between you and the goblins resulted in you managing to poach Fleur Delacour from them before the end of her contract. I know that whatever happened between you and them resulted in your 'consolidation' of the Potter and Black Vaults, something they would not have been particularly thrilled about. And I know that their retaliation, in the end, involved revealing you to the Ministry of Magic before you might have otherwise preferred it, ensuring that those with eyes and ears and influence would catch wind of you earlier than anyone else within the Magical World.”

Harry blinks as Narcissa finally takes a breath, finishing her rant. He can feel the strength of her ire in her words... she well and truly hates the goblins of Gringotts with a burning, fiery passion. Perhaps even more than she dislikes him.

Which is interesting, because if she were really in league with her sister, he wouldn't have expected the conversation to take this turn. Then again, Narcissa was fully capable of showing her true feelings on a different matter in order to lull him into a false sense of security.

"No matter how you look at it, you and the goblins are just as much at odds with one another as they are with the rest of the Magical World, Lord Hallows. It's just that unlike with most others, they are bound by magical treaty and law to serve your needs."

Harry arches a brow.

"Yours as well, or so I've been told. Or did your son not manage to secure your access to House Malfoy's assets before he passed?"

He brings up Draco for more reasons than one. Because in most universes, Narcissa Malfoy loves her son... and if she truly is involved in all of the killings in this universe, he wonders whether Draco's death was one she didn't agree with... one she regretted.

Indeed, Narcissa's jaw clenches and her free hand spasms into a fist in her lap. She tenses up for a moment, a flash of grief appearing before she gets herself back under control. When she finally speaks, just long enough has passed for it to be awkward, but her tone is nevertheless level and even.

"Access, yes. Control... no. All I can do is sit in the ashes of my House, wallowing in what remains. I can spend my stipend, yes, but I cannot make the moves I need to ensure our holdings do not continue to slowly rot, as they have been since my husband and son's deaths. I am trapped; Lord Hallows. As are so many other witches. Trapped because the goblins of Gringotts see a way to strangle us to death and take our wealth for themselves."

Fascinating. Truly fascinating. This wasn't the conversation he'd been expecting to have today. Truthfully, he hadn't been sure there would be a conversation at

all. But here they were, with Narcissa making it sound like she wanted his help rather than to do anything nefarious to him. Harry could scarcely believe it.

“... What do you want me to do about it, exactly?”

Narcissa pauses... and seems to gird herself for a long moment. Then, setting her teacup down, she rises from her chair. Harry tenses up as she draws her wand, ready for anything... but she points the wand at herself rather than him.

A moment later and the stately, buttoned-up appearance that she'd been presenting vanishes... replaced in a shimmer of magic by a light, sheer night gown tied off at the front that leaves very little of her surprisingly fit, toned body to the imagination. Narcissa Malfoy might be quite a bit older than him, but much like Amelia Bones and many other witches, she wore her age like a fine wine.

“I wish for you to do the only thing you can do; Lord Hallows. I wish for you to get me with child, a son... so that I may rebuild House Malfoy from the ground up.”

... Seriously?!

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!