

Just a Fling

by Savva

She didn't expect something like that happen to her. But it did.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Was written for ForTheLoveOfHP fest on LJ.

Prompt #: 6. Her son's best friend has watched her for years with the eyes of a man hungry to have at her. Narcissa has done her best to ignore the boy's attentions... Post-war, years after Lucius has been locked away for life, Theo reappears in Draco's and Narcissa's life. He's all grown up, and a striking man in his own right...socially powerful, magically talented, sophisticated & intelligent, a bit dark, and a lot snarky. He's everything that had attracted her to Lucius, when she'd been a young maid. How can she resist?

Notes: Enormous thanks to my wonderful betas krazyredhead0317 and AmyLouise, to mods for organising this fest and to RZZMG for the excellent prompt.

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Just a Fling

Nothing lasts...

But nothing is lost.

(Shponggle)

Denied

June of 2005

The air in the room was stale and heavy. In her quest to avoid the stench of mould, dust, and sweat, Narcissa opted to gasp only when her lungs were burning from lack of oxygen. Still, every time she drew a breath, she had to stifle the urge to grimace, as she didn't wish to aggravate the Ministry official, a pudgy, red-faced wizard with a receding hairline who, nevertheless, looked irate. *Or maybe that was his ordinary expression* she thought.

They had been watching him furiously scribbling on an official parchment for about forty minutes, and she could feel Draco growing rigid beside her. Why the Ministry clerks strove to make these annual visits as humiliating as possible was beyond her. Boredom, perhaps, she reckoned. Judging by their faces, she couldn't imagine their job being truly satisfying; they must find a sadistic pleasure in making the two Malfoys wait. It was the moment of their pitiful triumph over something that they were now permitted to hate, and they savoured every minute of it. She gazed at the man in front of her. He looked utterly pathetic.

At that moment, losing the last of his patience, Draco loudly cleared his throat. "Excuse me," he said, "are you going to provide us with the result of the hearings?"

A dangerous edge in his voice alarmed Narcissa. "Yes, please, if you'd be so kind," she added, in a desperate attempt to make his words sound friendlier. Draco gave her a quick, disapproving glance, and she squeezed his hand in a silent plea to stay civil. A conflict with the clerk was the last thing they needed.

She saw Draco's jawline hardening, but a moment later, he echoed her, "Yes, if you'd be so kind, sir," though that 'sir' was pushed through clenched teeth and didn't sound amiable at all.

The clerk stopped attacking the parchment and raised his face, focusing his colourless eyes on them. "What's the name again?" he barked, asking the question for the fourth time.

Afraid that Draco would snap, Narcissa hastily replied, "Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy." The clerk grumbled something under his breath and flicked his wand. One of his desk drawers opened, and a rolled parchment landed in front of him. He let out a grunt of exasperation and struggled to his feet, leaning heavily on the armrests of his dingy chair. Once up, he unrolled the scroll and began to read in a nasal monotone. Narcissa didn't try to make sense of the useless words, but waited for the only ones that mattered. The ruling: she needed to know the ruling.

"After a thorough analysis, the Ministry of Magic Parole Board has come to the conclusion that Lucius Malfoy is not a suitable candidate for community supervision at this time," the clerk announced at last. "Therefore, the petition for parole has been denied."

"Denied," rang in her ears. *Denied*. Finally, it registered in her mind, and she released the breath she had been holding. A sudden apathy took hold of her, and feeling Draco's shoulder behind her, she leaned on him. Without a word, Draco pulled the parchment away from the clerk and hurriedly led her out of the suffocating stuffiness of the room. Numb and oddly light-headed, Narcissa let her son steer her down the corridor toward the closest Floo.

They walked silently, manoeuvring around occasional passers-by, and Narcissa was straining to gather her scattered thoughts when she heard Draco muttering, "I hate this." Stopping abruptly and forcing her to stop as well, he peered into her eyes and asked, "Why do we keep doing this? Why do we willingly subject ourselves to this humiliation year after year?" He glared at her. "Do you even want him out of Azkaban? Do you, mother? Because I certainly don't. This ..." He paused, looked around him and grimaced. "This place makes me sick. Actually, all these things disgust me: the Ministry, those swine in their filthy offices, and, most of all, my shitty excuse for a father. I loathe everything about him. I don't understand why we are still trying to get him out. He is where he belongs. I don't want him to come back. I don't want anything to do with him, and I'm pretty sure you don't either. Or will you try to convince me that you still love him and want him back in our lives? Will you, mother?" His piercing grey Lucius-grey eyes locked on her.

The fact that Draco had allowed himself to raise his voice revealed how distressed he was. *My poor boy*, ran through Narcissa's mind, and she instinctively reached for him.

He sharply drew back from her. "Answer the question, mother!"

She leaned on the wall, seeking support from its cold stones. Struggling to keep her decorum in place, she mustered all her strength and replied as calmly as she could, "Draco, please, not here. Don't make a spectacle of yourself. Don't give them the satisfaction of witnessing your distress. Let's get home, and we'll talk there."

Gesturing at the empty corridor, Draco demanded, "There is no one here. For once, will you answer the damned question? Do you want him to return? Have you already forgotten what he did, how he killed and tortured? Have you forgotten what he did to you?" He rolled his sleeve and shoved his marred arm into her face. "Have you forgotten about this, mother?"

"No," she cried, suddenly unable to draw a breath. "No," she whispered again, and then everything went black.

She came about to the warm eyes of their family Healer Tibald. "Welcome back," he said, with the soothing manner doctors often use. "Feeling better?"

"Tibald? What happened?" Alarmed and disoriented, Narcissa sat up and glanced around. Recognising the room as her study, she let out a sigh of relief at least she was home, thank Merlin.

Tibald patted her shoulder. "Nothing too serious, don't worry. You fainted at the Ministry," he explained. "Draco brought you home and summoned me."

Draco, echoed in her mind. "Draco? Where is he?" she said, and tried to stand up, as their conversation came back to her.

Tibald, however, did not let her rise. "He's home. He just stepped out to the Owlery."

Narcissa leaned back and examined the old wizard's face. "Nothing serious," she repeated, eyeing him with suspicion. "Why did Draco decide to bother you, then? Surely, as a certified Healer, he could have handled a simple fainting spell himself?" Knowing Tibald for the last thirty years, she could tell whether he was telling the truth or not. "What is it? Am I ill?" she asked seeking an answer in his warm, brown eyes. "Because, if I am, I don't want to know anything about it. Not now."

Tibald chuckled and muttered wryly, "Always so vigilant."

"I grew up with Bella as a sister. It's instinctive." Narcissa shrugged, and once again locking her eyes on the wizard, prompted, "So?"

He gave her an open, genuine smile and said, "There is nothing to worry about, believe me. I'd say Draco did overreact slightly. You know it's difficult for him to treat you, even though he is fully capable of doing so. Plus, as I understood, you had a disagreement of sorts before you lost consciousness, so perhaps he was distraught and felt responsible."

Narcissa waved her hand dismissively. "It's not his fault he was right about everything." She sighed. "My poor boy."

"Indeed." Tibald nodded and also drew a heavy sigh. "Nevertheless, my darling, despite everything, or maybe because of it, he turned out just right. He'll have a brilliant career in St.Mungo's, you'll see. Now, let's talk about your health." He gave her a stern look. "You, my dear girl, have neglected it for the last ten years, and now we are reaping the results."

"What nonsense," Narcissa objected. "I think you're being ridiculous, Tibald. I'm perfectly fine."

"I've known you long enough. Today's episode was no accident. It was a clear warning, and we have to heed it. You must get out of this house. The war ended seven years ago it's time to let go and live your life, and as your family Healer, I propose that you start with a little holiday. Your body needs to recharge. You need sun, soft sand, and warm sea. Perhaps the Mediterranean?" He smiled, and his eyes lit up with wistful reminiscence. "Remember how you and Lucius used to love your villa in Greece? If I recall correctly, I was summoned there after your first episode of morning sickness. I can't believe it was twenty-five years ago." He shook his head, looking at her with affection. "You haven't changed a bit, my dear, and my duty is to keep it that way." He gently squeezed her hand.

Narcissa felt her throat tightening as the memories flooded her mind. She had been so young then, so in love, so naïve. She recalled how she had begged Lucius not to return to England. She had been so afraid for her future baby, and oh Merlin, how right she had been. If only he had listened to her. Alas, he hadn't, the arrogant, bigoted, power-thirsty fool.

"Our villa in Greece is still under the Gringotts' siege, Tibald, just like Lucius's vault," she said as her thoughts returned to the present, "and with Draco still on his internship in St.Mungo's, we simply can't afford a Mediterranean holiday."

Tibald slapped his forehead, his face flushed with embarrassment. "Please, forgive an old fool. I keep forgetting about your circumstances. Please, please, allow me to help," he pleaded.

Narcissa frowned and was ready to refuse politely when Draco appeared at the door. "Mother," he called, pausing at the threshold and looking unsure, "are you all right? I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have ..."

Narcissa stopped him with an impatient wave of her hand. "Stop that this instant, Draco. I'm fine, and if someone has to apologise, it's me. Come here," she patted a space on the settee near her, "and we'll talk."

As Draco came closer, Tibald threw a conspiratorial glance at him and asked, "Any luck with your friend?"

The young wizard smiled and nodded. "Yep, everything is settled."

"Splendid," murmured Tibald, returning his gaze to Narcissa. "Well..." He stood up with a grunt, said, "I think it's time for me to bid you good-bye. I'm sure this young man will take care of you, my dear," and left, seemingly in a hurry.

Surprised by Tibald's abrupt departure, Narcissa turned to her son, her eyebrows arched quizzically. "Draco?"

Draco crossed the room and sat down near her, still looking guilty and uncertain. "How do you feel about a holiday on the French Riviera?" he said, peering into her eyes.

Narcissa clasped his hand in both of hers and whispered, "I adore the French Riviera, my darling, and you know it." She frowned. "I won't allow you to take an advance from St. Mungo's. Not for my sake "

"Shh, don't worry yourself, it's not good for you. Everything has been arranged, and no advance is needed."

"But how?"

"Theodore Nott. Do you remember him?"

"Of course. What about him? I haven't heard of him for ages. I thought he lived in France. Oh ...," she breathed out as the realisation struck her. "I didn't know you kept in touch."

"We did. We talk regularly, actually, and he's been asking me to come to Cannes for a visit for years. I just didn't have time with my studies and everything. But I think it's time; we'll go tomorrow. It'll be good for both of us."

Suddenly feeling like crying, Narcissa sniffled and hugged her son, just as she had done when he was a little boy. His shoulders were much wider and stronger now, but it didn't matter. "I love you, my dear boy. Please, forgive me for everything," she whispered.

"I'm sorry," he muttered. "It was wrong of me to yell at you."

Narcissa drew back and wiped her tears. "No, it was wrong of me to drag you into it. I promise, I won't ask you again. Now," she smiled and drew a shaky breath, "tell me about Theo."

They talked over dinner, and then Draco had to return to St.Mungo's, leaving Narcissa alone with her musings. She sat in her study, thinking about life, fate, and the odd way in which everything was connected in this world.

She remembered Theodore Nott very well. He had been a quiet, blue-eyed boy with wheat-coloured curls and a perpetual pensive expression on his thin, angular face. She hadn't been close to his mother, though she knew that Elise came from a wealthy French family. The poor darling had died when Theo was only four years old, leaving him with that brute of a husband of hers. Nott Senior had been a frequent guest at the Manor, and over the years, the boys had become pretty close. Narcissa chuckled, recollecting the way Theo had always watched her every move. She had suspected that the boy had a childhood crush on her. It would be nice to see him all grown up, she reckoned.

According to Draco, after the war, Theo had fled to France and reunited with his grandparents, who were happy to welcome their grandson into the family. Alas, they didn't get to spend a lot of time with him, as they were both well into their hundreds. Theo's grandmother was the first to go, soon followed by her husband. Since Theo was the heir, he became the head of a rather profitable family business: Bolazam Apothecary. The name had caught Narcissa by surprise she knew it. In fact, Bolazam Apothecary was famous among the magical female population, and she had had their formulas on her toilette table as well. They had made the best cosmetic products for witches during the last century and a half. How bizarre that she never knew about that connection. Draco had mentioned that Theo, always proficient in potions, had breathed new life into the apothecary, and the company had been doing better than ever.

Later that night, Narcissa lay in bed and thought about Lucius. Draco wasn't entirely accurate in his assumptions: she hadn't simply stopped loving her husband; for a long time now, she had despised him. It hadn't happened overnight, of course. She had been watching Lucius for years, gradually losing her fondness for him. The more obsessed he had become, the harder it had been for her to remember why she had loved him in the first place. At some point, watching him and his fellow Death Eaters, she realised that she had stopped loving him altogether.

That transformation, however, hadn't ended there when Lucius' maniacal obsession had become dangerous to Draco, she had started loathing him. Passionately.

At the end, she had never forgiven him for what he had done to their son. Never. Yet she couldn't abandon him. He was the father of her only child. She bore his name and lived in his family house. She had to keep trying to help him, to set him free. It was her duty as a Malfoy, and it had nothing to do with her love or forgiveness.

Villa Esteli

Two days later

It was the scent that awakened her, the long-forgotten salty scent of the seaside. She could feel a warm breeze coming through an open window, caressing her bare shoulders and face. Not inclined to open her eyes just yet, she slowly breathed in, letting the fresh Mediterranean air fill her lungs. Oh Merlin, she had forgotten how good it felt. Afraid to ruin the magic, she lay in bed with her eyes closed, listening to the mellow sound of waves breaking on the shore.

Tibald was right: she had needed it.

After basking in the tranquillity for a while, she eventually had to open her eyes. The new day was upon her, and it was time to face it. Glancing around, she gasped, and a wistful smile touched her lips: everything looked so familiar. The simple elegance of the interior, from the off-white walls to the whispery-light draperies it was almost exactly like her beloved Villa Mirabelle in Greece.

She sat up, lowered her feet to the floor, and sighed. It was another forgotten sensation the soothing coolness of ceramic tiles under her feet. She stood up and, throwing her silk peignoir over her batiste nightdress, stepped onto the balcony. The sight made her gasp again as she took in the white sandy beach, stroked by lazy azure waves. Nestled by a small bay, the house was hidden from the prying eyes of Muggles by dunes and hills. And ... probably strong wards, too, she thought with a chuckle. She could see steps going down to a wooden dock. A berthed white yacht completed the view, making her regret that she hadn't had a chance to have a glimpse of that perfection last night. Alas, after a day of frantic packing, she had ended up with a splitting headache and had been forced to retire immediately after their arrival.

It didn't matter. The past didn't matter, she told herself, raising her face towards the breeze and inhaling the salty air hungrily. As the wind washed over her face, she felt the burden of the past slipping away, filling her with lightness and youthful exuberance. It was an illusion, of course, but she still embraced it. She was on holiday, after all.

Smiling and feeling content for the first time in years, she returned to her room. Twenty minutes later, freshly washed and with her hair plaited in a French braid, she stood in front of a mirror. A pale-blue silk kaftan enfolded her in its softness, just as it had done the last time she had worn it. It still fitted her perfectly, even though it had been made decades ago. Looking at her reflection, she could almost hear Lucius' voice, "I love this colour on you. It matches your eyes."

A pang in her heart made her frown, but fortunately, a soft knock on the door didn't allow her thoughts to travel that particular path. Grateful for a distraction, she called, "Yes." A flick of her wand opened a lock, and she added, "Come in."

The door opened, and Draco came in. It took Narcissa only one glance to tell that something was amiss. "What is it?" she asked, watching her son intently.

"Nothing," he replied, schooling his expression into unreadable mask. "Breakfast is ready. Shall we?" He offered her his hand.

Ignoring his attempt to change the subject, Narcissa sat down on her bed. "Draco?" She added a quaver to her voice, knowing that it always worked on him. She had already begun to worry. She didn't want to hear any more bad news.

Draco looked uneasily at her and crossed the room in three long strides. Sitting down beside her and taking hold of her hands, he repeated, "Nothing is wrong. Truly. It's just ... I received an owl from St.Mungo's. They've offered me the position of chief resident."

She laughed in relief. "How delightful! Congratulations, my darling, brilliant boy."

Draco sighed; he still seemed troubled. "The problem is ..." He paused and raked his fingers through his carefully-parted hair. "If I accept their offer, I have to return to England."

"When?"

"Today. The sooner the better, in fact."

"Oh." She glanced at the window and stifled a wistful sigh. "When shall we leave?"

"We're not leaving. I will decline," Draco said firmly, his jaw set into a stubborn line.

Narcissa smoothed his hair and, smiling, shook her head. "No, my darling. I won't let you destroy your career because of something as silly as a ruined holiday."

Draco gazed into her eyes. "Then you'll stay, mother. I've already talked to Theo; he's promised to take care of you. You need it."

"Draco ...," she began, but he didn't let her go on.

"Either you agree to stay here with Theo, or I decline their offer."

She could tell that argument would be futile. He would do what he said. Sometimes, she saw so much of Lucius in him; it was unnerving. "Are you sure it's appropriate? I shouldn't like to intrude," she tried to reason.

Draco grinned, and she noticed impish sparkles in his grey eyes. "Believe me, mother, Theo would be delighted to entertain you. More than you'll ever know, actually," he chuckled.

"Pardon?" she asked, raising her eyebrows questioningly.

The young wizard waved his hand dismissively and muttered, "Nothing," then offered her his arm. "Shall we?"

Still unsettled by the news, Narcissa decided to ignore his hints and let him escort her to breakfast. Together, they entered a spacious, semi-circular hall, the round part of which consisted mainly of windows, curtained in sheer off-white chiffon. A pair of French doors in the centre led to a grand terrace, and Narcissa could see the silhouette of a man watching the bay, leaning on a banister.

"Come on," said Draco, steering her outside.

The moment they stepped onto the veranda, the man waved and sauntered towards them. She couldn't believe her eyes when she saw how tall and handsome he was. Clad in light grey trousers and a simple white shirt that clung to his figure, showcasing the perfection of his build, he looked nothing like the pale, lanky, pensive boy she remembered. He wore his wheat-blond hair short, though she could still see the slight wave it had always had. His face was tanned, but it looked nice, making his blue eyes seem impossibly bright.

"My goodness, Theo, is that you?" Narcissa exclaimed when he came closer.

"Mrs Malfoy, what a pleasure to have you here," he said, and his deep, caressing baritone pleasantly surprised her.

"Look at you." She pressed a hand to her chest in disbelief. "I can barely recognise you!"

With a gallant bow, he extended his arm to her, and she granted him her hand. Grazing his soft lips over her knuckles, he looked at her and murmured, "On the contrary, you haven't changed at all, Mrs Malfoy, and your beauty shines as brilliantly as ever." Still holding her hand in his, he smiled and added, "This colour looks stunning on you. It matches your eyes perfectly."

The combination of the compliment and the way he bared his white teeth when he smiled made her shiver, awakening something long forgotten in the pit of her stomach. Slightly embarrassed, even startled by her reaction, Narcissa concealed it with laughter. "Call me Narcissa," she said lightly, "and thank you for the compliment."

"The pleasure is entirely mine, Narcissa." He spoke her name slowly, carefully pronouncing each syllable.

"Oh, my, who would have thought that you would grow up into such a sweet talker?" she remarked playfully.

"I can promise you that it is just the beginning. Now, having you here at last, I shall indulge myself and compliment you to my heart's content," he uttered softly, and his voice held so much hidden promise that Narcissa let out a little gasp. Trying to suppress a sudden urge to blush, she told herself that the boy was merely being polite and that she had forgotten how pleasant it felt to be treated like an attractive woman. Perhaps that was all it was, though the fact that he was still holding her hand in his, and

his thumb was drawing lazy circles on her palm, suggested otherwise.

Luckily, Draco cleared his throat and said, voice laced with amusement, "I think our breakfast is getting cold, figuratively speaking," which succeeded in diffusing the tension.

Theo grinned, muttered, "So it is," and releasing Narcissa's hand, offered her his arm. Feeling pleasantly lightheaded, she allowed him to lead her to a table covered with vast numbers of tasty Mediterranean treats.

Breakfast was an enjoyable affair. They opened a bottle of champagne to commemorate their meeting. There were toasts that ended in funny banter between the two men. Smiling, she listened to their wry remarks and risqué jokes. They reminded her of Lucius and Rodolphus, who had been just like that before the madness swallowed them.

Halfway through their meal, she noticed something that surprised her. Apparently, Theo hadn't abandoned his habit of watching her. His blue eyes still followed her every move. His gaze, though, wasn't anywhere near as boyishly timid as it had been then. This time, she could almost sense its heat on her lips, on her neck, on her bare shoulders. It was flattering and troubling at the same time, and if it hadn't been for her deal with Draco, she would have returned to England that instant, just to be on the safe side. With that option out, however, she convinced herself that she was being overdramatic; a little light flirting never hurt anyone. *Surely you can handle a twenty-five-year-old boy*, she told herself ... and took a calming sip of champagne.

The breakfast was over before she knew it, and Draco stood up, saying that it was time for him to leave. Narcissa made him promise to write to her. He let her hug and kiss him, said, "Theo, a word, please," and left, taking his friend with him.

Narcissa's solitude was short-lived: a little elf appeared in front of her, a minute later, silently refilled her flute, and escorted her to a white, linen-covered lounger. She settled down and smiled. The view was perfect, the champagne in her glass was cool and crisp, the soft breeze that played with her hair was warm, and she felt wonderfully at ease. She missed the moment her eyes closed, but she was awoken by the sensation of warm lips slowly moving up her arm. Startled, she let out a cry, as it took her a second to understand where she was and whose smiling face was in front of her.

Theo watched her with a teasing grin, and she could see amusement in his bright eyes. "I didn't mean to frighten you. Please, forgive me," he murmured.

Narcissa, who had managed to come to her senses (at least somewhat), arched her brow and retorted with the same playfulness, "Don't you worry, my dear boy. It takes a lot more than that to frighten me."

"Good," he drawled and bared his teeth in that predatory smile which Narcissa found so very sensual. "Would you like to take a walk down the beach?"

"Of course." She didn't try to calm the butterflies in her stomach.

"Splendid."

He grasped her hand and tugged her with him, making her laugh. Somehow, near him, it was easy to feel like a twenty-year-old again.

The rest of the day passed in relaxing walks on the beach and exploration of the villa. To her delight, Theo turned out to be a considerate and attentive host, and the slightest of her wishes were immediately gratified. Surprisingly, he refrained from flirtation, and by the evening, Narcissa decided that all her worries had been utter nonsense. She did feel a trifle disappointed, though.

After a marvellous supper, he escorted her to her room. Stopping at the door, she turned to him and said, "Thank you for a wonderful day," offering him her hand for a kiss.

He took it, and murmuring, "Thank you for allowing me to entertain you. It was an absolute delight," began to press whispery-soft kisses to her fingers, then worked his way to her knuckles and her forearm. The way his slightly rough chin grazed against her skin made her knees buckle, and she had to lean on the wall to steady herself. He kept moving up, making her gasp and quiver, but eventually, when he was almost at her elbow, she managed to muster her strength and whisper, "Theo. Please. Stop. This is most inappropriate."

He abruptly released her hand and with a curt nod and words, "You're right. I beg your pardon. I forgot myself," took off down the corridor, leaving Narcissa breathless and bewildered.

She masturbated that night, for the first time in years. She imagined his lips on her breasts, sucking her nipples, his strong hands grasping her thighs, opening her and thrusting, thrusting, thrusting. Perhaps she ought to be ashamed of fantasising about a mere boy, but strangely, she wasn't.

A Fling

Next morning, Narcissa woke to the hoot of an owl. It had brought a note from Draco, in which he let her know that everything was all right. He seemed happy with his new position, which pleased her, and she left her room feeling elated.

Going down to breakfast, she found it prepared for her on the terrace, and the moment she sat down, the same elf she'd seen yesterday appeared in front of her. "Master leaves a missive for Missus," he said in his creaking voice, and with a bow, put a rolled parchment on the table. Surprised, Narcissa opened the letter and read,

Dearest Narcissa,

Forgive me for leaving you alone today.

Please believe that it wasn't something I planned or wanted. But, alas, I was called to the Apothecary, as there are some urgent matters only I can address.

I shall return as soon as I can.

Love,

Theodore

She finished reading and threw the parchment on the table, struggling with the urge to pout. Frankly, after last night's episode, she had been looking forward to seeing him, and somehow, she hadn't considered the possibility of his being called to work. She sighed and let herself feel disgruntled for a moment or two, then, smiling, shook her head at her antics. She ought to be used to being alone.

Noticing that the elf was still waiting near her chair, she turned to him and asked, "What is your name?"

"Master calls me Philip," creaked the elf with a polite bow.

Narcissa glanced at the table, and not feeling in the mood for tea, said, "Could you, please, bring a bottle of champagne, Philip?"

The elf smiled and eagerly nodded. "Certainly, Missus. I is to fulfil Missus' every whim."

"Perfect," she murmured, and took a piece of toast.

All in all, Narcissa's day was pleasant, if a bit lonesome. Those stupid butterflies in her stomach that had been awakened by Theo yesterday didn't go away, though, and by

nightfall, she found herself slightly tipsy. It was already dark, and she stood on the terrace, watching the bay. The glass in her hand was almost empty, and she was going to retire to her room when she had finished her drink.

"Narcissa." She heard a familiar voice and spun around. Theo, clad in black trousers and white shirt, hurried toward her.

"Theo, darling, oh how marvellous that you are here," she exclaimed, the champagne making her more exuberant than usual. She watched his face light up with that dangerous smile. "I missed you today," she confessed, granting him her hand when he came close enough.

"Delighted to hear it," Theo replied in a soft murmur and bowed, pressing a long, utterly indecent, open-mouthed kiss on her palm.

Feeling his tongue flickering against her skin, Narcissa gasped and, plunging the fingers of her free hand into his thick locks, whispered, "Oh, Merlin, what are you doing to me?"

He gazed into her eyes, growled, "This," and placed a kiss on her wrist. "And this," he said again and pressed a kiss on her forearm. By the time he reached her neck, she was trembling. "And finally ... this," he whispered into her ear and covered her lips with his.

His mouth was hungry and insisting, and he was forcing her lips apart, thrusting his tongue deep into her mouth. Hitching her up the whitewashed wall behind them, he ground his hips against her, and the feel of his erection pressing into her flesh made her gasp anew. Surrounded by his scent, overwhelmed by his youthful eagerness, she let him have his way with her. What he was doing with her, she did not know, and frankly, she did not care as long as he was kissing her mouth, her eyes, her neck.

Soon, his fingers found their way under her silk tunic and into her knickers, and he drove two fingers into her, deftly working her into a quivering, needy mess.

"Theo, please, please," she begged shamelessly, and he tore the silk that covered her breasts and sucked on her nipples, just as she had imagined the night before.

"More, more," she demanded as she clung to him, and he gave her more, circling his thumb over her clitoris with just the right amount of pressure. When rapture became too much to handle, a tightly coiled spring inside Narcissa came loose, and she was about to scream her release into a dark, Mediterranean night. Seeing that, Theo swiftly covered her mouth with his hand, and her cry was smothered into his palm as he unwaveringly brought her to a climax.

Sweeping her limp body into his arms, he carried her to the lounge. Settling near her on the floor, he watched her come to with a light smile. "You look so beautiful when you come apart."

"Liar," she laughed, still breathless.

Theo, suddenly serious, shook his head and said, "For me, you are the epitome of perfection, Narcissa. Always were, always will be."

Startled by the intensity of his gaze, she whispered, "Such a sweet talker."

"That I am," he said, and springing to his feet, extended his hand to her. "Would you fancy a ride on Elena?"

"Elena?"

Theo chuckled and gestured toward the dock. "My yacht," he explained.

Narcissa's eyes widened. "Now?"

"Yes. Now. The night is still young." He laughed. "Unless, of course, you're tired," he added, and she could see sparks coming to life in his eyes.

She arched her eyebrow, and lightly running her fingertips over his straining crotch, murmured, "What about this?"

He hissed and hauling her onto her feet, growled into her ear, "I will have my fill tonight. Don't worry."

And he did, first on the smooth wooden surface of the yacht's deck. Then in the warm Mediterranean water, after he anchored Elena in a shallow, secluded cove, and again in the cosy cabin, that time taking her from behind, roughly pushing her into a plush cushion of a loveseat.

They returned to the dock only when a fiery red disc appeared on the horizon, telling them that a new day had come.

Awakening

Two weeks later

Theo was called to the Apothecary again, and Narcissa had an opportunity to sit down and think for the first time in a fortnight.

Fourteen days, she thought. Fourteen days was all it had taken for her to fall in love with him ... with a mere boy ... her son's best friend.

Of all the imprudent things she could have done, she had gone and made the silliest possible mistake she had fallen in love with a younger man. Thank Merlin she had kept enough wits about her to understand that their little holiday affair, which he probably found trivial, had no chance of survival. He didn't love her. Or, at least, he didn't love her the way she loved him. She didn't blame him. It was all right with her. Truly. Moreover, it didn't matter, because after what she had gone through during the last decade, she knew better. She was wise enough to understand that fate had granted her an unexpected present, and she should be grateful for that momentary ray of happiness. So she was, and she wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth.

Their days were divided between desire and fulfilment, with occasional pauses for walks on the beach, sailing, swimming in the nude, and even stargazing. Though all those activities still managed to end with them fused and racing toward completion. She was astonished by the amount of fire Theo could ignite in her. She had never known that she could be so passionate. Being in love took her by surprise, and she found herself doing silly things, like going weak at the knees every time she heard Theo's voice or saw his smile. It was so unlike her that she inwardly laughed at herself. Still, she couldn't stop, nor did she want to.

Everything seemed so new to her, and it was fabulous. Theo's impetuousness excited her. The fact that he would have her on a whim, regardless of where they were, made her heart go berserk, and she treasured those moments. She loved when he was rough and dominating, doing things to her that made her toes curl in ecstasy. She also loved his gentle moods, when he lavished on her his almost boyish admiration.

He wasn't a talker, but neither was she. He was a little odd, and he had strange hobbies: fishing, for instance. But after Lucius and his fellow Death Eaters, nothing surprised her. He even talked her into going fishing once, though her thoughts were far from catching fish. She just enjoyed watching him shirtless and barefoot as his well-defined muscles flexed and rippled in the sun. Amusingly, he knew quite well when she was watching him she could tell by the wicked smile that played on his full, sensual lips.

Oh, and she loved his lips and his bright blue eyes, as well.

She simply loved being in love. And even though the word itself wasn't mentioned by either of them even once, it was all right. She didn't need it. She was perfectly content with the way things were, and when the time came, she would go back to England and Theo would stay here, and that would be the end of it. No discussion of feelings necessary.

"Mother!"

Draco's voice tore Narcissa from her ponderings, and she sprang to her feet, saying, "Draco?" The next moment she saw him, looking pale and agitated, hurrying towards her across the terrace. She ran over to him. "What is it? What happened?" she asked as soon as they reached each other.

"It's father."

"Lucius?" she whispered, watching Draco's face and trying to understand. "What about him? Draco? Tell me."

Draco raked his fingers through his hair and sank on the nearest chair. "The Aurors came to St.Mungo's to question me. Father and Uncle Rodolphus broke out of Azkaban. They found Uncle. He's dead. They think he tried to Side-Along and splinched. They wanted to talk to you, and I told them that you'd return home tonight." He dropped his head into his hands.

Shocked, Narcissa sat down, her mind a blank.

"I hate him," she heard Draco growl. Then, raising his head and looking at her, he repeated, "I hate him. He destroys everything."

Narcissa squeezed his shoulder, trying to calm him down.

"The Aurors have searched the Manor. They said they would put us under observation until they find him. Do you understand what it means, mother? It means house arrest. Again. It means the end of my internship." Standing up again, Draco drew a slow, calming breath, clenched and unclenched his fists a few times, and then said, his voice calm and firm, "I have to go back. I'll collect you around four o'clock, and, mother, please don't go anywhere. You are safe here." He glanced around. "Where is Theo?"

"He was called to the Apothecary," Narcissa explained.

"I'll ask Philip to fetch him. Pack your things. I'll see you later."

It took a while for Narcissa to come to terms with the news. She had known that an awakening from her dreamy holiday was imminent, but she hadn't expected it to come that soon and be that rude. She had hoped that her wonderful reverie would last a bit longer. Alas, it wasn't the first time she had received a blow in the guts. Thoughts dashed through her mind in rapid succession, painfully pulsing in her temples. Draco was her main concern for the moment, and the more she thought about what happened, the more furious she became. She couldn't believe that Lucius had gone that mad. Escaped from Azkaban! Fool! How dare he? He was going to ruin everything. Everything their son had worked so hard to achieve.

No. She wouldn't allow it. That monster had done enough. No more.

Narcissa glanced at the calm, azure sea, and a long-forgotten sight came to her mind: a grey, broody ocean, its wild waves crashing over a lonely cliff; a small, mouldy house, heavily guarded by century-old wards. She knew where Lucius was. There was only one place that he could go, one secret place, which the Malfoys kept for situations like that a cottage on the coast of Cornwall.

Narcissa sprang to her feet and Apparated to her bedroom. She had very little time before Theo came; she had to act quickly. Changing into her warm robes, she focused, trying to remember exactly how the cottage and its surroundings looked. She had been there only once, and that was more than twenty-five years ago. Finally digging up a clear memory of it, she closed her eyes and Apparated. Moments later, she stood in front of a structure, almost entirely covered with moss and vines. Its dark windows glared at her ominously, and the wind howled in her ears. She could feel the magic swirling around her aggressively. It couldn't harm her; she was still a Malfoy, if only by name. She pushed at the heavy oak door, and with her wand clasped in her hand, stepped inside.

It was dark, and at first she couldn't discern anything at all. A softly spoken Lumos lit up the room, and there he was, slumped on the wooden bench dirty and thin, his hair filthy and matted, his chin resting on his chest.

"Lucius," she whispered.

With a grunt, he raised his head and glared at her. "You? Why did you come? It's over," he rasped.

She couldn't tell if he had recognised her and cautiously crept closer. "Lucius, it's me."

Shaking, Lucius repeated, "It's over. Leave."

Narcissa took another step and sat down on the edge of the bench. "Come with me, Lucius. It's your last chance."

His face contorted in rage, and he shouted hoarsely, "Leave!"

"No. You're going with me," she demanded. "The Aurors are looking for you. You can't do that to us, to Draco. Not again."

"Stupid bitch," he muttered and struggled to shift away from her. It didn't work: he couldn't prop himself up, and he moaned, letting go of the folds of his prison robe, which he was clasping together. The bright red stain on his undershirt explained his odd behaviour. *He's delusional*, thought Narcissa as she attempted to move the fabric and check his injury.

"Don't touch me," he growled, weakly slapping her hands off him. "Filth. Filth is everywhere." He focused his fading gaze on her, his lips moving, as if he were trying to say something.

Narcissa shook her head. "I can't hear you, Lucius."

He beckoned her to him, and Narcissa tilted her head forward. When she was close enough, he took a deep breath and hissed, "Whore." Satisfied, he closed his eyes, took one more ragged breath, and went completely still.

With a gasp, Narcissa touched his cheek. It was cold. Too shocked and numb to even move, she stared at the corpse of the man she had once loved.

The loud bang of a door flying from its hinges made her leap into the corner of the room.

"Mother!"

"Narcissa!"

Two young voices rang out simultaneously as Draco and Theo appeared on the threshold.

Flabbergasted, Narcissa collapsed on a wooden chair, staring at two men in disbelief. A heartbeat later, they were next to her, asking all kinds of questions. Ignoring them, she whispered, "How did you find me?"

At this, Philip bashfully crept forward, and nervously twisting his ear, creaked, "Philip worries for little Mistress." He gestured at Narcissa's abdomen. "Philip brings Master Theo and Master Draco to save Missus Narcissa and little Mistress. Missus Narcissa not knows what is dangerous."

Suddenly, it all became too much. All the faces began to spin, faster, and faster, and faster, and then everything went black again.

Just as she had done a fortnight earlier, Narcissa came round to Tibald's smiling face. This time, however, she could hear the soft sound of waves breaking on the shore

and feel a fresh breeze coming from an open window. "Congratulations, my dear girl," Tibald said and patted her hand. "I must confess I didn't expect to hear such wonderful news." His eyes sparkled mischievously.

"Am I truly pregnant?" Narcissa said, feeling mortified.

"Yes, my dear, you are. I would say about two weeks along, so we can expect to welcome a little girl some time in March. Spring babies are wonderful."

"But ... my age."

"Nonsense. You are still a baby, my dear. Live your life, Narcissa." The old wizard lightly squeezed her hand. "All right," he grunted, standing up. "There is one happy wizard waiting to see you. I'll go and let him know that you're ready for him."

Moments later, Theo, his hair dishevelled and his eyes brighter than ever, dashed into the room. Without a second's hesitation, he dropped on his knees near the bed and grasped her hands.

"Where is Draco?" she asked.

"Talking to the Aurors."

"Theo, I..." she started.

"Shh, don't talk," he hushed her.

"But we ought to discuss..."

"We don't. Not now. Tibald said you need to rest."

"But, I'm..."

He interrupted her by saying, "Yes, and it means you're finally mine." Divesting her of her robes with a wave of his wand, he crawled in her bed and gently kissed her stomach. "Mine," he repeated, making his way up and flicking his tongue over her erect nipples. "Mine," he growled against her neck. "Mine," he breathed into her ear, and then, propping himself on his elbow and looking into her face, said, "I love you."

"Liar," she murmured, gazing into his eyes searchingly.

Taking hold of her chin, he said it again, his face solemn. "I love you, Narcissa. Always have and always will."

"Such a sweet talker," she whispered, smiling.

"That I am," he agreed and finally, *finally* kissed her lips.

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