

Memories of Midnight

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In the shadow of the Dark Lord, villages burn, men live in fear, families break, and a Malfoy heir learns how far the sins of the past can reach.

Prelude: Draco's birth.

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Chapter 1 of 2

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[Author's Note: Before getting into the story, I'd like to take a moment to thank two people. My brilliant beta, Jamie, for peppering her wonderful feedback with cheers of encouragement, and the always-lovely Zan, for actually making me love Narcissa. Thanks!]

Sing me no songs of daylight,

For the sun is the enemy of lovers.

Sing instead of shadows and darkness,

And memories of midnight.

-Sappho

[June 6th, 1980]

Birds sang their herald to the rising sun in the distance, notes light yet somehow sharp and discordant by the time they bounded across the grounds and through the open balcony doors. The wind, cold and fresh, carried the scent of freshly trimmed grass, flowers just beginning to open in the early morning light, and death.

She told herself it was her mind that played games with the shadows until tendrils of darkness reached for the sheets tangled at her feet. She told herself it was the fever that sent such shaking chills up her spine and through her sweat covered limbs. She told herself it was all simply her imagination, but the shadows still tarried at the edges of her vision, her body still shook with each breath, and there was no mistaking the scent of decay and ancient secrets drifting in with the breeze.

How she knew, she couldn't say, but Narcissa had seen those stone doors parting with her slumbering eye, and she knew the truth. The crypts had been opened. And the

slow scrape of stone against stone, the sudden rush of long dead air from those rarely used passages, could not be ignored.

'They've awakened...' she may have whispered in those few precious moments before her mind began to drift once again. The room was empty and the words, if they came, were no more than a dry whisper. The masters of old gazed from their tombs, open eyes caked with cobwebs and the dust of the ages, and they saw the ruin.

Narcissa closed her eyes, if they had indeed been open (darkness... heavier than before at least), and slept. She dreamed and she saw those visions of tarnished blood. She saw herself.

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[June 7th, 1980]

Floating, drifting... falling. Her world was alive with brilliant shades of gray a world of dancing shadows without light to cast them. Somewhere far in the distance she heard voices, familiar and yet impossible to place.

"... is she?"

"Fever broke a few hours ago, but we've a ways to go yet. Best to let her sleep."

A hollow sigh. "And the child?" The question echoed through her mind and momentarily pierced the darkness. The child... The child... She reached out towards the question and the light the answer held, but it slipped through her fingers leaving only shadow.

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[June 8th, 1980]

"M'Lady?"

A warm hand on her brow, a gentle touch. Narcissa groaned and opened her eyes. She was struck at once by how dark the room had become, dawn having been replaced by dusk endless times since she last braved a look. A few candles fought against the oddly cold night that tarried just outside the windows, aided by the recently fed fire roaring under the hearth, but ultimately all failed.

"That's a girl. Go on, drink." A smiling face, lined from the years and the poorly hidden worry that all but screamed from dull brown eyes. Cercei...

The midwife brought a cup to her lips, and Narcissa let the warm liquid spill down her throat, errant drops trickling from the corners of her mouth. Cercei wiped them clean with a bit of cloth.

"Lucius?" Narcissa asked, her own voice startling her as it croaked from her lips. Cercei glanced away. "Where..."

"Shhh, now. I'll go fetch him but you rest." Without looking back, Cercei left the room. If she returned, Narcissa didn't know. The potion in her belly quickly warmed her limbs and sleep was impossible to resist.

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[June 9th, 1980]

Another hand, another touch, cold where it should have been warm. Gentle but hesitant and so light as to almost go unnoticed. She would have opened her eyes if they had only cooperated. Instead, Narcissa turned towards the touch to let her cheek be cradled by that familiar hand. Its thumb brushed her lips and her mind spoke of blood.

"Why isn't she awake?" A voice asked, as cold as the fingers that slowly ran along the line of her neck. "What have you done?" She knew he was trying to stay quiet, keep his temper, but even on the edges of sleep, Narcissa could hear those hard-pressed restraints begin to give way.

"There's nothing to be done, M'lord," came the equally cold reply, voice so hard that she barely thought it to be Cercei's any longer. "She sleeps until she sees fit to wake."

Silence. The hand had moved to her hair, petting those sleep and sweat spoiled locks absently. Finally, the first voice responded. One word, no more, and yet it spoke volumes. She almost cried for the desperation she heard there. "Out." Hushed footsteps told of the midwife's departure and the hand disappeared.

She heard motion by the fire, flames beginning to crackle and break as more wood was added. A creak of leather broke through the gently warming air. The clink of ice in a glass. The shutting of a wooden door. Time passed though she couldn't say how much or how quickly. Soon enough, she found strength to open her eyes. To search the room for her husband.

His shape was shrouded in shadow as he sat in the corner, chair turned away from her and towards the fire. Though his head rested against the back of the chair, she knew he wasn't asleep. Those familiar fingers toyed with the rim of the glass at his side and occasionally he would take a sip. Save his subtle movements and the fire, the room was in silence.

"Luciu-" she tried to squeak out, only to find herself overcome with a brief coughing spell. The coughs were unproductive, more dry heaves that rubbed harshly against her sore throat. She opened her eyes again, and he was at her side.

A specter. A wraith of the man she'd last seen as he kissed her cheek and bid her farewell for the day. By the gods, that seemed a lifetime ago. His pale hair held none of its former sheen, though that could have easily been the dim light of the room. But no... No, his face was changed as well. Small lines ran where the skin had before been smooth, and his complexion held a hint of gray. His eyes... His eyes were as before, a cold gray that once flickered with white flame, but there was no life there. Only that bleak color that reminded her so much of her own plaguing shadows that Narcissa looked away.

"No. Don't go back to sleep... Don't..." His hand found hers and gave it a small squeeze. "Cissa, look at me." He finally touched her chin, tilting her face back towards his. "You're a mother. Did they tell you that? A son. You've given me a son but there is no one to mind him. Don't..." Why was his voice so cold and yet so raw?

"A boy?"

"Yes, pet. Draco. We named him Draco, remember?" It was his turn to look away, eyes moving back to the fire. Even then, with the red and orange flames reflected there, she saw very little in his eyes.

Narcissa had to force herself to think back, to try and recall anything, past the shadows. Past the purposeful darkness dominating her mind. Images came slowly at first, only colors to start. Crystal blue and deep purple and red of a such a brilliant hue that she first mistook it for liquid ruby. Blood certainly couldn't be so vibrant, so bright. But perhaps it was another trick of the mind, another game of memory. Pale hands, thick blood and her own screaming before darkness.

Only the tears that ran down her cheeks let her know that she was crying, and when Lucius turned to wipe them clean, she pushed away his hand with more strength than she truly possessed. She'd expected to find him shocked or at the very least angry, but his face was blank, melted into that damned mask she'd seen him don for so many others before her. He hid.

"Where is Abraxas?" she whispered, watching his eyes all the while, hoping against the truth she could feel clutching at her heart.

Only then did something come to dead man's eyes. Only then, as his fingers wrapped instinctively around his father's cane, did she see something move behind pools of

gray. He needn't answer and he didn't.

"Bring me my son. And then leave."

# An Ounce of Blood

## Chapter 2 of 2

In the shadow of the Dark Lord, villages burn, men live in fear, families break, and a Malfoy heir learns how far the sins of the past can reach. Chapter One: Draco visits his mother after the events of HBP.

"Mother?" His voice came out a whisper, all but swallowed by the darkness of the tomb.

Draco stood in the archway at the bottom of that long descending stair, the torches along the subterranean hall more accentuating the darkness than relieving it, and he all but forgot the sun shining above. Each shadowy passage held another long-dead ancestor, another name on the endless and steadily unraveling tapestry of house Malfoy. He couldn't see their resting places, his own mother was no more than a silhouette in the distance, but Draco felt their presence. He knew that just beyond the false security of those flickering lights they lie in wait, cold hard faces carved in cold hard stone. The dead were the masters of the catacombs and never was that fact more evident.

His first memory of the tombs was that of a child, eyes shut tight against all those unyielding faces no matter his father's short rebuke against cowardice. He could still remember the way the torch light danced in Lucius' eyes as he towered above him, looking across their shared history encased in frozen earth, and how he'd wanted so badly to grab his father's hand in that stretch of silence by the entrance. To feel some sort of warmth deep beneath the earth. To remind his young mind that not all was darkness and decay as the crypt would have had him believe. But more than anything, he remembered the long walk to the end of the tunnel. He remembered his father then looking down to him.

*Every day, people are born and people die. The world takes a fleeting interest, no more. As we breathe, we are simply men; it is when we join these ranks that our names are finally remembered. Only family can truly make an immortal from those whom are destined for the earth.*

And at that moment, so long ago and yet close enough to taste in this place, he came to understand the reality of death. At five, his father made him to understand that even he was going to die and sleep in that dark tomb – the thought still made his hands shake.

He tried to remind himself that he wasn't a child any longer, but it did no good. Boy or man, he was a Malfoy and all roads led here. Somewhere in the distance, he could hear the sounds of water trickling into pools and the scurry of faceless vermin across long-sealed crypts and they sent a shudder through him. Draco braved a step forward. "Mother."

Shivering slightly from the chill, he pulled his cloak tighter around his shoulders and made his way down the corridor. Each footfall sent echoes bounding across the stone and yet she was still. It wasn't until he was close enough to make out the red hue to her robes, the faint smell of her hair, that Narcissa turned.

Her face, always so fair, was lined and worn in the faint light. Dark circles rested under her eyes, and there was no mistaking the shimmer of tears, still wet, on her cheeks. Her light hair, usually pulled back, lay long and limp down her back. His hand flew to her face only to be pushed aside. That small touch was enough though. His fingers still stung from the brush of her cold skin.

"Draco. Forgive me, you..." Her eyes rose to meet his. "You startled me."

Draco sighed and looked away. He felt so ill at ease in her presence now, and his tongue refused to cooperate with the smallest request. "It-it's late. It's... cold. We should —"

"No." Again their eyes met, hers just as startled as his own. This time, Narcissa turned away. "I can't..."

"It's alright, Mother. We can talk upstairs, in the parlor if you'd like. I can send for something warm to drink an—"

"Have you finished packing?"

He didn't dare look her way, not then, and focused his eyes instead on a crypt to her side. It was empty, a great gaping hole lying in wait. Draco didn't care to think for what. Finally he spoke. "I'm not leaving."

"Draco, please."

The soft yearning in her voice made him shiver all the harder, and he fought to still the hands limp at his sides. He ventured a glance at his mother, thought against it and turned to look to the other side. Another empty crypt. "We've been over this. No, Professor Snape said tha—"

"Severus be damned."

Draco sighed, wanting to reach out for her (as he wanted his father's hand long ago, for warmth and comfort and ignorance of death so close at his heels). "You don't mean that."

"And your Dark Lord with him, for all that amounts to."

It was difficult not to look at her then, difficult not to notice the sudden fire in her eyes as it threatened to engulf the meager light of the nearby torches. He could make out the clench of her small jaw beneath almost translucently pale skin and the subtle shudder in her fingers as they firmly clutched the thin robes to her body.

The tomb itself seemed to echo that small quiver, set to silence as her words hung in the air between them. After a small while, he slipped from his cloak and eased it over Narcissa's shoulders. "Don't say such things," he said, his voice dropping to a whisper and yet still managing to bound through the stone hall. "Please... We shouldn't be here. Not now."

His touch lingered, faint at her arms, and she looked so fragile in the great folds of his cloak that he dared not pull away. They stood like that for some time, bodies close and her eyes so distant, until Narcissa moved back.

"No." She shook her head, hair falling to partially cover her face. Narcissa paid it no mind. "If you insist on following through with this madness, I'll have no part in it. Now

let me be." She turned to the side, staring into the darkness of an empty crypt. Her voice was low but he heard. "Let me wait the return of my husband *and* my son to the only place the gods deem to allow."

Draco couldn't have said what struck him harder: her words or the loss of her touch. He felt that much colder, that much more the child. She spoke of sorrow and loss as though he hadn't the faintest idea as to the word's meaning. Without thinking, he grabbed Narcissa by the wrist and spun her to face him. "That's enough. I'm not five, and it will take more than a few rotting corpses or the promise of my own inevitable place among them to frighten me. Stop being foolish, Mother, and let's go upstairs."

It was only when he saw her wince that he felt his fingers digging deep into the flesh of her wrists. Draco recoiled.

"It is so easy to forget that you are a man now," she replied without hesitation, pulling his cloak tighter. Her face was plain, but he couldn't help but notice the way her eyes still shimmered just before she cast them to the floor. "I know you'd rather not hear it, but you are so like your father." Narcissa glanced up again, peering at him through her lashes. "And you are right. It really is time I rest." She opened her arms. "Come. Give your mother a kiss goodnight."

Although he would later call it insight or the like, it was only confusion that gave him pause. It wasn't like Narcissa to give in, especially not when she'd committed herself so fully. He'd seen her face set in nothing short of fury not moment ago and now...

Draco let his mother draw him close, her head resting so lightly on his shoulder, before he spoke. "I'm so tired," he whispered into her hair without knowing why, as she reached up to cup his face and place a kiss on his cheek. The soft words were true, no matter that he would barely remember saying them afterwards, and he allowed himself to forget his hesitation for the comfort of her arms.

"I know, Draco." Her hands were warm, her hair smelled of the lilac perfume he remembered from his childhood, but her lips were cold. "I know." So was her wand, pressed deep into his neck, and the darkness of the tombs swarmed forward to take him with one muttered word.