
Mark of Cain

By deslea | <http://fiction.deslea.com>

Fandom: Harry Potter. **Pairing:** Lucius Malfoy/Narcissa Malfoy. **Wordcount:** 3600. **Rating:** R.

Summary: Narcissa had hoped that her arranged marriage would be a loving one. After years of coldness, she discovers a secret that changes everything - for better and for worse. **Artworks:** Cover sketch by [Ellygator](#). Other artworks by deslea.



Making love with Lucius was cold.

Strictly, it wasn't making love at all. There were words that fit better, but Narcissa had not been raised to use them. So making love it was, even though it wasn't.

It was always in the dark; always in the middle of her cycle. Brief, clothed, against a wall or bent over a table or chair. He readied her with magic, not with pleasure.

She didn't conceive - not for years. It was as though her body was closed to him in retaliation. But that was fanciful, she knew. She wanted his child, if only to put these tedious, gloomy efforts to an end.



The Healer said all was right with them both. If she ever did conceive, she could expect to carry safely. It had just...never happened. Privately, she wondered if part of the problem was that he never took his rest with her afterward. The way they stood and went their separate ways when it was over, his seed leaving her as swiftly as it had entered.

She had hoped for a loving marriage. Arranged ones often were, especially when arranged in adolescence like theirs. Temperament and personality were considered, as well as blood and wealth. In theory, the match was a good one, on all fronts. And Lucius had been unfailingly polite, respectful and courtly, right up until the betrothal was announced.

The problem was not so much that he had changed. It was more that he had stayed the same. He was still a stranger to her, even now, closed to her in every way. The chaperones had fallen away but he continued to act as though they were there.

He had bedded her, but never in a bed; she had never seen his bedchamber. His rooms were warded against her, as though to an unwanted houseguest who had stayed too long. She had never seen his naked body; she had seen glimpses of his shaft thrusting between them, but never his chest or his arms or his thighs. He was impersonally polite and attentive to her



at home and at social events, a pleasant enough companion she supposed, but more on the level of a carefully polite friend than a spouse.

They went on like this for five years. For the most part, Narcissa accepted her lot; she had hoped for more, but she had never been allowed close enough to Lucius to love him. You couldn't grieve *too* much for something you'd never had, she supposed, and it wasn't as though he was really unkind to her.

The time it hurt was when she was leading up to her fertile time. It was then that her deeper instincts broke through the stoicism to which all Blacks had been trained. She would watch Lucius surreptitiously from beneath hooded eyelids, and wonder. Did he take care of his own urges? Did he pay the whores of Knockturn Alley? Was there a woman at the Ministry? Merlin knew, he worked long enough hours there, at all hours of the day and night.

Most of all, she wondered who this man was behind those closed features, and why he wouldn't allow her to love him. It was then that she held the *potential* between them, held it in her heart like something fragile and precious between her palms.

She held it wistfully, and with pity for them both.



At last, Narcissa conceived.

It was 1979, five years into their marriage. It would be a summer baby, a boy, in June the following year. After so long, she had become slipshod in tracking her cycle, so she didn't begin to suspect until the first flurries of snow were beginning to fall. It was in the snow that she told him, walking in the grounds in the winter sun.

Not even Lucius could maintain his cool facade

at the news. Joy, real joy lit on his face, and he bridged the space between them and kissed her firmly on the lips.

She yielded, lips opening beneath his with a gasp of surprise. He'd not kissed her since their wedding day. She searched for his hand with one of hers; found it, drew it to her belly. The other she pressed gently to the back of his neck, holding him close.

She opened her eyes when she felt him pulling away.

"I do apologise," he said in a strangled voice. "Most improper, I know. I quite forgot myself."

Narcissa could hardly believe her ears. "*Improper?*" she echoed. "I'm your *wife!*"

"Well, you know what I mean."

"No, I bloody well don't know." She softened. Lifted her hands. Cradled his jaw and held him looking at her. "Why won't you let me in?"

A chill fell over his face - and his voice. He took her hands with a firm, unyielding grip. Lifted them off him. "Narcissa," he said with a tone of warning, "I do not take unnecessary liberties with you. I would appreciate the same in return."

"Liberties?" she whispered. Tears pricked at her eyes.

He regarded her for a long moment. Pressed his lips together into a line, and bowed his head politely to her. "Congratulations, Narcissa. I'm sure you will be a wonderful mother. I look forward to meeting our son."

He turned on his heel, and his footsteps crunched away from her in the snow.



Lucius did not make love to her anymore. She hadn't really thought he would.

He spent more time with her away from the bedroom though (or rather, the various walls and bits of furniture that had substituted for it). He sat with her more often. Sat closer. Very tentatively approached her to touch her belly now and then.

The day she flinched, bending a little, he rushed to her side and held her, his arms protective and strong. Real panic in his voice. "Narcissa - darling -"

"No," she said, "just a particularly strong kick in the ribs. It's all right." She braced herself against him as she straightened.

Lucius let out a rueful sound. Supported her arm. His eyes locking on hers as their field of vision crossed. His face was *softer*, somehow. Like all the masks were down.



She dared to raise her hand to his cheek. Stroked it with the backs of her fingers. Whispered, wistfully, "You know I want to love you."

He closed his eyes for a long, long moment. Turning his face harder into her hand with a look that hinted at a strange sort of grief. Said, unusually gently, "It's really much better for you if you don't." He looked away. Cleared his throat. "Let's get you comfortable, shall we?"

She didn't understand, but the fact that he answered at all struck her as a win anyway.

It was their baby, really, who wore him down in the end.

He needed to be near the baby, so he needed to be near to her. And the nearer he got to her, the less adept he became at keeping her out. It was nigh impossible for him to hold hands with her over the gentle curve of her belly in one moment, and then fall back into the impersonal courtesy he had used as a shield in the next.

Finally, when she was nearly five months gone, there was a shining moment when she kissed him as he knelt before her, and he didn't pull away.

"Lucius," she whispered.

"Please. Oh, please."

He held her gaze, looking suddenly, terribly raw. Lips parted, just a little.



Whispered, "Narcis-" and broke off. At a loss.

"Let me in," she pleaded. "You can't *want* this distance between us. I don't believe that."

His jaw wavered a little at that. She'd touched him. "No," he admitted. "No, I don't."

She leaned in. Pressed her forehead to his. "Then let me love you," she whispered, pressing her lips into his mouth. Felt triumph as he parted for her, sighing, falling open under her advance.



He gave a low groan, a sound of surrender. Tugged her down off the Chesterfield to straddle him where he knelt. "Narcissa," he said, sinking his hands into her hair. "Oh, Narcissa."

There was a strange mix of haste and leisure about it. He touched her lovingly through her [tea gown](#), filmy fabric shifting restlessly beneath his hands, bringing her the pleasure he'd always denied her without even baring her at all. Her fingers were shaking as she unbuttoned his shirt,

then slowed to touch his chest in wonder. She learned what made him shiver, and herself as well. They had done this a hundred times and never at all.

Before long, she was stretched out on the floor beneath him, sighing out his name, kneading hands with him. Rising and falling in time with him. Crying out as he sank down to kiss her throat and her jaw. Sighing as he plundered her mouth, delicately fierce, over and over, as though he couldn't get enough of her. Their climax was something vibrant, something they shared, so different to the perfunctory cause-and-effect they had painstakingly reached before.

Afterwards, he traced her hair back off her face with gentle fingertips. Lines of worry knit into his brow. His mask had not yet fallen back into place, but she could see it being rebuilt in readiness. He was preparing for it the way you would prepare to lift a great burden.

"Stop thinking," she whispered. "Just stop it."

"I already did," he said, heavy with self-reproach. "That's the problem, don't you see?"

She stared at him. "Stop talking in bloody riddles and just *talk* to me."

That seemed to touch him. He let her go, but he did it gently. Reluctantly. This wasn't the mask. It was something else.

He sat up, slowly, still half-dressed. He buttoned his trousers, but there was nothing about the gesture to shut her out. It was just to unfurl them, get them straight enough that he could sit in comfort. His shirt and waistcoat he left open, still all askew. There was something intimate about it. A kind of homely familiarity.

Narcissa sat up too. She was still in her gown, her silk knickers somewhere on the floor behind them. She let her skirt fall to cover herself, but deliberately left herself a little dishevelled. She edged over to sit next to him, side-on against the Chesterfield, half-facing him. The baby was kicking up a storm and she took his hand in hers, lacing fingers, and drew it to her belly to feel.

"Must've woken him up," she said ruefully.

There was gentle warmth etched around his eyes as they locked gazes, and then suddenly it melded into hurt, dry and arid and sore. Jerkily, he lurched forward and tugged her against him, fierce and tender, and she let him, feeling his breath rippling over her neck in trembling little puffs. She felt growing dismay and puzzlement, and just below that, a creeping sort of fear.

Finally, he let her go. Cleared his throat and settled himself into some sort of simulation of his prior casual stance. The imitation was shoddy.

Brow puckering, Narcissa followed his lead. Braced herself for whatever was to follow.

"I need to show you something," he said. His voice was low and heavy and resolute. "You've a right to know. Before you get in any deeper."

He lifted both of his hands out between them, and with one, he tugged at the sleeve of the other. And then she saw it, a dark, curling streak of black on his wrist, protruding from the layers of fabric that she'd never, in all these years, seen him without.

The Dark Mark!



Anger flared in her, overbright, eclipsing her horror and fear. Later, she would be grateful for it. Had she betrayed the latter two, he would simply have closed up all over again.

She reached out, hissing, like a grasping, clawing thing, and twisted his wrist to look at it. Looked up at his ashen face in fury.

"*This?*" she demanded. "*This* is why you've shut me out? *This* is why you've withheld the love that was my right?"

He tugged his hand; she did not release him. He said in warning, "Let go, Narcissa."

She held on tighter. "I'm not letting you go."

He gave a sound of frustration. "Yes, this is why, you infernal woman. There are two kinds of wives - those who know, and those who don't. The ones who don't are safe, and if it all goes to hell, they'll be above reproach. They'll be able to remarry."

Those words, *they'll be able to remarry* sent chills through her. She knew, in a general sense, what it meant to be a Death Eater - everyone did - and that those closest to *him* had as much chance of coming to a grim end as those who crossed him.

But there was knowing, and there was *knowing*. *Knowing* was knowing in your gut and your bones, knowledge beyond Obliviation, so deep that it could only be eviscerated. Lucius, sitting there, so methodically making provision for her life as a widow, had shoved her rudely into the second.

"And those who know?" she demanded at last.

"You don't want to be one of the ones who know. Ask your sister."

Narcissa's eyes widened a little. Bellatrix had become...well...*odd*, these last few years. In fact, she was on the very outposts of sanity, if not far beyond them. There'd been no children, and she'd thought that Bella was mad with grief, at infertility or miscarriages or both. But now, she wondered.

Lucius tugged at his hand. Said again, "Let go."

She shook her head. "I'm not letting you go. Not ever." She held his gaze.

His jaw trembled, just for a moment. His eyes suddenly glistened, and he blinked them quickly.

"Understand me, Narcissa," he said roughly, "there is no turning back from here. One does not *leave*. If you take this path, you will rise or fall with me. The Dark Lord believes only in power and those who do and do not seek it. You will not have the luxury to think in terms of right and wrong anymore. It will separate you from everything you believe, everyone you hold dear. You, this child - your fates will rest on a knife-edge. You will be at the very frontlines of a war waged by an extremist, and extremists rarely hold power for long."

"And yet you chose it."

"I didn't know the cost until I was betrothed to you. Everyone I cared for before that was inside. You weren't. You were safe, and you could stay that way, if I just kept you out. I knew then that the price was too high, but I knew it too late."

She scanned his face. He was deadly serious. About all of it. She could never, when it all went to hell - and it would; he was right about that - she could never say that she hadn't known what she was getting into. She would, most likely, be exempted by her sex from anything too awful herself, but she would have to stand by and watch as others did them. She would sit in rooms where atrocities were planned, a decoration, a silent witness.

A silent assent.

He softened. "It doesn't have to be like that. You could obsess over the baby. We could drift apart. It happens. In time, you could establish a separate home at the French estate. Separate lives. No one would question it." He leaned in, pressed his palm to her cheek. "You don't have to be alone," he said quietly. "I don't *want* you to be alone. I'll look the other way."

Oh, God, he meant to be kind, but it was like driving nails through her heart. "No," she whispered. "*Lucius.*"

"Yes," he said ruthlessly. "Damn it, Narcissa, we barely *know* each other. I know that grieves you, as it has grieved me, but it's the truth. Don't let this, here, today blind you to that. You can still harden your heart to me and walk away. It isn't too late."



She cried out,
"You're the father
of my *child!*"

He grasped her by
the wrist. "And you
are the mother of
mine! The only gift I
can give you
anymore is your
lives!"

"To what good,
without you in it?"

He made a sound
of frustration.

"You're a Black,
Narcissa, so use
some of that
famous Black self-
interested bloody-

mindedness and make the only rational choice."

Narcissa said in a low voice, "I'm not a Black. I'm a Malfoy. And Malfoys stick together."

"And what happens when the Dark Lord threatens our child, Narcissa; what then? Will you be so glad to have stuck together then?"

She snapped, "If he's half what they say he is, he'll threaten us whether we're here or not." His lips pressed together in a grim line at that, and she knew she'd struck a nerve. "If we're to be in danger either way, I would rather be with you than not."

He held her gaze, jaw set in a hard line. "And if I refuse to indulge this lunacy? If I leave here, tonight, set up a home of my own in London?"

"The Dark Lord will never allow that. Your respectability is valuable. Drifting apart is one thing, but walking out on your wife when she is with child quite another." She said, just as firmly, "I am your wife, Lucius, and I will no longer be denied my due."

"And the next time I stay out all night, and you weep with fear that I shan't come back? And the time after that, and the time after that?"

"Then they will join the tears I wept when I thought your mistress a woman and not a megalomaniac," she said brutally. It was a contest now. She could demolish his walls as quickly and coldly as he could build them. He would build and she would break and if they had to do this forever then she would. Just to have his love again.

His head jerked up at that, as though she'd struck him, then everything about his face seemed to *collapse*. His eyes closed and he whispered, "Oh, Narcissa."



She'd become adept at seeing her openings and seizing them, and she did so now. Tugged him by the wrist and kissed him with everything she had. He opened a little for her, letting her in, but passive too. Poised with indecision for a long, tense moment.

Then suddenly, his hand closed on her wrist just above where she clasped his. Linking them together. He tugged her against him, arms wrapped firm around her,

pressing her against him. Hauling her into his lap. Kissing her, hard and hasty. Feverish with a hunger that had little to do with making love, but could be satisfied in no other way.

She pushed off his waistcoat and shirt. Urgent. Clumsy. Lifted herself a little as he fumbled with her skirt, pulling it out from under her. Gaspd out *ohgodLucius* as he pulled her dress over her head. Saw and dismissed the Mark, the scars, mapping out the terrain of him and accepting it in the same instant. His hands fell on the bare flesh of her body for the first time, tracing breasts and the planes of her back and the gentle rise of her belly.

He eased her back onto the floor. Leaned over her, poised to enter. She *ached* for him, but with every shred of self-control she had, she stopped him with a hand on his chest.

"Bed," she said. "Your bed. Or mine. I don't care which. But choose one, and let it be ours."

He groaned. Sank his head to her shoulder, shaking. It took her a second to realise he was laughing. "Sexual blackmail? Darling, you're such a *Slytherin*."

She mustered a rueful laugh at that. "And you're stuck with me, so you might as well enjoy it."

He sighed in defeat. "Sod it all, woman. Mine, then. But later. I need-"

She reached for him. Drew him into her gratefully. "Yes."

The days that followed were longer and darker than even Lucius could have known, filled with dread and horror and fear. But even at their darkest, even when home and hope were gone, they were never, ever cold.

For that, she could endure.

END