

A Question of Mortality

Von viv-heart

Kapitel 3:

3

Narcissa's nails dug into Draco's hand painfully, but he didn't pay it any attention, his eyes not leaving the woman she had addressed as Bellatrix.

"I can't believe you of all people are so easily influenced by feelings, Lucius! Your son is gone for eight years now! They had already declared him dead! Do you know how low the chances are that he would be still alive, not to mention suddenly turn up?!" Bellatrix glared at his father, who returned the glare with an icy stare.

"I know exactly how low they are, but I am not blind," he spoke, his voice piercing the air. Long gone was the loving father at the verge of tears, replaced by the ruthless businessman managing the family fortunes. "He looks like Draco - like me."

Bellatrix snorted. "Never heard of plastic surgery?"

Draco felt his mother tense next to him.

"We will run DNA tests. While I am sure they will turn out positive, it will clear all doubts any of us," she looked pointedly at Bellatrix, "might have. We will not notify the authorities until we have the results. Lucius, would you please call Severus? I think it best to get this over with as soon as possible."

Bellatrix recognized the dismissal for what it was and turned on her heel, not even bothering to say goodbye.

Narcissa looked at Lucius, who was still glaring daggers at the spot where Bellatrix stood seconds ago, expectantly. "What are you waiting for? I was serious."

"Oh really?" Lucius drawled and Draco suspected he rolled his eyes, but he left, the clicking of his cane on the marble floor echoing through the manor.

"Who was that?" Draco asked when Narcissa didn't speak or move, obviously lost in thought. He couldn't blame her. The whole encounter with Bellatrix had been strange at least. She had marched in without being announced, accused him of various crimes and then left again. He was sure that there weren't many people who could allow themselves to act like that towards the Malfoys and get away with it.

"Oh, of course," Narcissa shifted in her seat so she could look at Draco and finally released his hand, leaving angry red marks where her nails had been. "Bellatrix is my older sister - your aunt. I am sorry about her behaviour. She can be a little, let's call it harsh, at times. I am sure she'll come around when there's proof of your identity."

Draco nodded, not trusting his voice. For some reason his throat was tight and he felt dizzy. He concentrated on rubbing his hand, hoping that Narcissa wouldn't notice his discomfort. But he had underestimated her motherly instincts.

"Draco? What's wrong?" she put a hand on his shoulder.

"It's a lot to take in," he said, not sure if he was trying to reassure her or himself.

"Who's Severus anyway? Lu-. No, fa-," Draco closed his eyes and took a deep breath. This was harder than he had expected. He could call Granger Granger and his friends by their respective names, but he had not stopped for a moment to think about how he would address his parents. While it had been easy to call them mother and father in his mind to label them it felt weird to call these people he didn't know something like that openly.

"I am sorry," he whispered.

"It's not your fault," Narcissa said gently, starting to rub soothing circles on his back. "You went through a lot and losing your memory must be a terrible experience. While it hurts me to hear that you don't remember us, I can understand that you need time to adjust to some things."

Draco shot her a grateful smile, unable to convey his feelings into words.

"But aren't you hungry?" she asked suddenly.

The question startled Draco. He hadn't thought about being hungry, thirsty or even tired for a long time, but he realized that he was all of these things. "Yes, I am," he said eagerly. The sensations were new, they were weird, but to hell with him if they weren't welcome.

"I can show you the manor!"

Narcissa led him through the house and towards the kitchen, stopping repeatedly to tell him about something they passed. Draco wasn't really listening, concentrating on getting some sense of direction in the large manor, but failing miserably. By the time they reached the kitchen, he was utterly lost. The house was just too big.

"Mrs Malfoy," the butler Draco had seen when they arrived stood up from the table where he was having tea with a maid of sorts when they entered. "Is there anything you need?"

"A sandwich for Draco would be wonderful," Narcissa said and Draco rose an eyebrow at her cold tone. Granger used 'please' and 'thank you' in almost every interaction, being almost too polite. The lack of those words from his mother together with the order itself had surprised him. He wondered if this was normal in his circles, but bit his tongue and watched the maid hurry around the kitchen until he felt his mother's gaze on him.

"We should go back," she said. "Your father is surely waiting for us. Dobby will bring you the food."

Draco glanced back at Dobby and the maid, who seemed completely unfazed by Narcissa's behaviour, and followed his mother wordlessly.

Lucius was indeed waiting for them, staring out of the window of the drawing room, when they entered. "Severus is on his way," he said without turning around. "He should be here in less than an hour."

"Wonderful," Narcissa sat down on the sofa once again and ran her hands over her skirt to smoothe it out. "That leaves us enough time to talk about how we proceed concerning Miss Granger."

Draco bit his cheek. He wanted to ask what they were talking about but he knew that he had acted as if he cared about her before already. If he did that too often, it would seem suspicious, considering how bad their past relationship had been.

"She will have to give a police testimony one way or another. We will get the person responsible for this!" Lucius turned around, his eyes gleaming dangerously.

"It seems we agree that she is innocent," Narcissa sipped from her now lukewarm tea and put it down with a disgusted expression.

Draco looked at her in horror. "You suspected her?" he asked, his blood suddenly

boiling. His fingernails were digging into his palms, and his jaw was almost painfully tense as he waited for the response.

"Of course we did," Lucius said in a tone that suggested he thought the question was ridiculous. "We investigated everyone who would have had a motive and even people who really wouldn't and she certainly had one. She hated you."

"She told me somebody had demanded money in exchange for me. You thought - what was she? 15? 16? You thought a 16 year old would do that?" Draco shook his head slightly in disbelief. The notion that Granger could have killed anybody was a joke. He had watched her for years and just the idea of the girl, who spend most of her weekends alternating between crying over romance novels and yelling at them, and fighting over socks with her ridiculously ugly cat, shooting or strangling somebody made him want to laugh. No wonder he hadn't been found when the people investigating his disappearance had believed Granger was capable of something like that. They were clearly idiots who sucked at their job.

"Inspector Crouch believed that two parties were involved. One that abducted or killed you and one that demanded money for you," Narcissa put a hand on Draco's fist. "We had to take every possibility into account."

"Of course we paid the money just in case," Lucius continued bitterly before Draco could say anything. "Obviously in vain as you can see. The police didn't even manage to catch any of the culprits. If I ever get my hands on them, I-"

Draco didn't get to hear what his father would do to his killers, as a loud ring echoed through the manor.

"That must be Severus," Narcissa stated the obvious into the silence that had fallen over the room.

"You must understand our precautions," she turned to Draco. "While I am very willing to believe you have returned to us, we can't risk anything."

Draco nodded, just as the butler Dobby arrived carrying a tablet with a sandwich and fresh tea. He was followed by a man clad all in black, who Draco assumed to be Severus.

"Good afternoon," Severus said, his eyes fixed on Draco, who had to suppress a shudder at the piercing look. He felt as if the man was looking straight through him and could determine all of his darkest secrets with one glance.

"I am glad you could make it on such a short notice," Lucius shook Severus' hand and they joined Draco and Narcissa on the sofas and armchairs while Dobby prepared their tea.

Draco was eyeing his sandwich but didn't dare to eat as the adults discussed the further proceedings. He knew it was ridiculous to call them adults as he was technically an adult himself, but he certainly didn't feel like it. He felt lost even though he was sitting next to his parents in what was supposed to be his home.

"Each of you needs to take this," Severus gave each of the Malfoy's an unusual longish kind of cotton swab, "and move it around the inside of your cheeks for about a minute."

"When will you be able to provide the results?" Lucius asked and his hand twitched as if he had to stop himself from clicking his fingers on the table.

"I'll come by the day after tomorrow. Technically, I would be able to provide you with answers tomorrow morning, but as you have demanded to run several tests, it will take slightly more time."

Draco put the cotton swab into his mouth, following Severus' instruction to hide the fact that he was making a face. He was really looking forward to a full day of

awkwardness. His parents were obviously more than ready to welcome him back, but reminded themselves that they couldn't be sure once in awhile and pulled back. It was exhausting.

It didn't take long and Severus excused himself again, explaining that he had a long ride ahead of him and had to get up early if he wanted to drop by in the lab first thing in the morning.

Draco who was getting hungrier by the moment couldn't say he was disappointed. When his mother announced that she was going to retreat to her quarters and take dinner there, he almost cheered.

"I would like to retreat for the night as well," Draco said when she suggested that he and Lucius take dinner together.

Narcissa rose an eyebrow but didn't protest. "I'll show you your old room," she said instead and Draco grabbed his plate and followed her.

"Dobby prepared a set of guest sleepwear for you. As you've grown since your disappearance, we don't have anything that would fit you. Usually, Lucius' tailor comes here if he needs a new suit, but as you need a completely new wardrobe, we will go to London tomorrow to take care of it."

Draco nodded at the appropriate places during Narcissa's following monologue about where she would take him and what he would need as they walked to his room.

"We will have to keep a low profile to keep you out of the media for the time being," Narcissa stopped in front of a room. "I hope you understand that. I would wait for after everything is made public, but then we won't be able to get anywhere without paparazzi."

Draco's jaw dropped. He certainly hadn't expected paparazzi. Just how rich and famous was his family?

"I- Thank you for everything," he said, running his free hand through his hair.

"I am your mother. You don't have to thank me. This is your home too."

Draco nodded and mumbled a quiet goodnight before retreating into his room.

The amount of green caught him by surprise. He almost dropped his sandwich at the sight. Everything was green. He didn't know why, but he was sure he would find out.

Draco wolfed down his food in record time. He was eager to explore, and set to look through his old things.

He went through old books and trophies, drawings and notes, toys and clothes, not noticing how the time went by.

Only a knock on his door brought him back to reality. Draco suppressed a yawn and stood up, cursing when he realized that one of his legs had fallen asleep. He hated the tingling feeling.

"I'm coming," he shouted when there was a second knock. He opened the door to find Dobby there, fresh clothes in his hands.

"Mr and Mrs Malfoy await you in the dining room for breakfast," Dobby said.

Draco took the clothes from him and disappeared into the bathroom adjourning his room.

He spent the whole way to the dining room yawning, cursing himself for not getting any sleep with every step.

Draco managed to get lost two times before he finally found the dining room, where his parents and an excessive amount of food were already waiting.

The breakfast passed mostly in silence with his father reading the newspaper and his mother casting worried glances towards him every two seconds, but Draco didn't care. He was tired and had no appetite, even though he was starving. He forced down

several pieces of toast with bacon and egg, which threatened to come up again when his mother announced that they were leaving for London immediately after breakfast, destroying his hopes of getting some rest.

Draco felt terrible the whole time his mother dragged him from one shop to another. She was obviously greatly enjoying the fact that she could dress him up and create a new wardrobe.

His skin tingled, his stomach rebelled and worst of all, he felt incredibly restless. Draco wanted to shout and jump and claw his eyes out all at the same time while sitting on the floor, rocking forth and back. He didn't know if it were the effects of severe sleep deprivation - like the past eight years - or if it was something entirely different. It was hard to tell as it could be anything from anxiety over getting sick to a punishment for him for joining the world of the living again.

Worst of all was the old beanie his mother had forced him to wear to hide his hair so they wouldn't be recognized. She hid behind a huge pair of sunglasses and a rather stylish hat.

Draco was about to tear the damned beanie into pieces when his mother finally declared that they had everything after she paid for his sixth pair of shoes.

"Thank god," he muttered and followed her to their car.

As soon as they arrived back at the manor, Draco disappeared back into his room and fell straight into his bed, not even bothering to change into his new pyjamas.

Despite his exhaustion, he didn't manage to fall asleep immediately. Draco turned from one side to another, the feeling he had had the whole day intensifying until it suddenly disappeared.

Draco pulled a pillow over his head with a groan and closed his eyes.

He shot up from his bed in the middle of the night, covered in sweat. Draco looked around, trying to orientate himself. When he didn't see any immediate threat, he fell back into bed, but the feeling of dread didn't leave him.

He didn't know what woke him up - if it had been a dream he didn't remember it. Draco closed his eyes again, not really expecting to fall asleep again.

He mulled over everything that had happened the past two days. He got up and back into the bed several times until sleep claimed him again around five in the morning.