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## Mina de Malfois and the Adult Proposition

by [Mina de Malfois \(Carlanime\)](#)

### Summary

Eventually, everything changes.

### Notes

Thanks to Ankaret for inventing matchbook fic:  
<http://archiveofourown.org/works/137030>

I should have been happy in my retirement from fandom. My first book was still selling briskly, and the discreet veil of a well-chosen pseudonym concealed me from any untoward fallout. I had begun, in a desultory fashion, to work on the second.

There was every reason to believe that, while I might never quite support myself in the manor to which I'd have liked to become accustomed, I would at least be able to keep up my share of the payments on ye olde condominium. Why wasn't I appropriately gleeful? I gloomily restacked the Sayers novels I'd knocked over—Arc was on some kind of retro novel kick.

It was the desultory-ness that provided the first clue. I had a case of post-grad ennui going on, without even the excuse of grad school—my thesis had been submitted, revised, revised, revised, and approved, and now languished on a shelf somewhere. Accordingly, I should have been free of the vocabulary paralysis and intermittent narcolepsy with which the thesis-writer greets the blank page. I had nothing hanging over me but the free-form bliss of novelling, so why was I lurking on an anon meme?

I sighed, heavily.

I missed fandom.

Oh, not all the time, and not all of fandom. Pseuicide really was, as the song assures us, painless. It felt good to be free of the obligations of BNFdom. I'd hardly ever been tempted to resurrect my deleted LJ and DW accounts. By now, I reflected morbidly, they'd probably been purged.

Melancholy settled, shawl-like, around my shoulders. I never should have started reading the BNF-fic meme.

I'd only meant to glance at it out of a kind of historical curiosity, to see if the name Mina de Malfois was still a presence, however posthumously, in fandom's serried ranks. The whole point of the meme was for fans to contribute anon commentfic in that most exclusive of all subgenres: BNF RPF. Ever since Prince C had mentioned it, I'd been meaning to sneak a quick peek at it, just to see if my former self lingered in fandom's collective mem. at all.

Now I'd wasted an entire morning, and real life had gone all drab and grey. The mundane world offered none of the instant gratification and feedback in which I'd so long basked. I'd been just about coping with that via the clever mechanism of being too damned busy to think about it. Now I'd been reminded, and what's more, a further inadequacy of the real world had been brought home to roost: my actual life was nowhere near as interesting as the exploits the anons had imagined for me.

True, the zombie fics were in slightly poor taste given that fandom believed me dead, but even those were brimful of events and significance, neither of which reality had been dealing out as of late.

I tried explaining this over lunch to an abstracted-looking Arc. "Judy, old thing," I began, shifting a bunch of A. A. Milne's best efforts off my chair with a patient-ish sigh.

"Old thing?" she interrupted, a kind of patina of frost forming on the words as they hung there in the air.

Had it been any lesser person I might have assumed she was momentarily bothered by her age. Feeling a bit elderly, kind of thing. To be honest I'd been feeling the march of time treading on me a bit as well, now that I wasn't enrolled at university and had been wholly thrust into the marketplace.

But it wasn't a lesser person, it was Arc, so it couldn't have been that. Something else must have been bothering her. No doubt she'd tell me when the appropriate moment arose. She's a positive master of the a.m., is Arc.

I'm more a master of the i.m., and somehow I sensed now was an inappropriate moment for fandom discussion. I'm not even sure why, other than that Arc's phiz bore that more-than-usually pensive look which had been haunting it of late. So I shelved my homesickness for fandom, resolving to vent my feelings later on, in my new DW journal.

It was a peculiar thing, that journal. I'd chosen a username nothing at all like

my nom-de-fanfic, flocked every single post, and friended only the people I was, well, friends with. None of them were particularly well-placed to help me, fannishly speaking—none of them were BNFs, eager minions, compilers of rec lists, or proprietors of gossip comms. Had I intended to stage a comeback, they'd have been useless to a man. Or woman. Or otherkin.

But for keeping mum about my new identity and sharing virtual and real sympathy, they were just the thing.

As so often is the case, PrinceC—I mean Jamie-- was the one with the apposite link. “Why don't you offer fic over at the Charitable\_Efforts comm?” he suggested the next day. “You can comment offering to write Mina de Malfois stories, if self-fic appeals at all. They're big on BNF fic over there.”

A few moments perusal was enough to fill me in on the comm's raison d'etre. Fandom, with its usual generosity of spirit, had set up a charitable comm whereby those willing to pay to have their prompts filled could offer up cold, hard cash. The earliest comm post had a vast comment thread, preserving for the latecomer all the squabbling that had gone on over which charity should get these monies—this charity was deemed racist, that one sexist, a third unwelcoming to the trans homeless population, and so on until finally it had been decided that they should charitably prop up the only people they could really trust: online fans. So the charitable donations were all going to AO3.

This seemed eminently sensible, so I posted a comment as SoPseudMe offering to write MdM RPF for any reasonable donation. I could, I promised them, do it really well. I itched to tell them why, but restrained myself.

I had several prompts by the end of the day, which was pretty impressive for a well-cloaked BNF. But the prompts left me more depressed than ever re: the flatness of real life. “\$20,” ran one, “for steampunk fic in which Mina is a Holmes-type detective thwarting a Dracula-style vampire.” Why, I moaned to myself, had I never thwarted anything? And the next person wanted Mina-as-rock-star bandfic, which was just as deliciously, and depressingly, unrealistic.

“The thing is,” I confessed, back in my own journal, “once I read the prompts I start imagining these scenarios. They start to feel almost possible, just because I'm thinking about them. And then I remember they aren't possible, and I drop back to real life, where nothing interesting ever happens.” I sighed at the screen, and ran a jaded eye over the books stacked next to my computer: *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, *Mrs. Tim of the Regiment*, *Can Any Mother Help Me?*. Arc's retro kick was taking over. What she wanted was a new bookcase.

It was funny, but the next four prompts I got were all for the sort of fic that could be confused with mundane life. The sort, I mean, chock full of realism and stuff. One could almost believe an unfeeling universe had decided to be a dear old feeling universe after all and had taken pity on me.

“I'll pay \$200,” said the first, “for PWP in which Mina hooks up with a much younger man at a con.” My heart raced as I read it—that was nearly on par with the pledges being offered for fic of the current, non-dead crop of BNFs!

The second was even more generous. "\$400," it promised, "for curtainfic in which a decent, God-fearing man makes an honest woman of Mina, and they buy their first home." I couldn't imagine who would want to read such a dreary thing, but at that price I'd be happy to write it.

"Ugh," said the third prompt, apparently in response to the second. "How about \$500 for F/F featuring Mina and a devastating, dashing older woman?"

But it was the final prompt that made me gasp out loud. "\$1000. Babyfic. F/F." Crisp and to the point, and so much more money than any other prompt strutting its stuff at Charitable\_Efforts. It must've been the pricetag that made me feel all fluttery and giddy.

"Of course I intend to fill all the prompts," my pseudonymous fingers typed, "but since the point is to raise money for Archive of Our Own, I'll write the highest donation prompts first." There. That seemed sensible.

I braced myself to tell Arc the entire story that evening. I'd made such a point of leaving fandom; I couldn't help but wonder how I'd sound, admitting I'd snuck back in.

She was at her desk, writing something, when I cleared my throat.

When she turned around she handed me a cheque. I glanced at it, then reglanced in surprise. "A thousand dollars?" I said, bewildered.

She smiled, and waited for me to catch up.

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