

## Flying Without A Broom Lunchtime Disturbance

### Chapter One

#### ~ Lunchtime Disturbance ~

Albus Dumbledore was not a wizard prone to panicking. This was the reason he kept his cool when Ernie MacMillan came running up in a right agitated state one fine Hogsmeade weekend in early the days of Spring. Still, Dumbledore would have to admit to some degree of alarm at the sight, as the urgent look on MacMillan's face did not bode well. Something was clearly up and, knowing the nature of the universe, it undoubtedly involved Harry in some manner.

Cause enough for some concern.

"Headmaster! Headmaster! Professor Dumbledore!" the sixth-year Hufflepuff was screaming as he barrelled through the Great Hall, causing lunch to come to an abrupt halt as those students who had not gone down to Hogsmeade that day stared curiously at him.

"Please, Ernest," he told the anxious young wizard as he stumbled up to the staff table, "calm yourself. Now, what is the problem?"

MacMillan was sucking in great gulps of air as he tried to catch his breath, leaning against the table while clutching at a stitch in his side. Shaking his head he managed to gasp out, "Harry."

Dumbledore was not surprised.

"Potter?" asked Professor McGonagall, who also did not seem surprised. She did, however, sit up in her seat, as did most to the other professors. "What's happened now?"

"We - we were in the - the Three Broomsticks," MacMillan panted, now able to at least stand upright. "The members of the DA, y'know? We were having some butterbeers when... Harry..."

His curiosity piqued, as well as a slight twinge of worry, Dumbledore looked on as MacMillan seemed to find himself unable to describe what had happened. The boy was waving his hands aimlessly, as if that might somehow convey his meaning.

"What happened to Harry?" he asked.

"He started *smiling* ," MacMillan answered, sounding as if he still couldn't believe it. This

probably had something to do with the fact that Harry been in a near constant state of depression since the death of his Godfather, Sirius Black. The Boy Who Lived hardly ever smiled these days. Indeed, Dumbledore could not remember seeing Harry crack so much as even the faintest of grins in the past nine months.

Hoping that perhaps MacMillan was simply overreacting and that this was simply the first sign of Harry breaking out of his depression, Dumbledore said, "Ah well, butterbeer does have that effect on people."

MacMillan looked at the headmaster and said, "We thought so too, at first. But then... sir... he started giggling. Then laughing. Hysterically."

Now this, perhaps, was cause for worry.

Dumbledore could see McGonagall out the corner of his eye. She was visibly worried and clearly sharing a similar thought to his own; that Harry was having a breakdown of some sort. Even if it were cathartic in a way, it was still not something they would wish upon the young wizard.

"And then Malfoy," muttered MacMillan, an expression on his face that was now a mixture of worry and delight. Seeing the professors' interest he explained, "The prat must've heard or seen Harry laughing, so he came over and tried to insult us - just like he normally does."

"And what was Harry's reaction?" asked Dumbledore a tad nervously.

He knew full well the strength of Harry's anger; his office having been on the receiving end of it shortly before the end of the previous school year. Unlike Ron Weasley, whose temper was permanently set on a hair-trigger, Harry bottled his fury inside an internal prison more heavily fortified than Azkaban. It was as if he cultivated it, let it grow and feed upon itself within that cage in which he held it inside. This naturally meant that when something did manage to escape; it did so with a terrifying force and suddenness.

If Draco Malfoy was imprudent enough to avoid the warning signs; Dumbledore shuddered to think of what an enraged Harry would do to the boy.

"Naked."

This single word, uttered like a benediction, shook Dumbledore out of his musings. He, as well as everyone else in earshot, stared at MacMillan with confusion. The Hufflepuff boy was gazing into space, an almost demented grin on his face.

"I beg your pardon?" asked McGonagall incredulously.

"Er... sorry, Professor," apologised MacMillan, shaking himself out of his memories. He looked at the headmaster and tried to explain. "It was Harry, y'see. Leastways we think it was. Malfoy was going off about how Harry was starting to sound like Loony, er, Luna Lovegood. Naturally we were all getting ready to hex the bas, uh, the git, when Harry started laughing even louder. That's

when... well... Malfoy... his clothes..."

Professor McGonagall's eyebrows were in danger of crawling past her hairline, over her head and down the back of her neck, when she heard this. Minerva, Dumbledore knew, was an exceptionally intelligent witch and had easily been able to infer what MacMillan was trying to tell them.

"Do you mean to tell us," she asked incredulously, "that Potter cursed Malfoy's clothes off?"

The thought, and accompanying mental image, were enough that Dumbledore had to struggle not to break into a grin.

MacMillan, however, shook his head and sounded perplexed, "That's just it, Ma'am. Harry didn't even have his wand drawn. He was just sitting there. Laughing. He actually fell out of his seat he was laughing so hard."

"You mean he performed accidental magic?" asked Professor Flitwick, who was listening as well.

"Uh, no sir," answered MacMillan. "Harry did it deliberately. He had to have; he did the same thing to those thugs Crabbe and Goyle. In fact, we know he did it to them, 'cause he snapped his fingers in front of those two before it happened."

"Wandless magic?" asked Flitwick, sounding positively delighted.

Dumbledore cleared his throat, mostly to get their attention but also so that he could school his face into something other than an equally delighted smile. When MacMillan was looking at him, he settled his hands on the staff table and asked, "What happened next, Ernest?"

MacMillan gathered himself. "Well, after we'd all recovered from the shock - I might be scarred for life after seeing the three of them just... uhg. After they'd run away, Malfoy was screaming like a baby, Harry stopped laughing and got this funny look on his face..."

"Funny look?" Dumbledore prompted when the young wizard trailed off.

"Yeah. I can't describe it." MacMillan shook his head and continued, "Anyways, you know the transfer student? The girl? Nikki Fraser? Well, she was with us..."

At this Dumbledore felt a sliver of relief shoot through him. Unbeknownst to everyone at Hogwarts save some of the staff, Harry, Hermione and the Weasley siblings, Nikki Fraser was actually none other than Nymphadora Tonks. She was posing as a student, supposedly from one of the lesser known Irish schools of magic, ensuring that the Order of the Phoenix would always have an experienced agent near the Boy Who Lived over the course of the school year.

Young Harry had clearly not been particularly pleased by it, but had eventually relented after much persuasion and pleading. Everyone knew Harry abhorred being given special attention or, even worse, preferential treatment of any kind, but the assignment had been a necessary one when it was discovered halfway during the summer that Voldemort had more than one elaborate assassination attempt planned against the Boy Who Lived.

"I don't really know what he did to her," continued MacMillan, causing Dumbledore's heart to skip a beat. The headmaster suddenly had a terrifying vision of Tonks standing starkers in the Three Broomsticks, a murderous expression on her face and her wand levelled at Harry, who was rolling on the floor with mirth. MacMillan shook his head in puzzlement and said, "All the Muggleborn students seemed to get it, but..."

"What did he do?"

MacMillan looked completely baffled as he tried to describe what had transpired. "He walked right up to her, really invading her personal space. I think everyone thought he was going to kiss her or something like that. Then... then he flicked her nose with a finger and said..."

"For heaven's sake, MacMillan, get on with it," demanded McGonagall. "What did Potter say?"

"Meep meep."

Professor Flitwick fell off his chair.

"*Meep meep* '?" repeated McGonagall, clearly under the impression that she had not heard right.

MacMillan nodded. "Yeah. Then he stuck out his tongue and blew a raspberry at her before he... well, it looked like he Apparated."

Dumbledore half rose from his seat in alarm. "But Harry doesn't know how to Apparate yet."

"I'm afraid he does, sir," said MacMillan. "In fact, right after he meep meeped Fraser, he made a short Apparition jump from our table to the door, where he meep meeped again and blew another raspberry. By the time we got outside he wasn't anywhere to be seen. The others are searching for him right now, but what with his ability to Apparate, not to mention the Aquila in him..."

"Aquila," gasped McGonagall, clutching a hand to her chest and growing very pale. Professor Flitwick, who had just managed to remount his chair, promptly fell off again. All the other teachers who had been listening reacted with similar expressions of alarm, though none of them lost their seats. Dumbledore fell back onto his seat, feeling as if someone had landed a sledgehammer blow to his stomach.

Aquila was a colloquialism used to describe a variety of hallucinogenic and pleasure inducing potions, not unlike Muggle drugs. They were as illegal as any of the Muggle brands, but were unfortunately just as easily acquired, if you wanted them badly enough. Had the pressures and obligations of his destiny, which he had discovered the previous year, weighing so heavily upon Harry that he was seeking solace in Aquila induced euphoria?

No, it simply wasn't possible. Harry would never willingly take any mind altering substances. After his experiences in Occulmency under Professor Snape's tutelage and Voldemort's attempts to influence him, Harry had learned to guard the sanctity of his mind and thoughts with a fierce possessiveness that was frightening.

Indeed, as Severus had unfortunately discovered during an Order meeting several months before, Harry's mental defences were now not only nigh impregnable, but also capable of causing considerable pain in the mind of whomever tried to gain access without permission. The force with which he had been evicted had rendered the potions master insensate for the better part of three days, despite Madam Pomfrey's best efforts.

That meant this incident had to be an accidental dosing.

Or worse, not an accident at all, but something carefully arranged by the Dark Lord.

MacMillan nodded in confirmation, now deadly serious, "Yeah. It was Fraser that worked it out. She took a whiff of his butterbeer bottle and recognised the smell of it, though she didn't say how. That's why Harry was laughing and acting so weird... he's high!"

Right then, Dumbledore dearly wished he was prone to panicking.

"Oh shit."

TBC...

## **Flying Without A Broom Unexpected Wedding**

### Chapter Two

#### ~ Unexpected Wedding ~

The hunter paused. His prey was nearby; he could hear the boy talking, but his attention had momentarily been caught by a very pretty crack in the wall he was slinking past. Harry stared at the crack, thoroughly mesmerised by the sight, for nearly two minutes before shaking his head and returning his attention back to the three figures in front of him. Fortunately they had not moved far during his distraction.

Draco Malfoy, Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle had somehow managed to acquire replacement clothing for themselves since fleeing from the Three Broomsticks. This fact, quite naturally, prompted Harry to find the need to dispense with these just as he had their original garments. It was such wonderful luck that he had stumbled upon them in the course of his little game this afternoon.

"I'm going to kill him!" Malfoy was shouting, "I don't care if father and Aunt Bella want him alive as a present for the Dark Lord! I will kill him if it's the last thing I do!"

Crabbe and Goyle were nodding in dumb agreement as Harry succeeded in sneaking right up behind the trio of Slytherins. He had been crouched down low during his approach, so that they would not spot him until the very last second. He grinned broadly, almost splitting his face in half, as he reached out and tapped his nemesis on the shoulder. Leaning in close as Malfoy turned around he found himself almost brushing noses with the pale haired, and even paler skinned, young wizard.

"Boo."

Malfoy's eyes grew wide and seemed in danger of popping out of his skull as he realized who was standing so close behind him. Harry's grin was one of demented glee as Draco sucked in a deep breath before screaming in stark terror.

"YEEEEEEAAAAARRRRGGGHH!!"

Harry literally fell on his arse laughing as Malfoy threw his arms into the air, turned on a heel and ran for his life, Crabbe and Goyle in close pursuit. The three Slytherins were running as if the

Devil himself were chasing after them and Harry found himself scarcely able to breath amidst his gales of laughter.

Waving his hand in the general direction of the fleeing trio his laughter promptly redoubled as their newly acquired clothes promptly disappeared. Malfoy skidded to a halt, almost being run over by Goyle in the process, and let out an effeminate shriek before covering his exposed regions and resuming to run at an even faster pace.

"AAAAAHHHHH!!!"

It took Harry a good many minutes before he calmed down enough to regain his footing. Wiping the tears from his eyes, chuckling all the while, he resumed walking through the streets of the village. On one level he was vaguely aware that this was a somewhat dangerous venture, but his mind was so perfectly distracted by the sheer volume of sensory input it was receiving that Harry could scarcely be bothered by such a slight niggling feeling.

Everything seemed so much... more. More colourful. More vibrant. More alive. It was a wonderful sensation and Harry was revelling in it. It was an experience the likes of which he had never before imagined. The colours, the sounds, the smells... well, all right, the smells weren't such a wonderful thing, but other than that the world had suddenly become a wondrous place, with so much for him to see and feel.

Harry couldn't help it and soon found himself skipping playfully down the street, occasionally twirling around, humming any tune that came to mind. He had just swung around on lamp post and was preparing to move onto the next one, which he planned to swing around as well, when a flash of red caught his eye. Harry's eyes widened with surprise, anticipation and delight as he quickly ran for cover in the nearest alley. Peering out from around the corner, he watched as two of his friends approached.

"Bloody hell," Ron was cursing loudly. "Where the hell could he have gotten to? I mean, for Merlin's sake, what is he doing running around by himself when he *knows* the Death Eaters are out trying to kill him?!"

"I think you should relax, Ronald."

"Relax? Relax?! How could I possibly be relaxed at a time like this?"

"It's easy really, if you know how. Either way, it will be much easier trying to find Harry if you spent more time actually looking for him and less time shouting out rhetorical questions."

Watching as his best friend in the world strolled past, completely unaware of his presence, Harry was deeply touched by the concern Ron was showing for him. Sure they had had their ups and downs over the years, but in the end Harry knew Ron would always stand by him. Even if he didn't know quite where Harry was at the moment. Say...

This was going to be so much fun. He would get to play a prank on Ron, revenge for all those

times Fred and George had done so --Ron was their brother after all, so it sort of worked out-- and at the same time he could help his friend take that all important first step into a relationship with the girl Harry knew Ron was secretly pining for. This was going to be so much fun!

Tip-toeing quietly behind the pair, listening as Ron continued to complain as they searched for him, Harry steadily crept closer. He was delighted to observe, whereas Ron was oblivious, that the girl listening tolerantly to Ron's panic filled tirade. This, Harry felt, was a sure sign that she returned Ron's feelings. This was wonderful as it simplified everything and meant that Harry could not possibly mess things up. They were so clearly in love and it was just as clearly up to him to force them to act upon their true feelings.

He drew out his wand and pointed it at his friends' backs, breaking into a grin as he thought of the favour he was doing them. They would be so grateful for his help.

"Ropes!" he shouted, not really bothering to try and use the correct incantation which Flitwick had drilled into them several years earlier. After all, Harry was the Boy Who Lived. Since when did he ever do anything the normal way?

A length of rope appeared out of nowhere, encircling the surprised pair before they could even turn around to the sound of Harry's voice. The ropes wrapped around them, from their ankles all the way up to their shoulders. Now this was the brilliant part of Harry's plan. The part which would ensure that his friends would get together. Simply put; he was getting them together himself. Using the ropes.

"Harry? Harry! What d'you think you're doing, mate?" asked Ron as he and Luna Lovegood toppled to the ground, firmly trussed up and bound together with seemingly no end of rope. As luck would have it, the bindings had settled around them at the precise moment when they were facing each other whilst turning around. "Harry!"

Bouncing with delight and clapping his hands Harry waved his wand at his friends and said, "Naked!"

Without further a due, Ron's clothes proceeded to disappear in much the same fashion as Draco's had earlier. At the same time, Luna's clothes vanished as well, leaving the pair bound bodily together with absolutely nothing separating them. Harry was thrilled that everything was working out so well. There was no way they could not get together now.

"Ro-o-on and Lu-u-na starkers in the park," he sang, smiling down at his two friends as they struggled against the ropes binding them together. "What will they get up to, when it gets dark?"

"Harry! Give back our clothes! Now!" demanded Ron, his face flushed such a flaming colour of red that his hair seemed pale by comparison. "Harry! Harry!!"

Kneeling down next to them, Harry looked from Ron to Luna and back several times. He was still grinning happily at the success of his plan when he suddenly turned his attention to Luna, who was staring up at him with implacable calm. She blinked languidly at him as he leaned close to her,



ignoring Ron's futile attempts to free himself. That was his friend, after all, always the one that played hard to get.

"Be gentle with him, Ducks," Harry told her solemnly, "it's his first time."

"I shall. It's mine as well," Luna replied calmly.

This was the one thing about Luna that simply delighted Harry. She was so accepting of his help and generosity. He had to blink back tears as the emotion almost got the better of him. It was so beautiful to know that he would be the one to help his friends through this. It never once occurred to him that it was him that got them into it in the first place, but even if it had, it was doubtful that anything would have turned out different.

"Very well, then, let's get started," Harry declared, adopting a stern expression. He looked piercingly at Ron and told him, "You do."

"I do?" asked Ron, perfectly confused.

Harry grinned at his friend's answer and then turned to Luna and said, "You do too."

Luna considered him for a moment before bobbing her head and agreeing, "I do."

"Excellent!" Harry exclaimed. He pulled his wand out of his robes, much to Ron's alarm, and then continued. "By the powers invented, er, invested in me by... uh... someone important, I hereby announce, I mean pronounce you; husband," he tapped his wand against Luna's forehead and then turned to repeat the action right between Ron's eyes, "and wife."

"What? Hey!" Ron goggled up at Harry, at once both amazed and horrified that Harry was presuming to officiate this rather impromptu and unofficial wedding and also affronted that his friend had cast him in role of the bride, rather than the groom.

Harry leaned forward and stage-whispered to Luna, "You may now kiss the bride."

Luna did just that.

"Now remember to make sure your first-born is named after me," Harry told them as he rose to his feet and began to skip away. His job here was done. His mission; completed. Chalk up another one for the amazing Boy Who Lived... matchmaker extraordinaire!

"Harry! No! Come back!" Ron's shouts echoed behind him as Harry swiftly departed. Clearly his friend wanted to share in the joy of his blessed union. It was tempting to be sure, but Harry could not bring himself to intrude. Particularly during their honeymoon.

"Harry, come back here, you bastard! Harry!"

Eyes ablaze with an inner mirth that had not been let out to play in a long, long time, Harry danced down the streets of Hogsmeade, humming a catchy tune as his friend's cries of delight slowly

faded into the distance.

"HARRRRRRRRREEEEEE!!!!"

TBC...

## **Flying Without A Broom**

### **Game of Tag**

#### Chapter Three ~ Game of Tag ~

Tonks was in the process of having a nervous breakdown.

At least that is how the young Auror would have described her current condition. As it stood Tonks was already convinced it was only a matter of time before her state of mind deteriorated into a full blown panic attack. That, of course, would be the perfect way to cap off the day. Pausing in her search Tonks took several deep breaths in an attempt to calm herself, even though she had a feeling it wouldn't work all that well. But she at least had to try. After all, she was an Auror and that meant she was supposed to be able to keep her cool under fire. Nobody ever saw Dumbledore panicking, did they?

Of course not. Dumbledore never panicked. It simply wasn't done.

At the moment, however, this did little to ease Tonks' anxiety.

Everything had been going so well. More or less. The assignment was almost painfully easy to fulfil. Having shown up at Hogwarts at the start of term, posing as a sixth-year transfer student from the Tara School of Magicks, Tonks had quickly been sorted into Gryffindor. After that, keeping an eye on Harry was easy. They lived in the same tower after all, attended the same classes and Dumbledore had been very insistent when telling Harry not to try and avoid her. Naturally the young wizard was a little resentful of it, especially after the troubles he had been put through the previous year, but for the most part he had simply grit his teeth and accepted Tonks' presence.

His friends; Ron, Hermione and Ginny had been a bit more relaxed about it than Harry, although Tonks had caught a few disapproving frowns shot her way from the girls. Ron, on the other hand, had somehow managed to rope the Auror into joining the Gryffindor Quidditch team, resuming her old position as one of the Beaters. She might have been too clumsy to handle a Quaffle properly, but there was nothing wrong with Tonks' aim when it came to the Bludgers. She had proved that to the Slytherins, particularly that little snot Malfoy, during their first match when several snide comments had been sent her way.

So, aside from the fact that Harry had a tendency to glower at her, the year had been progressing

quite well. She had been invited into the Defence Association, jokingly referred to as Dumbledore's Army, by several of the previous year's members. With Hermione's approval, and a dismissive grunt from Harry, she had joined in and begun sharing some of the simpler spells and techniques she knew - passing the knowledge off as something she had learned from a duelling club at Tara.

There had already been one attempt made on Harry's life, over the Christmas holidays, but the incident had been dealt with so efficiently and quietly that none of the students were even aware that anything untoward had happened. Tonks' suspected that Hermione was aware that something had happened, it was hard to get anything past that girl, but nothing had been said about it, so everything had continued as normal. Dumbledore had even authorized today's Hogsmeade weekend, the first one of the year.

True, there was admittedly some risk, a fair bit of it, in letting Harry wander off the school's grounds, but almost everyone in the Order had agreed that something had to be done in an attempt to bring Harry out of his funk. Nobody could deny the feeling that his increasingly dark moods would soon reach a head and an explosion of some kind seemed imminent. And nobody wanted to be around when Harry finally cut loose. Fortunately almost all of the best students from the Defence Association had agreed, after some prompting from Hermione and Tonks, to accompany Harry into the village.

At which point everything had gone straight to hell.

How could she have missed someone spiking Harry's drink with Aquila, especially one as potent as what she had been able to smell from the empty bottle? She had been watching everything the boy touched in case it was somehow charmed or cursed to injure him. She had performed all the necessary Detection Charms immediately after purchasing the DA group's drinks from the bar. It hardly seemed possible that someone could have slipped the drug in any of the bottles during the brief journey from the bar to the table they had been sitting at. And even if they had, how could they have known which Butterbeer Harry would have taken? There had been nearly a dozen of them on the tray Tonks had carried. Somehow, only God and the perpetrator know how, they had done it anyway.

She should have realized something was wrong the moment Harry started smiling. Heck, now that she looked back, she should have been suspicious when she saw Harry frown and look curiously at his bottle. Obviously he had detected the Aquila, been able to taste it in spite of the sharp tang of the Butterbeer. Unfortunately he hadn't said or done anything, but had finished the drink without complaint or comment. Typical Harry.

The only good news, which did nothing to alleviate Tonks' anxiety, was the fact that she recognised the particular Aquila that Harry had consumed. It's official name sounded more like an entry in an encyclopaedia than anything else, but was commonly known as Black Lotus. This was good because, unlike most Aquila, Black Lotus was almost never addictive unless taken in large quantities over a long period of time.

The bad news, which did a great deal to enhance Tonks' anxiety, was the knowledge that Harry had

unwittingly ingested Black Lotus. This was bad because, like most Aquila, Black Lotus would send just about anyone on a trip that would have them floating higher than a Muggle weather balloon. The problem lay in the fact that Black Lotus was a good deal stronger than most. In fact, it was something of a miracle that Harry had been coherent enough to stand upright, let alone perform any kind of magic. It also had a tendency to last disproportionately longer than the amount would seem to warrant.

In other words, while Harry need not fear becoming addicted to Black Lotus, he was hopeless high and unlikely to come down to earth for at least a day. Maybe two.

The perfect opportunity for Voldemort and his cronies to lay their hands on him.

"Crap," Tonks swore as she hurried down one of Hogsmeade's side streets, sweeping her gaze back and forth in an attempt to spot Harry. Thus far, much to her chagrin, she had thought she had spotted Harry's unruly black mop of hair twice. Unfortunately, it was only upon much closer inspection that she discovered, on both occasions, that she had been mistaken - which meant that she had accidentally assaulted two completely innocent strangers in the space of half an hour.

"I'm dead. Moody's going to kill me. Kingsley's going to kill me. Remus is going to kill me. Molly's going to butcher me. Dumbledore's going to be disappointed. Hermione's going to yell at me. Ron and Ginny are going to kill me. Fred and George... oh God, help me!"

She was so preoccupied with her litany of predicted death and dismemberment that she completely failed to spot one particular mop of unruly black hair until it slammed into her from behind with all the force of rampaging Minotaur.

"What the--!!!"

The two of them toppled to the floor in a tangle of arms and legs, though in truth it was Tonks whose arms and legs were all a tangle. Her assailant, on the other hand, had both arms wrapped tight around her waist and his legs pressing firmly against her thighs. They rolled about for a moment or two until Tonks found herself laying flat on her back with him straddling her hips and pressing down on her body.

"Tag!" he declared in a bubbly voice, rising up so that she could see his face. He grinned down at her and poked his index finger against her forehead as he crowed, "You're it!"

"Harry!" Tonks exclaimed, a mass of relief, concern and downright bewilderment flooding through her at the sight of his familiar features. He looked much younger right then, sitting astride her hips and beaming happily. No, not younger, but for the first time since she had known him, Harry looked his age. He looked like a sixteen year old boy, who happened to be having a grand old time, rather than a sixteen year old man with the weight of the world and more on resting on his slender, but reasonably broad shoulders.

In a way Tonks was glad to see him like this. Even if it was artificially produced and not likely to last more than a day or so, it was good to see Harry free of the burden which had plagued him

since that night when she had met him, nearly two years ago. This was how he was supposed to be, carefree and without a worry in the world.

"Harry, what on earth d'you thi-- mmph!"

Her question was cut off abruptly as Harry leaned down and covered her mouth in a kiss. It was such a surprise that it actually took Tonks several seconds before what Harry was doing sunk in properly. It was only when Harry, who didn't seem to notice that she was too shocked to respond, deepened the kiss that Tonks began to comprehend exactly what was going on. The faintest hint of Black Lotus on Harry's lips and tongue were enough to shake her out of her daze.

To her infinite surprise, and Harry's delight, Tonks found herself reciprocating - though she would never be able to explain why. From what she knew of him Harry had only ever had one girlfriend before now, a relationship which by all accounts had been something of an unmitigated disaster. She would not have expected him to kiss quite as well as he currently was. There was a confidence behind his actions that he should not have had. She supposed, as his tongue playfully danced against her own, that this aggressive and dominant behaviour was being brought out by the Black Lotus.

Perhaps there was something that could be salvaged from this mess.

"Tag," he whispered throatily against her lips, ending the kiss when the need for air became to great. He pulled away from her so that he could stare into her eyes, his own brilliant green irises burning with such passion that it made Tonks swallow nervously. Harry looked as though he would be quite happy to devour her right there and then, though there was a sparkle in his eyes that was more mirth than desire. He grinned wolfishly at her and finished, "You're it."

Before she could respond, either in words or in actions, he was gone. He vaulted off her and immediately began sprinting down the street, leaving a completely bewildered Tonks lying on the cobblestone ground. By the time the young Auror managed to regain enough of her senses to pull herself into a sitting position, Harry was at the other end of the street and about to disappear round the corner. He paused though, to glance back and shout over his shoulder.

"Come on, Niks!" he called, using her nickname for the DA. "Catch me if you can!"

TBC...

## Flying Without A Broom Dancing Between Raindrops

### Chapter Four

#### ~ Dancing Between Raindrops ~

Hermione found herself faced with something of a quandary. She had most emphatically *not* expected to find herself in such a situation when she woke up this morning. Looking to one side, in the hopes of getting some guidance from Tonks, it was only when faced with empty space that she remembered how she and the Auror had been separated in their frantic search for Harry after he had left them gaping in the Three Broomsticks. After knocking over one young wizard with black hair, whom she had mistakenly identified as Harry, Tonks had rushed off down a side street and left Hermione so far behind that the young witch had completely lost sight of her.

With her partner (the entire DA group from the Three Broomsticks had paired off in their search for Harry) missing and thus unable to give any advice on how to handle the situation confronting her, Hermione found herself trying to work out on her own exactly what to do with the two students sprawled at her feet. Apparently, where Hermione and Tonks had failed, Ginny and Neville had succeeded in finding Harry.

Unfortunately they had also let him talk them into a drinking game of some sort and were currently plastered to the point where they could not even stand upright. At least that is what she was able to gather from their slurred ramblings, which were interspersed with bouts of drunken laughter.

"This is getting completely out of hand," she muttered to herself, pinching the bridge of her nose as Neville giggled inanely while pointing out the similarity between Professor Snape and a lone cloud that was drifting overhead. Already a few drops of rain were beginning to fall, even though the sun still shone brightly in a sky that only lightly clouded over.

"Then letsh gedit in hand," said Ginny with a leer before reaching over and groping her partner's crotch. Neville gave a surprised yelp which promptly caused them both to burst into gales of laughter.

Musing distractedly that perhaps it was fortunate she had discovered them rather than Ron and Luna, Hermione drew her wand in preparation to cast a Sobering Charm in the hopes that it might sort things out. She was about halfway through the motion and incantation when realization struck her like a thunderbolt out of the blue.

Ginny and Neville had found Harry.

Harry had convinced them to join him for a drink.

Ginny and Neville were now drunk as lords.

Harry was still missing...

Which meant that Harry was now not only stoned out of his mind, thanks to the Aquila he had consumed earlier, but was now probably blind drunk as well. And to think, only moments ago, Hermione had not believed that things could possibly get any worse than they already were. If Harry had been prey to any stray Death Eater that happened to find him in his earlier state, he was now likely to be as helpless as a lamb being led to the slaughter. As if to emphasise the seriousness of Harry's plight, the few drops of rain already falling began to multiply.

"Oh God," she whispered before turning on a heel and running down the narrow cobblestone street, thoughts of returning Ginny and Neville to a state of sobriety completely forgotten. Ginny had, before deciding to molest Neville, indicated that this was the direction Harry had taken off in.

For a brief moment as she ran Hermione felt a stab of anger at her friends. They had known the state Harry was in, known how unstable it would have made him; particularly taking into account the stress he had been under recently. The first thing they should have done when they found him should have been to contact the rest of the searchers and then escort Harry back to Hogwarts where they would at least have a chance to look after him properly. They should *not* have sat down to have a drink with him, let alone enough drinks to get sloshed. They most certainly should never have let Harry get away from them, even if they were too drunk to stand up without immediately toppling over.

Hermione slowed down as she approached the next street corner, the faint sound of music reaching her ears. She frowned as she continued onwards, at a more sedate pace, certain that she recognised the tune but not able to place where she had heard it before. It sounded like... a saxophone? No, maybe an oboe or something similar? It was definitely familiar and for some reason conjured up images of her childhood, before coming to Hogwarts.

Rounding the corner she crashed headfirst into Harry.

She caught a flash of two brilliant green eyes under raised eyebrows and a seemingly delighted smile. Then she collided with his surprisingly firm chest and bounced off, falling to the ground and landing on her rear with a thump. She immediately tried to scramble back onto her feet, but found herself instead being lifted up by Harry, who was grinning wildly at her.

"Harry! Thank goodness!" she exclaimed with relief, grabbing hold of his arms to steady herself as he set her down in front of him.

"Mione! I was hoping to run into you," he replied, still grinning brightly. He paused to ruefully rub his chest, where she bumped into him, and teasingly joked, "Only not so hard."



"Harry, you..." Hermione looked at her friend in surprise. Considering the way Ginny and Neville had been lolling about, drunker than she had thought possible, it was something of a surprise to find Harry seemingly stone cold sober. In fact, he seemed almost perfectly normal, save for the fact that he was grinning like a two year-old who'd just discovered that Christmas was coming early. It must have been the Aquila that was making him so cheerful, but it did not explain why he wasn't swaying back and forth like a palm tree in a hurricane - which was Hermione had been expecting to find. She looked closely at him, a stare he scarcely noticed, and asked, "You're not drunk?"

Harry looked positively scandalised and exclaimed, "Of course I'm not!"

This left Hermione feeling very confused as she sputtered, "But Ginny... and Neville..."

"Come on, Mione," he urged her, tugging on her arm in a gentle attempt to pull her off the pavement and into the street with him. He looked pleadingly at her, the look he usually wore when trying to coerce her into joining Ron and him in some illicit adventure. "Dance with me?"

She look at him strangely. Harry hated dancing ever since the Yule Ball in their fourth year.

"Why?"

"Because it'll be fun," Harry said, beaming at her. He pulled on her arm again and implored. "Trust me."

Hermione had to struggle to contain the nervous laughter that threatened to bubble up. Whenever Harry happened to ask someone to trust him in such a tone of voice, it was usually a warning that the person in question should not trust a single thing of whatever was going to happen next. In moments like this Harry sounded oddly similar to how Fred and George did when offering up one of their latest products to an unsuspecting victim. Against her better judgement, especially after seeing what had happened to Ginny and Neville, Hermione nodded her assent.

"Okay."

Harry's delighted smile was far more than Hermione's acceptance should have warranted. He was definitely too happy, clearly still under the Aquila's influence. The sight was enough to make her heart ache, reminding her of the stark contrast between the young boy who had saved her life in their first year and the brooding teenager he had become. She now understood, all too well, what had happened to Ginny and Neville. The temptation to let Harry enjoy himself without the burdens of his life weighing him down, if only for a short while, was simply too great to resist - even knowing the possible consequences. Besides, what could it hurt to share one dance with the young man she trusted beyond anyone else?

Before she knew it Hermione was twirling and spinning lightly in the street, Harry leading her about with childlike exuberance. The rain was so gentle that she scarcely noticed it, there was not even any cause to worry about her robes getting more than a little damp, the fat raindrops sparkling in the sunlight as they fell.

Harry moved them around with such a deft and easy touch that was almost impossible to believe, especially considering how much of a klutz he had been on the dance floor with Parvati during the Yule Ball two years earlier. Now he was skipping about, seemingly as light as a feather but at the same time as sure footed as a gazelle, as if he had been born to dance. It was a remarkable transformation and Hermione was almost lost in the feeling of it.

"Harry, what are we doing?" she asked after several minutes, slightly breathless as they continued to waltz down the village road to the faint sound of a quirkily tune that Hermione *knew* she had heard before but could still not recognise.

Harry laughed and, with a flourish, spun her about in his arms. He took one of her hands in his own and settled the other on her hip - as if preparing to tango, smiling down at her with the look he always gave when someone asked something that was perfectly obvious.

"Dancing, silly."

"I mean, what kind of dance is this?" she asked, tilting her head to one side in an attempt to pick out the tune they were dancing too more clearly. "I don't recognise it."

"It's raining," Harry told her, as if this were also perfectly obvious - which it was. "And we're dancing between the raindrops."

"You can't do that," Hermione protested, before realizing that (maybe) Harry wasn't being serious and was actually pulling her leg. This seemed to be born out as he laughed merrily, spinning them about again and again in a dizzying series of swooping twirls.

Hermione fought her blush and otherwise ignored the laughter at her expense, mostly because she knew that this was something Harry needed very much. It was also because she knew very well that Harry's sense of humour was never intentionally cruel, but simply quirky in that way everything about him tended to be a tad off centre.

Hermione was so caught up in her musing that she almost lost her footing when Harry abruptly stopped on a dime. Literally.

"A dime!" he exclaimed, releasing his hold on her so that he could bend down and pick up the Muggle coin at his feet. He held it up for them both to see. "Uncle Vernon gave me one for my birthday when I was six. They had taken Dudley to Disney World that summer."

"Uh, Harry..."

"I've *got* to show this to Niks."

"Niks? Nikki Fraser?" asked Hermione, wondering why Harry was referring to Tonks by the young Auror's alias. Perhaps it was the Aquila? If the dose he had ingested was as potent as believed, it was entirely possible that Harry had forgotten the fact that Nikki Fraser was in actual fact Tonks. He always, as a matter of course, referred to Tonks by name, except when in the presence of

anyone that did not know her true identity.

"Uh huh," Harry bobbed his head up and down so quickly she was almost afraid it would fall off. He started to eagerly look about, clearly hoping to catch sight of Tonks. "I wonder were she is? She's not very good, is she? She should've found me *ages* ago!"

"You've seen To-- uh, Niks?"

"I tagged her," he said happily. "She's it."

Hermione blinked. "It?"

"Uh huh," Harry's head was nodding dangerously fast again. He paused and a dreamy smile stretched across his face as he added, "Did it right after I helped Ron tie the knot with Luna."

"WHAT?!?"

"It was so beautiful," he told her, reaching up to wipe a tear from his eye. He sniffed happily, like a proud parent. "They promised to name their firstborn after me, y'know."

"Ron... and Luna." Hermione was, understandably, having some difficulty processing that particular thought. Luna, she had no doubt, would probably have played along with Harry's little fantasy. Ron, on the other hand, would have had an entirely different reaction.

She cringed at the thought. If Harry had done as he said, it could only have been accomplished if Ron had been restrained somehow. Something else which would not ease Ron's volatile temper. At the rate things were going it would not only Death Eaters they'd have to protect Harry from, but his best friend as well.

"Come on, Mione," Harry urged her, pulling on her arm before sprinting off in a seemingly random direction. "We've *got* to find Niks and show her this."

"Harry!" she called after him, breaking into a run and chasing after him. "Harry, wait! Harry!"

Harry was fast, much faster than Hermione would have thought, but if she could just get him to slow down a bit... He disappeared around a corner and Hermione pushed herself to move faster, fully aware that she could easily lose track of him if she couldn't keep him in her sight. She rounded the corner at almost a full run, and promptly found herself skidding to a halt in an attempt to avoid careening into a dancing broomstick.

Tripping over her own feet she tumbled to the ground in a heap, landing almost on top of the broomstick. The music, to which she and Harry had been dancing, seemed much louder and the broom seemed to be dancing along to it. Sitting up with a groan, and reaching down to rub her bruised rear, Hermione was about to get up and resume her chase after Harry when a wet and very dirty mop slapped her in the face.

"Gah! Get away!" she cried, pushing the cleaning implement away.

Blinking the cleaning water out of her eyes and rubbing it off her face with a sleeve, she looked up to see that the broomstick was not, in fact, dancing as she had first thought. It was, it seemed, enthusiastically mopping the floor in time to the beat of the music. It dipped the mop in a small bucket of water and began slapping and sweeping the mop over Hermione's front. Apparently it was unable to tell the difference between a witch, half lying on the cobblestone floor, and the floor itself.

"*Reducto* !"

With a crack the animated broomstick was blown away from her. It was also blown into several dozen little pieces, which clattered to the ground before her. The mop and water-filled bucket it had been using, in its attempt to wash her, toppled over and Hermione knocked them aside as she scrambled to her feet. The strange music that had been playing in the background stopped and she waited a moment for the broom's owner to come and start shouting at her for destroying it.

After several seconds passed, in which Hermione decided that whoever had charmed the bloody thing wasn't coming to complain, she cast a quick cleaning and drying spell on her clothes and resumed her chase after Harry. Unfortunately her tumble had cost her precious seconds and she doubted that she would have an easy time finding him again. As she ran down the street, not bothering to look back, Hermione could have sworn she could hear that familiar tune starting up again.

Somehow she just *knew* Harry had something to do with it.

TBC...

## Flying Without A Broom Good Days and Bad

### Chapter Five

#### ~ Good Days and Bad ~

Bellatrix Lestrange was having a good day.

Everything was proceeding almost perfectly. Months of meticulous planning and design had finally led to this day, the day when that insufferable brat who dared to think he could challenge the Dark Lord for supremacy would finally receive his comeuppance. The so-called Boy-Who-Lived would soon fall into their grasp, his mind so clouded by Black Lotus that he would scarcely realize the danger he was in until it was far, far too late.

That had been the master stroke, doping the idiot boy into consuming the most potent Aquila known to the Wizarding World. Flint, one of the new generation of Death Eaters, had performed his task admirably - doubtless the fools guarding Potter still had no idea how the drug had been slipped into his drink. It could have just as easily been poison, which Bellatrix had originally proposed. The Dark Lord, however, most emphatically did *not* want Potter to suffer an easy death. Of course there were many poisons that would have caused the boy a great and long agony before finally killing him, but the Dark Lord was also most emphatic that Harry Potter was to die by his hand and his hand alone.

Even those hulking morons Crabbe and Goyle weren't stupid enough to go against their master's wishes in such a matter. The example he had made of Woodrow, who had attempted to assassinate Potter over Christmas - despite standing orders that not a hair on the boy's head was to be harmed, was more than sufficient deterrent to prevent anyone else from trying.

The only problem was that Potter was not cooperating. The dose of Black Lotus administered to him should have driven the boy into a euphoric stupor - exactly what they needed. Unfortunately, however, the little twit was reacting in a completely opposite manner to what was expected. It sometimes happened that Aquila would affect various wizards in different ways, which was probably what was causing the Death Eaters' current dilemma. Apparently Potter was bouncing around and tearing through the streets of Hogsmeade like a giddy three year old, running circles around his friends (as well as his pursuers) in the process.

Frustrating, to say the least. The only snag in an otherwise perfectly executed ploy, which was causing Bellatrix some small degree of annoyance. Still, it would not be long now. Hogsmeade

was a fair sized village, but with a dozen Death Eaters combing the streets they would surely stumble across Potter before long.

The only danger was the chance that one of Potter's friends might find him first and spirit him away to the castle. That would not be good, since the Dark Lord had been most insistent that his servants not fail him in this endeavour. He had promised slow and painful punishment if they did.

At the moment Bellatrix and her companion, an annoying young Durmstrang whelp by the name of Vornholt, was making her way through the southern quarter of Hogsmeade. They had turned off Satissa Lane and into Wedgelock, when Vornholt suddenly grabbed her by the arm. It was only the fact that he also exclaimed his success and was pointing with his other arm, that prevented her from immediately hitting him with a particularly painful hex for such affrontary.

"There! Look!" he all but shouted, pointing eagerly at a figure two blocks down and on the other side of the narrow street.

Cutting back the words to the hex, Bellatrix peered at where he was pointing. It was a young man, dressed in Hogwarts school robes, a mop of black hair and round glasses. A predatory grin cut across her narrow face as she purred his name. "Potter."

It was clearly the Boy-Who-Lived, even from this distance she could recognise him with ease - his features etched into her memory during their encounter at the Ministry of Magic the previous year. And, much to her delight, the boy was obviously still under the effects of the Black Lotus. She had been worried that maybe the same resilience which kept him on his feet would perhaps be enough to flush the Aquila out of his system before they could find him. Clearly that was not the case. Better still, the dolt was heading straight to where they stood, blissfully unaware of their presence.

Vornholt, the unsubtle clod, made to charge down the street and start cursing. Bellatrix reached out and grabbed him by the back of his robes, almost causing the impertinent wizard to fall on his arse as she yanked him back.

"Idiot!" she hissed angrily at him. "Don't draw attention, either to us or him. We'll wait here before making our move. If you try anything without my order, our Lord will be seeking a replacement for your miserable carcass before sunset. Understand?"

"Yes, yes, sorry," he apologised, wisely stepping back and allowing her to take the fore. He might have been tempted to try and take the glory of capturing Potter for himself, but as the younger Death Eaters had soon learned after her release from Azkaban, doing such things while under the command of Bellatrix Lestrange tended to shorten one's lifespan quite dramatically.

Bellatrix gave the young man a sidelong glance for several seconds, appearing to gauge the sincerity of his apology, but not really. After all, Vornholt was a Death Eater. As such it was a matter of course that he didn't have a sincere bone in his body. Naturally, neither did Bellatrix, but in her case that was something she took pride in.

Resisting the urge to hex him anyway, Bellatrix decided that her companion was suitably cowed for the time being and turned her attention back towards their target.

By now Potter was only a block away, strolling along as if he didn't have a care in the world. Oddly enough the boy seemed rather... perky... for somebody that was supposedly filled to the proverbial gills with some of the most potent Aquila in the world. By all rights he should have been completely incapacitated --practically catatonic-- yet there he was, bouncing along with all the exuberance of a toddler on his first outing to Diagon Alley.

The silly grin on his face, which Bellatrix could now make out quite clearly, was already beginning to grate on her nerves. The Black Lotus was supposed to leave him at their mercy. It was *not* supposed to bring him anything even remotely resembling some kind of pleasure. For Merlin's sake the bloody brat was whistling! Whistling!

"Hogwarts!"

Bellatrix blinked at Harry's suddenly, rather vocal, proclamation.

"Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts!"

Recognition immediately sunk in and if she had been anyone else Bellatrix would have covered her eyes with a hand and started shaking her head in a mixture of embarrassment, disbelief, shock and no small amount of aggravation. As it was she settled for arching one of her eyebrows almost all the way to her hairline as Potter continued onto the next line of Hogwarts' school song, which he did --very off key-- to the tune of something that sounded like a polka of some sort.

"Teach us something please, whether we be old and bald or young with scabby knees..."

"This is not happening," moaned Vornholt, looking at Potter with disgust written over his face for all to see. The expression soon shifted to one of anger as he growled, "The boy is making a mockery of us!"

Bellatrix cuffed the back of his head and snapped, "Shut up, you fool! He doesn't even know we're here."

Potter, in the meanwhile, was continuing to blissfully skip down the narrow lane. His head was thrown back and he appeared to be examining the few scattered clouds drifting overhead as he continued to sing. "Our heads could do with filling with some interesting stuff."

"Follow me," Bellatrix ordered, giving Vornholt a sharp nudge to the ribs with her elbow as she began walking towards Potter.

"For now they're bare and full of air, dead flies and bits of--"

Potter abruptly cut the song short and his head snapped in her direction, his eyes fixed upon her with the directness and intensity of a Muggle laser. He stopped his skipping and stood firmly in place, head turned towards where Bellatrix was standing.

Despite herself she was impressed by his awareness of his surroundings. She had been moving as unobtrusively as possible towards him and, even though the street was all but deserted, Potter should not have noticed her so soon in her approach. Only highly trained and alert Aurors would have reacted so, not some schoolboy who was supposedly stuffed to the brim with Aquila. She looked at him with raised eyebrows and voiced her thoughts on the matter. "Well, well, I *am* impressed."

"Soh-ho-rree, Mah-ham," Potter unexpectedly drawled after scrutinising her intently for several seconds. He sketched a short bow in her direction, cocking his head to one side as he looked at her with an expression of curious puzzlement. The horribly exaggerated twang was gone when he asked, "Do I know you? Do you know me?"

"Why, yes, Harry, you do," Bellatrix told him, hiding a smirk. Clearly Potter was so overwhelmed by the Black Lotus that his memory was drawing up a blank in regards to her identity. This was almost too good to be true, making her task that much simpler. Now all she needed to do was win the boy's trust and lead him straight into Lord Voldemort's hands.

She put on a smile that she hated, the kind she had used when making polite conversation to the gentry and other assorted idiots before her imprisonment so many years ago. Thinking back to those days she had to struggle to keep the vapid smile from becoming a sinister one. She knew exactly what to tell him.

"I'm an old friend of the family."

Potter looked her up and down, frowning. "Yeah... you do look familiar. Yes, you do."

"Your Godfather was my cousin," she told him, thinking that by telling him the truth she would stand less chance of accidentally tipping him off as to who she really was. It was difficult to keep her smile seemingly benign whilst thinking and talking of her treacherous relative. "You remember your Godfather, don't you? Bl - Sirius?"

"Yeah... you look... I think really might I know you," Potter was slowly bobbing his head up and down as he continued to regard her. His expression had shifted to one of intense concentration, something which disturbed Bellatrix, as such focus might clear his head enough for his to realize that she was hardly a friend of his.

"Come on Harry," she called, beckoning for him to join her on her side of the side. It would be easy to grab or stun him when he was that much closer at hand. Trying to spur him on, Bellatrix affected a look of wide-eyed anxiousness and glanced nervously over her shoulders and prompted, "It's not safe out here."

"It isn't?" asked Potter, sounding rather bewildered. He looked around, eyes slightly glazed and not really taking everything in properly. After a long, wide pan from side to side he looked at her again and shrugged, "Looks okay to me."

Bellatrix froze her smile in place and tried not to grind her teeth together too obviously. The



ignorant little pissant was already starting to wear her patience thin. Careful to keep her annoyance out of her voice she waved him towards her again. "Looks can be deceiving, Harry. Now come here so my friend and I can take you someplace safe."

Potter blinked several times, his own insipid smile appearing to freeze on his face. The look of extreme concentration returned and his eyes focused on her. He regarded her thoughtfully for a moment before giving a slight nod. "I think I do know you."

"Come on, boy," demanded Vornholt, impatiently. Bellatrix again resisted the urge to hex her over-eager companion. "We don't have all day!"

By now she was having to forcibly restrain herself from cursing her idiot partner into oblivion. She should have chosen one of the others, Falk or Wyndham, instead of such an boorish oaf as Vornholt clearly was. His complete lack of tact and subtly was only serving to focus Potter's attention on them more clearly. Already the boy was on his guard, rather than been lulled into a false sense of security - which she had hoped to achieve.

"I know you," Potter repeated. This time there was an edge to his tone of voice. His eyes narrowed as he remained fixated solely on Bellatrix. "Yes... I *know* you."

"Harry..."

"I remember," Potter said, his voice sounding oddly detached now as he took a slow step towards where Bellatrix and Vornholt were standing.

"Shit!" Bellatrix cursed her luck, realizing that she had lost all hope of capturing Potter without a fight. Now, she could only hope that she and Vornholt would be able to subdue the boy without drawing too much attention to themselves. This, she knew, would likely not come to pass - especially when she recalled Potter's actions at the Department of Mysteries the previous year.

Potter was now openly glaring at her as he hissed, "I remember!"

Bellatrix drew her wand and aimed it at the boy, Vornholt next to her doing the same. Drawing herself up to her full height, she hissed back, "We're under orders not to kill you, Potter."

*"I remember !"*

She bared her teeth in a snarl. "That doesn't mean we're not allow to curse you into next week."

*"I will kill you! "*

This vehement proclamation gave Bellatrix a moment's pause. She could remember full well the last time she had encountered Potter - after all, it was not everyday that one of the icons of the Wizarding World cast a Cruciatus Curse on you. That, if nothing else, had impressed upon her the fact that Potter was far more dangerous than she had originally believed. While the curse had not been as powerful as one cast by a true dark wizard, there had been potential.

And now, having been freed from the restraints of his inhibitions and morals, Harry Potter was perfectly capable of doing exactly as he said he would. Bellatrix levelled her wand at his chest as he launched himself across the narrow lane. Potter was charging towards her with such sheer bloody-mindedness that he completely ignored the fact that two Death Eaters had their wands fixed on him, curses waiting on their lips.

*"Stuporum !"*

The curse was an offshoot of the more common Stunning Curse --a favourite amongst Gryffindors for some reason-- only considerably more powerful. It would render the recipient unconscious for the better part of two days if left untreated. When the poor sod eventually woke up they would be left feeling as though they had been trampled underfoot by a herd of centaurs and left to suffer with a mind numbing hangover.

By all rights the Boy-Who-Lived should have been sprawled unconscious on the ground. But he was currently in the grip of a righteous fury that was burning brighter than the sun. He was also under the thrall of possibly the most powerful and beguiling Aquila the wizarding world knew of. Add to this the fact that he was a powerful wizard in his own right and it should not have been too much of a surprise that Potter scarcely even noticed the curse as it hit him, slowing his progress about as much as a drop of rain would have.

Bellatrix had just barely enough time to experience one moment of consternation followed by another moment of blossoming alarm before Potter slammed into her with enough force to lift her clear off her feet. Snaking one arm around her shoulders and the other around her waist, he hoisted her into the air without breaking stride and proceeded to barrel straight through the storefront window she had been standing in front of.

As the glass shattered and sprayed around them, the multitude of tiny slivers and razor edged shards cutting into her robes and exposed flesh, Bellatrix began to realize that perhaps she had made a mistake in not thinking this scheme of hers through to its rather obvious conclusion.

All of a sudden, Bellatrix's day was no longer a good one.

TBC...

## **Flying Without A Broom**

### **Rage Unleashed**

Chapter Six  
~ Rage Unleashed ~

Tonks was in desperate need of a stiff drink. Of course, drinking while on duty was against regulations. She had, however, come to the conclusion that since chasing after a drugged up, hyperactive Boy-Who-Lived wasn't in her job description either, then nobody had any right to begrudge her a shot or two or three or more of Fire Whiskey.

Her earlier game of "tag" with Harry had not lasted very long. In fact, it had not even begun before Tonks had completely lost all trace of Harry. The boy was harder to track down than one of Loony Lovegood's imaginary Scruple-Beaked Snorkles, or whatever she called them.

Of course, it wasn't her fault. She had to lay all the blame on the kiss. The kiss which had left her lying speechless on the ground, while Harry had disappeared from sight. The kiss which had so thoroughly scrambled Tonks' thought processes that it took her almost ten minutes before she realized that she had just let her target slip through her fingers - again.

Suffice to say that Dumbledore, and the rest of her superiors, would not be happy once she turned in her report.

It was bad enough that she had messed up to begin with, allowing somebody (probably a Death Eater) to sneak Black Lotus into Harry's drink. Bad enough that she had let him out of her sight. Bad enough that she had absolutely no idea how to fix this mess. But there she went and lost Harry for the second time today!

"What else could possibly go wrong?" she moaned as she hurried through the narrow streets of Hogsmeade.

This, unfortunately, was just the kind of question that the gods of bad karma live for.

The words had no sooner left her mouth than Tonks skidded to a halt and desperately tried to cover her face as the store window she was passing exploded outwards. Needle-sized slivers filled the air in a whirling maelstrom of glittered glass blades, tearing into everything they encountered. Including Tonks.

"That was a rhetorical question!" she shrieked as the razor-edged shards ripped at her school robes and exposed flesh.

The entire experience seemed to last an age, though it was probably only a second or two. Tentatively lowering her arms, which had been shielding her head, Tonks looked around in awe. Every single window up and down the length of the street was gone, shattered into literally billions of tiny pieces. Here and there people were poking their heads out from whatever cover they had hidden behind, surveying the damage with much the same amazement as Tonks.

Glass was usually the first thing to suffer, for some unknown reason, when magic ran out of control. When young witches and wizards performed accidental magic, it was usually when they were angry at something - and the glass paid the price. Tonks herself had once exploded a jar of pickled eggs when she was nine. But this...

The sheer scope and range of what had just happened was beyond what she could accept from a single person. And she knew without a doubt that a single person was responsible. Harry Potter.

"Shit."

That about summed it up.

Brushing her shoulder length brown hair, part of her disguise as Nikki Fraser, out of her eyes, Tonks became aware that her arms were covered in dozens of minute cuts. The storm of broken glass had sliced into her exposed skin, which was now slick with a sheen of blood. She had been lucky to have raised her arms quickly enough, or it would have been her face on the receiving end of such punishment.

Pausing only long enough to cast a quick charm to remove the tiny glass splinters embedded in her flesh and clean away the thin film of blood, she hurried down the street. She eventually found herself in front of one store, a small clothes shop, which she was reasonable certain was the source of the magic.

There was a wizard dangling from the street light.

He was tightly bound with thick ropes around his arms and chest. More rope was tied around his ankles, from which he hung suspended above the ground. His robes were upturned, succumbing to gravity, and covered his head as he struggled vainly to free himself.

"What on earth?" Tonks muttered as she cautiously approached the man.

"Who is it? Who's there?" asked the man. He could not see her, as his robes were in the way. He held still for a moment, waiting for an answer, but began to thrash about again when none came. As he struggled he swore to himself, "Dammit, Lestrage, I told you we should've just hexed the little twit from the start, but nooooo... you had to try and lure him into your grasp..."

This immediately confirmed Tonks' suspicions that the man was a Death Eater, which no doubt

explained why Harry had strung him up like a side of beef in a butcher's storeroom. It was the mention of Bellatrix Lestrange, however, that caused her blood to run cold. She shuddered to think of what that vile woman might do to Harry if she got her hands on him.

"Start talking, mate," she told the Death Eater, stepping up and emphasising her order by landing a punch to his stomach. As he coughed and sputtered, she grabbed him by his hair and pulled him to one side so that his robes fell out of the way and gave her a clear look at his face. She did not immediately recognise him, but the face was familiar enough for her to be certain that this was not a misunderstanding of some sort.

"Who - who the hell are you?" he wheezed, looking up at her.

"I'm asking the questions," she told him, pulling hard on his hair and eliciting a grunt of pain. She glared down at him and demanded, "Where's Harry? What did that bitch do to him?"

The man looked at her in surprise, before sneering, "So you're one of Potter's Muggle-loving friends! Come to try and save him from the big, bad dark wizards?"

Tonks broke his nose with a quick jab from her free hand. He gasped in pain and began to hack as blood streamed down his face. She twisted his head to one side, forcing him to look down the length of the street they were in. Even with a newly broken nose, his eyes grew wide at the sight of the ruined store fronts.

"I'm not here to save him from a bunch of incompetent twits like yourself," she told him, waving at the first at the ropes binding him and then waving at the debris littering the street. "I'm here to try and stop him from doing something he *might* regret once he's back in his right state of mind!"

"I think you might be... a bit late," the man swallowed.

"What d'you mean?"

He looked up at her, his face a picture of fright, "Potter didn't even look at me when he did this. He didn't even wave a wand or a hand in my direction."

Tonks frowned, "What do you mean by that?"

"Bellatrix Lestrange was with me. Potter charged right into her like a rampaging troll," the Death Eater explained, his voice wavering as he recalled the events leading to his present position. "He grabbed her in his arms and just kept on going - straight through the window. I was going to follow, help her, but... one second I was on the ground, the next I was tied up and hanging here."

"So they're still inside the shop?" Tonks asked, looking at the empty window frame in front of them.

"I think so. I hadn't heard anything for a few minutes before you came," he shuddered. "Thank Merlin."

Tonks gave him a warning shake, "Explain."

The Death Eater shook his head, "Potter was... not happy to see her. I think he was hitting her."

This was something Tonks could scarcely believe. Harry, while in possession of a dangerous temper, had never shown any indication of being prone to physical violence. All of the reports she had read supported this. In any confrontation, usually with Draco Malfoy, it had always been Ron that jumped into the fray with his fists flying. It was never Harry, even when he was provoked beyond the limits of his control.

Thus it was with a great amount of trepidation that Tonks released her hold on the imprisoned Death Eater and approached the gaping window. Ignoring the man's muffled protests she hesitantly stepped into the shop and began to look around. Her ears caught a disturbing sound coming from behind the counter near the back. It sounded not unlike the repeated chopping of an axe into a wet tree trunk.

"Harry?" she called, creeping forward.

The sound continued without pause, though as she drew closer Tonks could make out soft mutterings. Licking her lips she drew her wand, silently berating herself for not having done so before now. Moody would have her head if he ever found out.

"I've tried to be nice."

"What?" she paused, now able to make out some movement in the shadows behind the counter. Each word she heard was paced with the rhythm of the smacking noise, which Tonks now thought sounded rather... fleshy.

"I'm tired of being nice," the voice, which she now recognised as Harry's, continued.

Tonks girded her loins, so to speak, and stepped around the counter.

"Oh gods," she choked out, dropping her wand and covering her mouth and nose with both hands in a desperate attempt to prevent her lunch from heaving out of her stomach. She fell to her knees, her legs suddenly too weak to support her, and wished that she could banish what she saw from her mind.

Bellatrix Lestrange lay limply on her back, Harry Potter straddling her waist. His left hand held her throat in a tight grip, squeezing the flesh so strongly that it was already bruised almost black. His right hand, however, rose and fell with a metronomic rhythm. He was like a machine, moving without pause, each movement precisely the same as the one before it.

"I'm not--"

Up and down. Thwack.

--going--"

Up and down. Thwack.

"--to hold--"

Up and down. Thwack.

"--back--"

Up and down. Thwack.

"--any--"

Up and down. Thwack.

"--more!"

Blood coated his arm halfway to his elbow. Pale chunks of flesh which, Tonks realized with horror, had once been part of Bellatrix's face, clung to him here and there. The skin over his knuckles was split, swollen and bruised. It must have hurt beyond belief, most of the bones in his hand must have been broken, but Harry did not pause in his assault. Punch after punch rained down with nary a pause or hesitation.

As for Bellatrix...

Harry must have been in a blind frenzy, Tonks realized. For that matter, he still was. She had been so worried about what Lestrangle would do to Harry that she had not paused to consider what Harry would do to Lestrangle. Beat her into a bloody pulp with his bare hand.

"Harry?"

He moved so fast that if Tonks had blinked then she would have missed it. He was on his feet, facing her and for the first time in her life, Tonks understood why Dumbledore was so certain that Harry could defeat You-Know-Who. She could see what the headmaster had always known... could see what it was that had frightened the dark lord so much that he tried to kill a year old baby.

And then he was upon her.

At first she had the terrible thought that he was attacking her, but belatedly realized that Harry was clutching to her in what seemed very much like desperation. He was hugging her to him so tightly that she struggled to draw full breaths. She wrapped her arms around him, returning the hug, and tried to calm him as best she could.

"Harry?" she asked, with some trepidation.

She could feel him pressing against her, burrowing his face into her neck as his body was wracked with sobs. Tonks did not have much experience when it came to weeping teenage boys. In fact,

Harry was one of the strongest people she knew and thus one of the very last people she would have expected to react like this.

Gently stroking his back she asked, "Harry? Are you all right?"

"No," Harry sniffled, face still buried in her hair. "Do I bloody look all right?"

"No," she agreed quietly. At least there was some fire in his voice when he retorted. She gently pulled him away from her, amazed at how utterly fragile he seemed right then. She looked at his face, which was streaked with tears and spotted with flecks of Bellatrix's blood. "Please tell me what's wrong, Harry."

"I can't kill her, Niks," the young wizard whispered.

Harry's face was an expressionless mask, revealing none of the inner turmoil he must have been feeling. His eyes were a bit red from crying and his cheeks wet with tears, but other than that not his frozen features did not betray any emotion.

Tonks watched with mounting alarm as the façade began to crack. More tears began to flow as he curled into a foetal ball, his entire body trembling uncontrollably.

"I can't kill her," he repeated tremulously as Tonks enveloped him in her arms. She tried to reassure him, rocking him back and forth as she stroked his back. "I want to, so much, Niks, so much, but I can't..."

Looking over his hunched shoulders, Tonks had to bite her tongue to stop herself from saying anything. From her position she could clearly see Bellatrix's body and, more importantly, her face. She didn't need to check for a pulse to know that the woman was dead.

In fact, it was something of a mercy that she was - even with magic there would have been little hope of fully repairing the damage Harry had inflicted in his rage. She would have been horribly scarred for life if she had survived.

The reason she kept quiet was because she simply did not know how Harry would react to the news. On the one hand, he seemed devastated in his supposed inability to do just that. Learning that he had actually succeeded would probably cheer him up no end. On the other hand, Tonks wasn't all that sure it would be a good idea to stoke the fire in a boy who had just pounded someone's face into so much mince meat.

Besides which, she was fairly certain he would not react positively to the knowledge once the Aquila had been flushed out of his system. Then again, Harry had been showing a darker side to his personality since Sirius' death. For all Tonks knew, chances were he'd greet Bellatrix's death with the same stoic attitude he had developed over the summer holidays.

"...I just... can't..."

Closing her eyes to the sight, Tonks tried once again to banish the image of Bellatrix's mutilated



face from her mind. It would not be easy, as Harry had been particularly vicious in his assault. If it hadn't been for the Death Eater, dangling from the streetlight outside, Tonks would never have known it was Bellatrix lying there. The only way Ministry would be able to identify her would be by her fingerprints or magical signature. Her face was... gone.

"No matter how much I punch her," Harry continued, almost babbling, "no matter how hard I hit... she just won't die!"

"Shhh, it's all right, Harry," she soothed, "it's all right."

Tonks never did know how long she held him there, probably only a matter of five to ten minutes, but it seemed an age that she comforted him with her soft words. Slowly the trembling died down and the tears dried up. A few startled gasps and exclamations pulled Tonks out of her contemplations, signalling the arrival of a group of witches and wizards. Apparently they had just found the Death Eater dangling outside the shop.

It would not do, she thought, for anyone to see Harry in such a state. The Prophet had made a full retraction of all the damaging slander they had printed the previous year, now promoting The-Boy-Who-Lived as an unsung hero, but public opinion was still a fickle thing. Besides, there was a dead and very bloody body not six feet away, something that would most assuredly not be good for Harry's image.

Taking hold of his chin and tilting his head up, so that she could look at him properly, she asked, "Are you all right now, Harry?"

"I'll be fine, Niks," Harry answered unconvincingly.

He lifted his bruised right hand into view and Tonks watched with quiet surprise and amazement as the blood, covering it almost to the elbow, seemed to evaporate away. His knuckles were almost black, so heavily were they bruised, and the skin was torn with deep gouges that oozed congealing blood. She could see what looked like one of Bellatrix's teeth embedded between the knuckles of his index and fore fingers. The tooth popped out and fell to the shop floor as the cuts healed, leaving behind only thin white scars to mark their passage.

"I'll be fine," he repeated softly, regarding his healed hand. "Eventually."

Releasing her hold on him, Tonks rose to her feet. She looked over the counter and could see a small crowd of wizards gathered outside the shop. Fortunately they were entirely focused on the trussed up Death Eater, and had yet to turn their attention away from him. She held out a hand to help Harry up, surprised to discover that he was heavier than he looked as she pulled him to his feet.

"Harry, d'you think you can walk?"

"Yeah," he said, head downcast and not releasing his grip on her hand. He was holding her quite firmly, almost painfully. He glanced up at her and asked timidly, "Why?"

"It's not safe, Harry. We need to leave," she told him. She glanced towards the shattered front window and wondered how they were going to sneak past the crowd. "We can't stay here."

Harry looked at her uncertainly and asked, "You want to go... someplace safe?"

Tonks regarded him cautiously, having noticed something in his voice when he posed that question. She did not know what it was, but she had a feeling that Harry had something planned. If there was one thing Tonks knew about her young charge, it was that he had an uncanny ability to sneak out from under peoples' noses when he really needed to. That and her time at Hogwarts had developed an implicit trust in him, something she couldn't really explain. Which was why she decided to find out what he had in mind.

She nodded, "Yeah."

A faint smile graced his lips as he nodded in return. "Okay."

And then they were somewhere else.

"Holy shit!" Tonks yelped in surprise, pulling free from Harry's hold on her and whirling around in disbelief. After gaping stupidly at the surrounding landscape, she turned to Harry and asked, "Where are we?"

"Someplace safe. Like you asked," he told her quietly, bashfully examining his shoes.

"Actually, I was thinking of Hogwarts," she muttered, once again surveying their new location. Suffice to say they weren't in Kansas anymore. Or anywhere else that Tonks recognised. Certainly no longer in the British Isles. "Where are we, exactly?"

Harry reached up and nervously scratched the back of his neck, sounding faintly embarrassed as he said, "Isla Sorna, off the coast of Costa Rica."

"Oh."

That was all Tonks could think to say.

They were standing on a bluff, overlooking the ocean. Waves roared and crashed against the shore, sparkling a brilliant blue in what looked like morning sunlight. It had been sometime in the middle of the afternoon back in Hogsmeade, but Harry had seemingly just Apparated the pair of them halfway across the planet, or at least the Atlantic.

Behind them was a lush forest, coloured with every shade of green imaginable and loud with the chirps of birds and the noises of other animals. Basically it was your everyday tropical paradise, complete with a few palm trees to the left, which were swaying languidly in a warm breeze.

"Meep meep," Harry whispered in her ear, startling Tonks with his proximity. He had sneaked up right behind her and was able to catch her as she tripped over her feet in surprise. He leaned in close and placed a feather-light kiss on her lips. He stared into her eyes, a playful gleam once

again present, as he smirked, "Catch me, if you can, Niks."

He backed away and winked, before disappearing with a pop, only to reappear a moment later, this time on the edge of the forest. He waved cheekily at her and bolted into the lush foliage, quickly vanishing from sight.

"Tag," groaned Tonks, horribly aware of the irony of the situation. "I'm it."

She looked out over the island and the ocean.

"Nobody's going to believe this."

TBC...

## **Flying Without A Broom**

### **One Of Those Days**

#### Chapter Seven - One Of Those Days -

Albus Dumbledore had lived a long, long time. He had spent most of his life studying various arts and crafts - some of which were Muggle, rather than Wizarding. During his travels, in the days of his misspent youth, he had journeyed across the seven seas and to all four corners of the globe. As headmaster of Hogwarts he had access to one of the largest stores of lore and magic in the world.

Nothing, however, had prepared him for this.

"I once believed that I had seen pretty much everything the world had to offer," he muttered to himself as he surveyed the chaos strewn streets of Hogsmeade. "Trust young Harry to prove me wrong."

The last time he had seen the village in anything even remotely resembling its current state of disarray had been one notable Halloween night, fifteen years ago. Strangely enough, Harry had been the cause back then as well, having survived Voldemort's attack and earning himself the title of The-Boy-Who-Lived. Then Hogsmeade had been engulfed in a party that had lasted several days and left most of the inhabitants suffering from rather painful hangovers.

This time, however, it was panicked confusion that gripped the village rather than joyous celebration.

Quite naturally this did not lend itself to making the search for Harry Potter progress as smoothly as Dumbledore would have liked. Not that the old wizard would have considered things to be going smoothly even if there had not been a single disturbance happening. After all, it had been nearly eight hours since Harry had disappeared from the Three Broomsticks and he was still missing.

There had been sightings; a handful of people here and there had remarked about a black-haired young man meandering his way throughout Hogsmeade as if he had not a care in the world. But those sightings had dwindled down to nothing nearly six hours ago, though admittedly everyone was somewhat preoccupied with the task of restoring some order to the streets.

Still, six hours without a trace...

Not only was Harry missing, but it seemed that Nymphadora was nowhere to be found either. This eased Dumbledore's concerns somewhat, as it stood to reason that wherever Harry might be, Tonks was likely with him. At least he had someone to lend him a hand should he need it. Though it was worrying that she had not yet reported in.

The entire Order of the Phoenix had been called in to aid with the search. Every active member had been pulled from every assignment and brought to Hogsmeade. Harry's friends, namely the Defence Association, had also been scouring the streets - with varying degrees of success. Those that had failed to encounter Harry were despondent and beginning to despair. On the other hand, those who had succeeded in crossing Harry's path before all sign of him vanished...

Thus far the headmaster had made two visits to the Hogsmeade lockup.

The first call had come in only minutes after Dumbledore had arrived in the village. Apparently, as reported by Constable Troy, two students had been arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct. Dumbledore had no idea what to make of the fact that Ginny Weasley and Neville Longbottom had consumed nearly three *bottles* of Ogden's Fire Whiskey between the both of them, ending up so intoxicated that they literally could not walk.

After taking them into custody, and having to apply two separate Sobering Charms on each of them before they were properly coherent, Dumbledore was both alarmed and relieved by their abashed explanation.

He was relieved to learn that they had encountered Harry, apparently intent on celebrating a wedding of some sort that he had attended. Somehow he had convinced the pair to join him in a drink or two. Naturally one thing led to another...

His alarm was caused by the thought that Harry was now not only pumped to the gills with Aquila, but also drunk as a Lord. The combination of potions and alcohol was never a good one, particularly potions of the sort Harry had consumed.

While escorting Ginny and Neville to a carriage that would take them back to Hogwarts, where they could sleep off the hangovers they were suffering from (Sobering Charms did not cure that affliction), he happened across a besieged Hermione Granger. A mob of magically animated broomsticks, complete with catchy background music, were trying their utmost to swab her down with their mops.

Sadly Dumbledore only succeeded in compounding the problem by blowing nearly a dozen of the brooms into splinters before Hermione was able to stop him. As a result where there had at first been roughly three dozen brooms, there were now close to two hundred - a good number of which managed to steal away before the headmaster could Vanish them away. Suffice to say the chaos spreading throughout Hogsmeade multiplied rapidly after that.

The only good point about this was that Hermione was able to report that Harry had seemingly been entirely unaffected by the Fire Whiskey he had shared with Ginny and Neville. The fact that he was still completely smashed out of his mind, courtesy of the Black Lotus (a message

Hermione passed on from Tonks) seemed almost incidental after that.

Detailing Hermione, over her protests, to escort her fellows back to the school, Dumbledore hurried to the Three Broomsticks. He had hoped to trace Harry's magical signature from there, but had quickly been discovered that Harry's aura was fluctuating wildly. The Black Lotus Aquila must have reacted with Harry in such a way as to open the door for his true potential to finally come forth.

Until his magic settled down, which would take several days at the very least, Harry would be next to impossible to track or scry by any conventional means. Not to mention that all hell was likely to break loose whenever he was in the vicinity.

He had been in the process of relating this to Alastor Moody, via the pub's fireplace, when Constable Troy had appeared with the news that he had just taken another pair of Hogwarts students into custody. Pausing just long enough to tell Moody to assemble the Order and join in the search, Dumbledore had made his second visit to the village lockup.

At first Dumbledore had held the hope that the two students in question were Harry and Tonks (disguised as Nikki Fraser). Constable Troy, however, was quick to inform him that Ron Weasley and Luna Lovegood were being charged with public indecency.

From what he could make out, between Luna's dreamy ramblings about her 'blushing bride' and Ron's incoherent rants about being molested by his 'pervert husband', these two were apparently the cause of Harry's earlier celebration with Ginny and Neville. Having bound them up in enough rope to restrain Hagrid's brother Grawp, Harry had then proceeded to vanish their clothes and perform what essentially amounted to a wedding at wandpoint.

Luna was understandably disappointed to learn that her marriage was not binding, though there was a gleam in her normally misty eyes that made her future intended decidedly nervous. Apparently she was very eager to consummate the relationship and now fully intended to do just that - regardless of Ron's protests.

Dumbledore conjured clothes for both students and arranged an escort back to the castle (deciding not to leave Ron alone in Luna's company right then). Once the newlyweds, as Luna insisted they be referred to, had departed with Professor Snape of all people (much to Ron's horror), Dumbledore met with the now assembled Order at their impromptu headquarters.

By now, to his dismay, the animated broomsticks had multiplied so much that there were easily a dozen present along every street in the village. The accompanying music was beginning to grate on everyone's nerves, save perhaps the Weasley twins who instead seemed positively delighted by the current state of affairs. Seeing their already demented grins of glee, Dumbledore decided against revealing the fates of their younger siblings.

Dealing with the broomsticks had severely hampered their efforts to find Harry and Tonks. Most people made the same mistake that Dumbledore had and blasted the broomsticks, thus causing the cursed things to multiply by the dozen. While Hogsmeade's cobblestone streets were looking

better than they had since the founding of the village, it was impossible to step outside without getting a mop in the face.

It took nearly three hours and involved rounding up nearly every able witch and wizard in Hogsmeade, but eventually the tide began to turn and the number of brooms began to drop to manageable levels.

It had taken so long because several storekeepers had failed to observe the need to vanish the broomstick and had insisted on expressing their displeasure, at having their shops ransacked, by using enough Exploding Curses to emulate a small Muggle war. Several overeager housewives had also been reluctant to get rid of something they really wanted to have for themselves and thus tried to smuggle the brooms back to their houses, rather than Vanish them.

The big problem, however, had arisen midway during the clean up operation when news filtered in that a pair of Death Eaters had been captured in Satissa Lane. Constable Troy's superior, Inspector Barnaby, had cordoned off the area until Dumbledore arrived. It did not take long for the headmaster to understand why the Inspector had requested his presence, rather than call the Ministry.

The first Death Eater was a new recruit, a graduate from Durmstrang that Dumbledore thought looked familiar. The man had been strung up from a streetlamp like a side of beef. Dumbledore had to admit that Harry had done a spectacular job of subduing his opponent so readily.

The second Death Eater, however...

It was only thanks to the first Death Eater that Dumbledore was able to identify the remains of Bellatrix Lestrange. Harry had done a thorough job of brutalizing her face beyond recognition. Keeping this quiet from the Ministry would not be easy.

Dumbledore was able to convince the Inspector, whose daughter Cully had just started at Hogwarts, that it would be in everyone's best interests to leave Harry's involvement out of any official reports. Tom Barnaby was an intelligent and dependable man that understood the need for discretion in matters such as this. It also didn't hurt, so he said, that Cully had developed a bit of a crush on a certain black-haired, green-eyed, sixth-year housemate of hers.

As far as the rest of the wizarding world was concerned, Bellatrix Lestrange was killed during a duel with Auror Nymphadora Tonks when a stray curse caused a support beam in the ceiling to fall and crush her head.

Once that potential disaster had been averted the Ministry had been called in. With several dozen Aurors arriving to take charge of the situation, Dumbledore was able to conscript them into lending their aid in dealing with the broomsticks. This allowed the Order to concentrate almost exclusively on their search for Harry, much to everyone's relief, though Fred and George seemed a bit disappointed.

Despite this, however, there was still no sign of Harry. Or Tonks.

"Professor Dumbledore, sir?"

Dumbledore was shaken out of his wonderings by a familiar voice. He turned to find himself faced, yet again this day, with the face of Constable Troy.

"Oh dear," he sighed, realizing that his presence was required once more at the village jail. Indicating for the Constable to lead the way, he asked, "What is it this time, Gavin?"

"You'll have to see it to believe it, sir," Troy replied.

This proved quite accurate, as Dumbledore would never have expected to find his Potions Master, Severus Snape, stilling impatiently in a Hogsmeade jail cell. Well, perhaps he might have believed it possible, but he would never for the life of him have believed that Snape would be butt naked at the time.

"Severus, have you been drinking your experimental potions again?" he asked.

"Potter," Snape ground out through clenched teeth.

Dumbledore approached the bars of the cell and asked, "You've seen him?"

Snape glowered unhappily, displeased that Dumbledore was more concerned with locating Harry than with punishing the young man for whatever insult had resulted in this... situation.

"No. This is all his fault."

"Severus," Dumbledore admonished.

"It is!" insisted Snape, jumping angrily to his feet. The effect was ruined as he was simultaneously trying to cover his lower regions with one hand and hide his Dark Mark with the other. As a result he looked rather too hunched over to portray his usual intimidating self. "Earlier he Vanished the clothes of three of my Slytherins."

"Yes; Mssrs Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle, I believe."

Snape glared at Dumbledore and stated flatly, "Twenty two minutes and six seconds."

Dumbledore blinked in incomprehension. "I beg your pardon?"

"He did a lot more than simply Vanish their clothes, headmaster," Snape explained with forced patience. "Every twenty two minutes and six seconds, exactly and without fail, whatever they are wearing disappears. Everything."

"And in what way does this relate to your being here?"

"It's spreading, just like those damned brooms," Snape grouched.



"Excuse me?" Dumbledore asked, not sure he had heard correctly.

"Everyone that had come into contact with Draco and his companions since they returned to the castle is... infected... by whatever Potter did to them," reported Snape, teeth bared in a snarl. He made the mistake of waving both arms about in emphasis, before remembering his current state of undress. His black eyes burned with even more hatred for Harry than usual as he hastily covered himself. "Half of my house are trapped in their dormitories because their clothes keep disappearing before they can even get out of the dungeons!"

Dumbledore struggled not to smile as he asked rhetorically, "And yourself?"

"I was coming to inform you of the situation when... twenty two minutes and six seconds," Snape nodded in confirmation, now sounding just barely resigned. "After I was... arrested... the Constable was kind enough to conjure me a set of replacement clothes, but that was over half an hour ago."

"Which would explain your current state of undress," noted Dumbledore, allowing a hint of humour to bleed into his voice as he regarded his frustrated colleague.

"It's all Potter's fault," Snape asserted unhappily.

Dumbledore had to bite his tongue to keep from smiling, fully aware that if Harry were present and in command of his faculties, he would likely find Snape's predicament to be hilarious. The words divine retribution sprang to mind, as Harry still considered his disastrous Occlumency lessons with the Potions Master the previous year as something akin to mental rape. Having Severus laid bare like this, literally, would be guaranteed to put a smile on his face.

"Ah, Harry," he muttered to himself, arranging to have Snape released, "My mother told me there would be days like this. If only you did not produce them so regularly."

TBC...

## **Flying Without A Broom Teething Problems**

### Chapter Eight - Teething Problems -

Nymphadora Tonks was dreaming. Or at least, she fervently hoped she was. That would be the best, easiest and sanest explanation of how she had found herself in this predicament.

It was very noisy, wherever they were. Island Sauna? Something like that, Tonks had been a smidgeon distracted at the time, not surprising all things considered. Harry had somehow managed to accomplish something even Dumbledore could not and had Apparated them both halfway around the world. And he wasn't even tired afterwards. Quite the contrary actually, as he was currently bouncing around like an overly excitable three-year old.

The forest was a lush and vivid green that Tonks had never before encountered. It was so alive, more so than the forests back in merry old England were. The sounds of this jungle, it seemed too crowded to be considered a forest, were loud, insistent and all encompassing. There must have been whole flocks of birds hiding in the bushes, judging by the volume of bird song, though what the hell they could find to sing about at a moment like this, Tonks could not even begin to comprehend.

"At least things are getting better," commented Harry, not sounding the least bit out of breath, nor looking even the slightest bit tired by the furious pace they were running at.

"Better? Better?! Better?!?! How is this better?!" Tonks shot back incredulously, trying to keep her breathing regular as she and Harry belted between the thick knots of trees, bushes and other green stuff.

"Well, we aren't being chased by those Compy things any more, right?"

"THAT'S BECAUSE THEY WERE GUTTED BY THE PACK OF VELOCIRAPTORS!!!"

Tonks quickly glanced over her shoulder, only long enough to catch a glimpse of their pursuers, before turning her attention back to the treacherous terrain. There wasn't time to get a proper count, but she had seen several of the sleek predators darting to and fro, following behind them.

She had loved dinosaurs as a child, pestering her parents to take her to see the grand fossilized

skeletons that stood in the entrance to the Natural History Museum. That childhood fascination had dimmed somewhat over the years, particularly after she first saw a dragon, but she still sometimes returned to marvel at the splendour that these beast must have existed in. Why, there had been a wonderful documentary on them, screened by the BBC during the summer, which Tonks had watched avidly on her father's telly.

Which is why she could identify the pack of velociraptors for what they were. How this particular breed of dinosaur could be running around in the twentieth century was beyond her. Not to mention all the other dinosaurs. That, however, was the least of Tonks' worries at the moment. Right now, top of her list, was getting off this island alive and in one piece. Which was proving damnably difficult for the young Auror.

She couldn't Apparate herself and Harry to safety, for the simple reason that she had only the vaguest idea of where they were. Getting from A to B was impossible when you didn't have a clue where A was to begin with. Besides which, they were on an island in the middle of the ocean, who knew how far from anywhere she knew in England. If she did try and Apparate them, chances were they would appear with a pop above the water and Tonks wasn't too sure Harry would be able to swim properly, intoxicated as he was.

Looking forward, through the dense foliage, Tonks spotted what could be salvation. There, not too far away, was a particularly tall tree that they might be able to climb up. The raptors were obviously very intelligent, for non-Magical creatures, but she doubted they could chase after them up a tree trunk. The only problem was getting there without being brought down by their pursuers. Fortunately the raptors seemed to be toying with them at the moment, otherwise she and Harry would likely been eaten.

"This way!" she shouted, changing direction so that she was angling towards the small clearing where the tree was located. She waved for Harry to follow her and called, "This way, Harry! This way!"

"All right, all right," Harry said, vanishing from sight. He immediately reappeared right in front of her, not missing a stride in his relaxed run. "No need to shout, Niks."

Biting her tongue to prevent a scathing comment, Tonks pumped her legs for all she was worth. They burst from between the densely clustered trees in short order, Tonks almost crashing into Harry as he skidded to an abrupt halt right before the tree.

Unfortunately, the raptors were right on their heels and emerged into the clearing before either of them had a chance to begin climbing. Fortunately the half dozen dinosaurs did not immediately charge them, instead choosing to slowly stalk towards the panting witch and her charge. Tonks turned to face the approaching pack, wand held at the ready.

"Stay behind me, Harry," she ordered.

"Okay," agreed Harry, taking an exaggerated step so that he was positioned behind her. A moment later, much to Tonks' chagrin, he commented, "Y'know, Niks, you have a nice bum."

"Harry!"

A screeching hiss from one of the raptors, still a dozen or so yards away, startled Tonks. of its own accord her wand jerked in that direction and a corona of blue and violet light erupted from its tip.

"*Visrate !*"

The spell, a nasty one that by rights should have killed the raptor it struck, knocked the beast off its feet. It fell in a sprawl, but recovered with alarming quickness, angrily scrabbling back up.

Seeing that their pack mate was not seriously injured, the raptors began to circle them, spreading out. Tonks cursed under her breath, seeing that she would not be able to take them all out if they attacked at one. Aurors were trained to develop some of the fastest reflexes in the wizarding world, but even then they could not face down six simultaneous attacks coming at them from three sides.

"Bloody hell!" she spat, sweeping her wand from one side to the other. The raptors, clearly understanding that the ten inches of oak she held was a weapon of some sort, paused briefly but soon resumed their advance. Swallowing hard Tonks called to Harry, who she hoped was still behind her. "Harry, start climbing the tree. Go as high as you can. I'll hold them off as long as I can."

Which wouldn't be very long, she mentally observed as one of the raptors bared its jaws wide and squawked at her. She aimed the wand in its direction, only to have a raptor on the other side of the diminishing half-circle do the same.

"Much rather stay here with you, Niks," replied Harry, startling her with his closeness. He was almost pressed against her back, his breath whispering in her ear, his... she almost dropped her wand in surprise as his hands clamped down on her rear and gave a provocative squeeze. "Have I mentioned you have a nice bum?"

Her distraction at being groped was what the raptors had been waiting for. With a triumphant hiss the nearest raptor, five yards to their right, crouched low and sprung at them, claws outstretched and gleaming in the sunlight. Tonks tried to fire a hex at it, but there wasn't time.

"No!"

Already cringing in anticipation for the raptor's impact, Tonks got the surprise of her life as the snarling dinosaur disappeared in an explosion of feathers. A bewildered looking turkey landed with an unceremonious thump at her feet. This time, she did drop her wand, which landed on the turkey's head and elicited a startled cluck.

"Gobble, gobble, gobble," sounded Harry, leaning against her and peering over her shoulder at the dinosaur-turned-fowl. His hands slipped off her buttocks and circled around her waist. "Lunch is served, Madam Niks."

"Wha?"

That was about as articulate as Tonks could manage at the moment.

The turkey, quite understandably, was panicking. For some reason it seemed to think Tonks was the cause of its problems and had set about trying to peck her to death. That might have worked had it been attacking something other than her dragon hide boots, skilfully disguised as a pair of sneakers.

The five remaining raptors, on the other hand, had frozen in place. They were standing so perfectly still you could almost believe that they had been hit with a full body bind. It took a few moments before they seemed to shake themselves free of the shock that had temporarily paralyzed them. Their heads twisted and turned from side to side as they exchanged glances, probably trying to determine their next course of action.

Tonks, who was beginning to get annoyed with the turkey, quickly scooped up her wand and prepared to strike before the startled beasts could regroup. She was pleasantly surprised, however, when the raptors seemed to take one look at her and then took off like bats out of hell.

"We - we scared them off?" she asked, disbelievingly, as they disappeared into the forest.

"Not us," Harry corrected in an odd tone of voice. He released his hold on her waist and stepped in front of her, turning to look up and over her shoulder. In something that sounded like awe, he said, "Something bigger and meaner."

A sudden feeling of dread running up her spine, increasing in strength as she noted that even the turkey had grown silent for some reason, Tonks turned around. The sight before her was enough to turn her knees to jelly and leave her legs with the consistency of limp spaghetti.

She tried to speak, to vocalise her thoughts, but was less than successful. This probably had something to do with the fact that her brain was suffering from shock induced catatonia.

"It's... it's... it's... it's... it's..."

"It's a Tyrannosaurus Rex!" exclaimed Harry, sounding delighted, like a little boy for whom Christmas had just come early and in conjunction with his birthday as well.

Even after Harry's shout, it took Tonks several seconds before it really sank in. Yes, there, not five metres away, peering at them from around the tree she had intended for them to climb, was the co-called king of the dinosaurs. She had always thought dragons were big, but this thing would have given even a Hungarian Horntail a run for its money. Even without wings and fiery breath. Her mind, which was still not up and running properly, abruptly unstuck and backtracked a bit. Peering at them?

Tonks looked up, and up, and up, in dismay. The Tyrannosaurus' gaze was fixed upon Harry and her, its eyeballs as big as her head. "Oh shit, it's looking at us."

"Don't move!" Harry told her, freezing in place, "It can't see us if we don't move!"

Unfortunately, Harry was shouting out this piece of advice at the top of his lungs, which no doubt negated any possible security they might have gained by staying still

"Quiet," she hissed, also arresting all motion as the T-Rex continued to eyeball them.

"What?" asked Harry, not shouting, but still rather loud.

"Be quiet," she whispered.

"Why?"

Tonks turned and glared at him, snapping loudly, "Because it can hear you!"

Her impending argument with Harry was cut off at the knees as the T-Rex gave a deafening bellow, a pitch so deep it caused her very bones to tremble.

Harry, completely unfazed by this bone-rattling roar, stared up at the T-Rex and observed, "My, what big teeth you have."

The earth shook as the T-Rex took two lumbering steps forward, clearly intent on having a Harry snack. Tonks, who was not about to let that happen, whipped her wand around and fired off a Stunning Charm at its snout.

*"Stupefy !"*

The bolt of red magic hit its target exactly where she intended it to. Unfortunately it did produce the results she had been hoping for. The T-Rex took several thunderous steps back, shaking its massive head back and forth, as if it were being bothered by a swarm of flies or something similarly insignificant.

"Nice shot," commented Harry, throwing a companionably arm over her shoulder.

"Thanks," Tonks accepted, shrugging his arm off.

The T-Rex expressed its displeasure at being cursed by taking a menacing step forward and roaring even louder than before.

Harry watched with fascination and noted, "I think you pissed it off."

"I think you're right."

By now the T-Rex had finished its display of annoyance and had focused its baleful eyes upon the two very, very tiny humans standing in front of it. It growled, a deep rumble that was almost as unnerving as its roar, and bared its gleaming teeth in a display that put Tonks in mind of a set of steak knives.

She swallowed and began to back away, grabbing Harry by the hand. "I think we should start running now,"

Harry looked at her, disappointment etched on his face, and whined, "D'we have to?"

Tonks barely spared him an incredulous glare before turning tail and running, Harry dragging along behind her, as though the devil were on her heels. All things considered, she would have preferred that be true, rather than face off against a fully-grown monstrosity that even Hagrid would have had trouble considering cute.

The T-Rex, seeing its prey dwindling into the distance, set off in pursuit. Tonks, through some morbid fascination, glanced backwards just in time to see it stomp the turkey into the ground as it began lumbering after them. Fortunately the forest was thick enough that the trees slowed the T-Rex down, otherwise its ground-eating strides would have allowed it to catch them in less than a minute.

"I think we have a problem coming up," Harry suddenly said after a minute of frantic running.

"What?" Tonks asked incredulously, too terrified of the T-Rex to be bothered with the stitch in her side all this running had given her. "Another one? Worse than this?"

Harry pointed forward, directing Tonks' attention to the fact that the forest would soon be coming to an end, opening onto a level field that would offer no obstacles to slow the T-Rex behind them.

"Bloody hell!" she moaned. She glanced at Harry, who was running effortlessly by her side, and ordered, "Harry, I really think it's time for us to leave!"

"Y'do?"

"Now, Harry!"

"But we haven't played with the--"

"Harry!" she interrupted angrily, "Apparate us out of here! Now!"

Harry sighed unhappily, but relented. He reached out and grabbed her hand, just as they crossed over the verge of the forest edge. The T-Rex, sensing that its victory was imminent, doubled its pace and burst through the tree line, spraying broken branches in all directions. Three swift, long strides brought it level with its prey and it reared its head up in preparation to chomp down.

It was understandably disappointed when Tonks and Harry disappeared with a pop.

---

"Gods, that was close."

"Nah," Harry dismissed Tonks' relief with a negligent wave, "Missed us by inches!"

Tonks, who was sure she had felt the T-Rex's breath on her neck just before they had Apparated, was less than convinced. She was bent over as she tried to regain her breath. She only hoped that Harry had brought them to someplace not populated by a plethora of supposedly extinct lizards that either wanted to kill and eat them, or just plain kill them.

"Close," she repeated with certainty. Feeling somewhat recovered she looked up and around, asking, "Where are we now?"

"Hollywood!" exclaimed Harry, clapping his hands happily.

Tonks looked at him dumbly. She had to think for several seconds before it sank in, once again feeling as if the floor had been pulled out from under her. "Los Angeles?"

"We get to see the stars!" Harry enthused, nodding his head up and down to the point where he was little more than a black topped blur. "Without telescopes!"

"Joy," Tonks muttered, completely without enthusiasm.

Los Angeles might not have been as exotically deadly as Sonar Island, or whatever it was called, but she was already starting to worry what mischief Harry could get them into. Dinosaurs might be dangerous in their own right, but they were not nearly as perilous as a trip into a foreign city filled to the brim with lunatic Muggles.

Her wildly active imagination, which was currently working overtime, was effectively derailed when Harry kissed her. As before, the kiss was filled with passion, desire and lust. Harry crushed her to him, both hands reaching round and squeezing her rump as he explored her mouth with avid enthusiasm.

"Come on, Niks," Harry said with that devil-may-care grin after breaking the kiss. "I wanna see stars!"

He gave her rear a parting squeeze before running off in search of stars to ogle. Tonks, feeling somewhat dazed, stared after him, not quite comprehending what had just happened.

She shook her head and muttered, "I'm already seeing stars."

Glancing around she abruptly realized that she had, yet again, lost sight of Harry. Where the boy got the energy to run around like this was a mystery. Then the fact that Harry had just disappeared into a Muggle city, without an escort, and *still* tanked full of Aquila, sank in.

"This would be really funny," she sighed, "if it weren't happening to me."

TBC...



**Flying Without A Broom**  
**City of Angels**

Chapter Nine  
- City of Angels -

Tonks was in a right panic. Harry had run off, again, somewhere in Los Angeles and was somehow causing more mayhem and chaos than had a right to exist outside of Muggle movies. Oddly enough, the locals seemed to be taking everything in stride - no doubt thanks to Hollywood's influence.

"Where the hell does he get all the energy?"

Having retained her disguise as Nikki Fraser, but discarding her robes, just in case Harry decided to come looking for her. Tonks was currently running down what must have been a main street. She was trying as best she could to catch up (or even catch sight of) with her wayward charge.

That Harry was so far ahead of her that she couldn't even see him, did not worry her. It was not as if she could lose his trail. The swath of chaos Harry was leaving in his wake made that impossible.

Much to her amazement, nothing had exploded yet (though she was sure it was only a matter of time). In fact, Tonks would have welcomed some explosions right then. Listening to random strangers suddenly burst into song was just plain... disturbing. One more off-key rendition of "I'm A Little Teapot" and Tonks was going to start throwing a liberal amount of Silencing Charms around.

Tonks had always considered herself to be, in general, a non-violent sort of person. Baring circumstances where someone was trying to hurt her or her loved ones, Tonks was more than happy to live and let live.

Right now she was reconsidering that policy.

"I'm a little teapot, short and stout..."

"Aaaargh!! *Silencio* !"

"...here is my handle, here is my spout..."

"*Silencio* ! *Silencio* ! *Silencio* !"

"Tip me over and pour me out--"

"Damn it, will you *SHUT UP* !"

"I'm a little teapot--"

"*SHUT UP* !!"

"Excuse me, ma'am."

"--short and stout--"

*SHUT UP* !!!"

"Miss? Excuse me?"

"--here is my handle, here is my spout!"

"AAAARGGH !!! *Shut the hell up* !"

"Miss..."

"*WHAT* ?!" Tonks rounded on whoever it was that was trying to get her attention.

-oOo-

Harry was having *so - much - fun* ! In fact, he could not remember ever having even half as much fun as he was having right now. Except, perhaps, when he had recently presided over Ron and Luna's wedding. He had enjoyed finally getting his friends together like they so desperately wanted to be, even if Ron (joker that he was) pretended otherwise.

But now, now he was having so much more fun than he had ever thought possible.

Hollywood was amazing! Simply amazing! There was so much to see, so much to do. And everyone was so friendly as well, so willing to join him in song and dance.

The only downside was that he had lost track of Niks again. Honestly.

He decided, thinking about the cute witch that had accompanied him, that it was time to abandon his current playmates. It was a pity to leave these wonderfully enchanted cars. They were spinning gracefully around the plaza he was standing in - doing the most amazing ballet (to the Blue Danube, of course), but he felt that finding Niks was more important.

After all, he had heard and seen countless times in the few movies (which he had stolen glimpses of while staying at the Dursleys) that Los Angeles was one of the most dangerous cities in the world. The only place that seemed to have half as many troubles was New York, but that was an entirely different kettle of fish.

There were always armies of shadowy government agencies lurking about, broods of thirsty vampires, packs of rabid werewolves, invading alien creatures, rampaging mutant monsters and all manner of violent criminal elements running rampant through Los Angeles and its surrounds. He couldn't sit back, so to speak, and leave Niks to brave these dangers on her own.

Twouldn't be British, after all, eh, what!

Besides which, she had such a magnificent arse. He simply would not risk running the chance of anyone, other than himself of course, having a go at that wonderful rear. If some upstart were to so much as lay a hand on his dear Niks' delightful buttocks, well, Harry would simply have to thrash the miscreant to within an inch of his life.

Saying goodbye to his new friends, in particular a very enthusiastic steamroller that was trying valiantly to pirouette, Harry began to retrace his steps. Niks had to be behind him, after all, probably too busy enjoying sights to keep up with his energetic pace. He'd have to see about giving her a Pepperup Potion, and maybe some Fire-whiskey, so that she would have enough vigour not to fall behind anymore.

It was then, as he turned, that something caught Harry's eye. All thoughts of finding the missing Nikki Fraser, not to mention her charming backside, fled from his mind.

This was going to be *so - much - fun !*

-oOo-

Contrary to popular belief, there did indeed exist an organisation known as the Men In Black.

These individuals would frequently appear soon after anything peculiar happened. They were known for acting rather strangely by ordinary people's standards. They were only ever seen wearing black suits (hence the name). They had a tendency of flashing bright lights in people's faces and thus rewriting their memories.

Naturally the Muggles got the completely wrong impression.

For some reason they thought it was something to do with an alien cover up.

They were almost right.

The Men In Black were, in fact, employees of the American Ministry of Magic, specifically the Bureau of Muggle Memory Modification, often described as counterpart to the British Obliviator Squads.

It was an easy job, at least compared to what the Obliviators had to put up with. Muggles, in this day and age, were more willing to entertain the idea that it was aliens in their flying saucers that left the crop circle in the middle of the wheat field. Science and rational explanations did not cover incompetent warlocks and their rogue dervishes.

Though nobody really understood how scientific and rational explanations could account for why the supposed aliens bothered to cross the gulf between stars and then waste time drawing crop circles. Then again, Muggles were prone to believe just about anything that caught their fancy.

Of course, compared to Britain, America had a great many more witches and wizards running around and causing trouble for the overworked and underpaid Men In Black. Just this morning, since coming on duty, Agent Smith and his partner, Agent Jones, had found themselves casting one Memory Charm after another with hardly a moment's rest in between.

Apparently somebody had decided to try a hand at Muggle baiting.

First there had been an outbreak of what Smith decided to call the Twister Dog Syndrome. Dozens of two foot high twisters had sprung up from out of nowhere, causing incredible amounts of collateral damage to the trousers of anyone they encountered. It wasn't until one of the twisters came to an abrupt halt that anyone realised the cursed things were actually alive.

Once they stopped spinning the twisters were revealed to be magically conjured dogs of some sort. Oddly enough the creatures jumped around on their back legs, slobbering, drooling and gibbering incomprehensibly. It almost sounded as though they were trying to talk, but that seemed unlikely.

The biggest problem, however, was that the voracious little critters seemed to have bottomless pits for stomachs. They devoured just about everything in their paths (but fortunately not any of the people), seemingly quite partial to trousers and entire hotdog stands.

The Muggles, for some unknown reason, seemed more disturbed by these encounters than was warranted. Admittedly, most Muggles did not react well to their first encounter with rogue magic, but Smith did not understand their reactions. There were many great, not to mention high pitched, screams of "Taz!" whenever one of the twisters paused long enough for anyone to get a clear look. It was almost as if they recognised the creatures, though that was impossible.

In any case, Smith and Jones had worked their magical memory modification and soon had all the Muggles involved (including those who had only witnessed the outbreak) convinced that it was a result of a runaway lawnmower. Dealing with the twisters was more difficult, mostly the part when the Men In Black had to chase them down, but simple Vanishing Charms were enough to dispel the them.

Unfortunately, it hadn't stopped there.

After the Twister Dog Syndrome had been dealt with, the two Men In Black had almost immediately found themselves facing another problem. This, Smith thought, could only be described as the Dirty Harry Syndrome. To put it simply, every police officer in the area had started impersonating Clint Eastwood.

"Do you feel lucky... punk?" seemed to be the phrase of the day, not to mention long winded dissertations on the merits of whatever handgun the officer in question happened to be carrying.

Smith felt the situation was utterly hilarious and, at the same time, potentially lethal. This was because the various would-be Dirty Harry's began chasing after any potential criminal elements with almost rabid fanaticism. Luckily nobody had been shot, but there had been several close calls.

Now the troublemaker, whoever it might be, had started cursing random strangers to burst into horribly off-key renditions of "I'm A Little Teapot." Quite frankly, at this point, Smith was beginning to wonder what manner of Aquila the cause of all this singing had consumed. Nobody could think up things like this unless they were high.

Having just Obliviated a pair of Muggle businessmen, one of whom had been cursed, the other merely watching, Smith rounded a corner just in time to see a cute young girl start screaming invectives at another singing teapot.

"Tip me over and pour me out--"

"Damn it, will you *SHUT UP* !"

"I'm a little teapot--"

"*SHUT UP* !!"

Smith, wondering if this day would ever end, walked up behind the girl. She was so engrossed in yelling at the object of her frustration that she completely failed to notice his approach. Speaking up, so that she could hear him over the singing, he tried to catch her attention, "Excuse me, ma'am."

"--short and stout--"

*SHUT UP !!!*" the girl yelled, stomping her feet.

"Miss? Excuse me?" Smith tentatively tried.

"--here is my handle, here is my spout!"

"*AAAARGGH !!!*" the girl was all but tearing her hair out. "*Shut the hell up* !"

Smith was worried that he might have to intervene before she became violent. It would not do for the Muggles to start hurting each other because some joker of a wizard couldn't control himself. He reached out and placed a hand on the girl's shoulder and tried to turn her around to face him, "Miss..."

The young woman, she looked about sixteen or so, rounded to face him. Smith immediately forgot his concern for the singing Muggle and began to worry about his own safety. Frankly, the girl was looking homicidal.

"*WHAT ?!*"

"Could you look at this for a second, please?" he asked, holding up his wand in preparation to cast another Memory Charm. He hoped that would calm her down, otherwise there'd be tonnes of paperwork for him to fill out later.

The girl glanced at his wand and, to Smith's surprise, the blood drained out of her face. It was not the kind of reaction he was used to seeing from the Muggles he worked on. Usually they stared at the wand with blank incomprehension, or occasionally worried apprehension.

A moment later the blood drained out of his own face, most likely in response to the instep of her foot impacting between his legs.

-oOo-

Harry was panting slightly after climbing the steps. Not from any feelings of exertion or exhaustion, but rather from sheer excitement. He was outside an honest to goodness police station! Just like he had seen on the telly, when the Dursleys left him alone in the house.

He hurried inside, eagerly taking in the sight of everything before him. It was different from what he had been expecting, but that was probably because this was Los Angeles and not merry ol' England. It was hot, humid, stifling and there were a great many unhappy people shouting back and forth.

The cause of everyone's displeasure, from what he could make out, was the fact that only three police officers were working the front desk. There were nearly two dozen people waiting to be attended to, so things were progressing rather slowly.

Stepping up and taking a place at the back of the shortest line, Harry impatiently waited his turn. He tried, very hard, to restrain his eagerness, but could not stop himself from humming a perky tune and practically bouncing in place. His grin, he felt, would have lit up the room if it were not the middle of the day.

"Next!" called one policeman, sounding very bored with his job.

Harry began rocking on his heels, still grinning happily as he buried his hands in his trouser pockets. He found that twiddling his thumbs was rather boring after several minutes. Unable to help himself, he began to whistle, recalling the catchy tune that had proved to popular at Hogwarts the previous year.

Unfortunately the other people in line with him were not very appreciative of his rendition of "Weasley is our king". Most of them settled for glaring angrily at him, while several others muttered under their breaths. One wizen old crone, however, jabbed her walking stick in his direction and told him to shut his gob.

Of course, she *did* use bigger words, and more of them as well, but that was the gist of her demand. Feeling a little sad, especially when everyone else nodded in agreement, Harry ceased his whistling and feigned a pout.

"Next!"

Quickly growing bored of staring at his shoes, not to mention growing bored of the feeling of sticking his lower lip out in a pout, Harry decided to display the famed stoicism of the British. Lifting his head up, he stuck his nose in the air to emphasise his stiff upper lip.

"Next!"

Once staring up at the ceiling, it was a natural progression for Harry to begin counting the many tiles there. He had just reached two hundred and fifty six when he decided to start again, this time classifying the tiles according to their shape and texture as he went.

He managed to get as far as one hundred and twenty eight before growing bored again. He dropped his head, ceasing his examination of the ceiling and began searching for something else to occupy his time as he waited.

"Next!"

He contemplated the idea of playing dominoes with those standing in front of him in the queue, but that idea fell short when he realised that he was next in line. Moving on, he then emerged himself in the fantasy of all the fun he would be having once the police let him inside the station's firing range.

He was busy enough the part where he charmed all the targets to look like Malfoy, Snape, Fudge, Umbridge and several other people he didn't like all that much, when the person in front of him turned and walked away.

"Next!"

As eager as Hagrid presented with a dragon egg, Harry bounded to the counter.

-oOo-

Tonks stared down in alarm at the wizard currently curled into a ball at her feet. It had been an instinctive reaction, completely unplanned, in response to his attempt to Obliviate her. She had recognised who, or rather what, he was when he had asked her to look at his wand. It was hard not to, considering the suit. It was only when she saw the wand itself that she realized what he planned to do.

So she kicked him.

There.

She only hoped the other Men In Black would understand the necessity of what she had done. She was in the middle of chasing after her charge, who was openly defying half the laws of magic, and could not afford to have her memory of what was happening restructured. Besides which, she was a witch, not a Muggle.

"What's going on here?"

Tonks looked up and found herself face to face with another Men In Black agent. This one was older, easily twice the younger one's age, and was gazing at her in a stern, uncompromising manner.

"I'm a witch! He was going to Obliviate me!" she blurted, wanting to explain everything before the new agent also tried to modify her memory. "I panicked. Sorry."

"You're not from around here," the man said, bending down to help his slowly recovering partner to his feet. The younger man was wheezing and occasionally gasping out pleas for mercy.

"I'm from England."

"Here on holiday?"

Tonks shook her head and began to explain. "Business, actually. I'm an Auror."

The agent glanced up at her, an evaluating look, and then went back to helping his comrade. "What's your business here in L.A.?" he asked. "You'd better not be the one responsible for all this trouble."

"I'm not! In fact, I'm trying to find the cause of it all!"

"Oh?"

"It's kind of complicated," she began, kneeling down to help. Fortunately the first agent was still in too much pain to recognise her, otherwise he would have likely run away from her. "Have you ever heard of Harry Potter?"

The agent nodded thoughtfully. "Yeah, some kind of folk hero to you British. Killed a dark wizard when he was a baby, 'bout fifteen years ago?"

Tonks sighed in relief. At least she wouldn't have to explain everything - which would take up time she simply didn't have. No telling what havoc Harry might wreak if she didn't catch up to him. She decided to get straight to the point, not bothering to fill in any of the blanks. That she could do if they had the time.

"Unfortunately he didn't kill the Dark Lord, but only defeated him. Now the nutcase and his followers are back and out looking for revenge. Naturally, Harry's the first on the list," she told him, speaking in a brisk tone. "I was assigned to watch over him during the school term, thanks to my metamorph abilities."

"You're a metamorphmagus?" the younger agent wheezed, apparently having mostly recovered her attack. His face was still a bit pale, but he appeared coherent enough to follow the conversation.

Tonks nodded and shifted her features back to what she normally looked like, as well aging



forward to her correct age. She grabbed the man's hand and helped hoist him to his feet. She stepped back, giving them enough time to take in her adult appearance, before returning to her Nikki Fraser persona.

The older agent nodded briskly and asked, "So what went wrong?"

"Unfortunately a Death Eater slipped some Black Lotus into Harry's drink while we were at the local pub," she explained with a deep sigh. "Now he's higher than a kite."

"Wait a sec," protested the younger agent. "You're telling us that all this," he waved his free hand to encompass the street they were standing on, "all this trouble is being caused by one, *one*, tanked up schoolboy?"

"That about sums it up," she confirmed.

"I gotta tell you, partner," the younger agent looked at the older man, "this rates about a nine point nine on my weird shit-o-meter."

The older agent ignored the comment and focused on Tonks. "What's your name, young lady?"

"Tonks, but I'm currently going by Nikki Fraser. Use that."

"Got you. I'm Agent Jones and this," he indicated his partner, "is Agent Smith."

"Pleased to meet you," Tonks acknowledged, shaking the agent's outstretched hand. She looked at Smith, who was still clutching his abused privates, and apologised, "Sorry about earlier."

Smith gave a pained smile and shook his head, "No problem. Happens all the time."

Jones interposed, "So, what can you tell us about Mister Potter?"

-oOo-

Harry looked unhappily at the police officer. This was *not* fun. Not at all. He narrowed his eyes and glared at the man, deciding that he was going to have to punish him for this. The stodgy oaf was being unaccountably rude and refused him entrance to the inner works of the station. Said he was too young. That he should be in school.

Huh.

Of course, Harry couldn't just go ahead and cave the idiot's skull in. He would probably get into a *wee bit* of trouble if he did. Besides which, if he did that, the other coppers (Harry had seen enough on the telly to know the proper way to address American police) would likely be less than thrilled.

Which left the frustrated and disappointed Boy-Who-Lived without any means of expressing his displeasure and no way to get where he wanted to go - inside the police station.

Then, like the proverbial light bulb going off, a solution presented itself.

"I'll be back," he said calmly.

The policeman stared at him blankly, perhaps a bit incredulously, as Harry turned on a heel and briskly exited the building. He calmly descended the steps that he had so hurriedly climbed earlier, focusing his magic in on himself as he walked.

Why should he get into trouble for doing something he wanted? After everything he had done, not to mention everything that had been done to him, Harry felt that he deserved to have his wishes catered to. Not all the time of course, he wasn't a stuck up aristocratic ponce like Malfoy, but it would be nice to get what he wanted once or twice.

And since Malfoy was the spoilt brat that always got what *he* wanted, then Harry would simply borrow the little snot's face for the time being. After all, what better way to get what you want, than by becoming someone who always got what he wanted?

Reaching the bottom of the stairs leading to the station, Harry again turned on his heel, marching right back up the steps he had just descended. His magic wove the effect he wanted around him with each step he took, the illusion so complete that not even Dumbledore would be able to penetrate the disguise.

Besides which, taking on the appearance of his school nemesis, Draco would allow Harry the chance to do something he had always wanted to try. He could, for once, get to play the part of the "bad guy". That always looked so much more fun on the telly than being the hero.

Heroes had to obey the rules. Harry was tired of obeying the rules. Not that he always did, but you get the idea. The chance to do what he wanted, with all the repercussions falling, not on Harry's head for once, but rather on Draco's, was too good an opportunity to pass up. He should have done this years ago.

He strode into the station, entering with a flourish that drew all eyes to him. He walked straight to the counter and shouldered the person standing there out of his way. The man protested, but was easily silenced with a glare. Harry turned to regard the officer that had denied him entrance earlier.

"Get in line, kid," the man snapped in annoyance.

Harry raised an elegant, aristocratic, blonde eyebrow, his steel grey eyes focused on the man, and gave the most disdainful sneer he could manage. He adjusted his expensive, elegantly tailored clothes and waited. If he had to pretend to be Draco for this, then he'd damn well play the part to the full.

The officer scowled and leaned forward to berate him. Harry lashed out with a short right cross that snapped the policeman's head back with a resounding crack.

Cradling his bruised knuckles, Harry watched with delighted satisfaction as the policeman blinked once, apparently in surprise, and then rolled his eyes up into his head. The man then slumped bonelessly to the floor, a bruise already forming on his broken jaw, completely dead to the world.

Smiling grimly, Harry regarded the stunned witnesses.

"Get out."

-oOo-

"You sure you didn't have any of that aquila yourself?"

Tonks resisted the urge to kick Agent Smith in the bollocks again. She might have been able to talk her way out of it the first time, but she doubted Agent Jones would forgive her if she did it again - despite however satisfying it would feel.

She had just finished giving the two Men In Black an abridged summary of her day. Starting from when Harry had unwittingly consumed a Black Lotus butterbeer, the wild chase through Hogsmeade, the little incident of being Apparated halfway around the world, almost being eaten by some dinosaurs and now, finally, their arrival in Los Angeles.

If she hadn't experienced it herself, she wouldn't believe a word of it.

Apparently, neither did Agent Smith.

"He's that powerful?" asked Jones.

"More," Tonks replied with a gusty sigh. They had been following the trail of chaos Harry had been leaving, the Men In Black abandoning their attempts at containment until after Harry had been brought to heel. Unfortunately, Harry had been moving at a brisk clip and covered quite a lot of ground in the time since Tonks had lost track of him.

"More?" asked Smith, incredulously, "According to you, he managed to Apparate the both of you clear across the Atlantic as easily as most people would cross a room. How could he possibly be even *more* powerful?"

Tonks gave the man a level stare and said, "Because right now, he's only playing."

"Playing?" he repeated dumbly.

"Yes, playing around. Having fun. Enjoying himself," she reiterated.

"You mean to say," Smith spoke slowly, "that this kid you're after, is just goofing off? That he's caused more trouble in *two* hours than five dark wizards could do in two *weeks* - and he's not even trying hard?"

"That sounds about right," agreed Jones blandly. He glanced back at his partner, who was staring

at Tonks in open disbelief, and motioned with his head. "Come on, slick, pick up your jaw and let's get moving."

Smith managed to gather his wits about him and hurried a little to make up the ground he had lost, as Tonks and Jones had not stopped walking. As he caught up, Tonks could hear him mutter, "Thank God the kid's a nice guy."

"Don't assume too much," she grumbled under her breath.

"What do you mean by that, Miss?" asked Jones, who had apparently overheard.

"Harry's... a bit tempermental at times," she said, choosing her words carefully. No need to unduly worry the Men In Black. "Fortunately the aquila seems to have put him in a playful mood."

"Tempermental?" Jones prompted, too much of a professional to let the matter drop.

Tonks repressed a wince and tried to explain. "Remember when I told you how Harry blew out every window in the entire street? Ever since You-Know-Who was resurrected, Harry's been under a lot of stress. Sometimes it bubbles over."

"Is he dangerous?"

"Only to his enemies."

"Hey, you guys!" called Smith, unexpectedly. Tonks and Jones looked at him and saw that he had stopped and was pointing at something to one side. "Look at that!"

Looking in the direction he was pointing at, Tonks saw what appeared to be a dozen or so of Muggle police cars laying seige to a nearby building. Behind the cars were dozens of policemen, firearms drawn and carefully aimed at the doors and windows facing them.

A sudden gust of wind and a loud thrum signalled the arrival of not one but two police helicopters, which began to circle about the building. Looking around her, Tonks could see what looked like sharpshooters taking up positions on the rooftops of several nearby buildings, all overlooking the central building that seemed to be the focus of all this frantic activity.

"What's going on?" she asked nobody in particular.

"Haven't you heard?" asked somebody from behind her. She started and twisted to see a rather old Muggle that had come up behind her and the Men In Black, apparently intent on watching the spectacle.

"Heard what?" asked Jones, his eyes never leaving the scene.

"It's on all the channels," the man said, pointing to several nearby storefronts. Tonks could see that all the televisions on display seemed to be showing the same thing. From the look of things, it appeared to be an aerial shot of the building in front of them - probably shot from another

helicopter.

Jones only glanced over the televisions before returning his gaze forward and saying, "We've been otherwise occupied. What's going on over there?"

The old man stepped past them and slowly made his way over to a nearby bench, which sat overlooking the plaza where all the police were arrayed. He sank down, panting slightly, and said, "From what I've heard, it seems like somebody walked into the police station there," he gestured at the besieged building, "and took it and everyone inside hostage."

A terrifying suspicion bloomed within Tonk's chest when she heard this.

"They say it's some crazy kid," the man continued, not noticing her blanch.

"Oh, God," Tonks groaned, suspicion confirmed.

"What's wrong?" the old man asked, looking at her. Jones and Smith were also looking her way, having noticed her pale expression. "Why should you be worried if someone took a police station, of all things, hostage? You don't know someone inside, do you?"

Putting on a fake smile, Tonks shook her head and quickly walked away. The following conversation was not something she wanted a Muggle to overhear. She grabbed both Jones and Smith by their arms as dragged them after her. Once she was sure they were out of earshot, near one of the window displays showing the crisis, she relaxed her hold on them.

Jones looked at her narrowly and stated, "You know something."

Tonks held up a finger and told him to shush for a moment. She was staring at one of the televisions, the words "breaking news" glowing bright red at the top of the screen. Apparently this station was given a minute-by-minute report on the hostage drama that was unfolding not a hundred metres way from where she stood.

She had not lead them this way by accident. Before dragging the two Men In Black over here, Tonks had caught a glimpse of what looked like the black and white footage produced by security cameras. She waited impatiently, desperately hoping her suspicion would prove false, waiting until the security camera footage was repeated.

"You have to be joking," she groaned, as a low quality image of one particular, blonde wizard appeared.

"That's Mister Potter, isn't it?" asked Jones.

Tonks shook her head, not in disagreement, but rather in disbelief. It had to be Harry. She knew it was Harry. Why he was disguised as Draco Malfoy, she did not know, but there was no doubt in her mind that it was her charge standing there on the telly.

"I can't believe Harry's holding a *police* station hostage," she muttered.

TBC...