

When In Rome

by broomclosetravenclaw

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The last seven years of my life have left me empty. I can look back now and see the emptiness starting even earlier, but my mum was always there to disguise it. After I left what remained of Hogwarts, I had no one to talk to—to mourn with. With the Ministry looking into certain acquisitions of the Malfoy Estate, my mum—again to the rescue—thought it best that I leave the country for a while. In hindsight, I think she was too busy looking after my dad to bother with me. The arrangements were hastily made—a secluded Apparation point in southwest England, followed by a two kilometer hike to a Portkey. The brief mention of a tour guide from the Portkey, and for the remainder of my journey through Rome, could not have prepared me for the shock I got upon seeing my traveling companion, but hastily made plans always leave room for error.

As I made my way around the last bend in the river, I saw something shimmering in the sunlight near the tree where my Portkey was to be found. The something then stood and waved at me. My stomach felt like it dropped to my knees as I realized that I only knew one other person, excluding my immediate family, with hair as white-blond as my own.

Luna Lovegood was smiling expectantly at me. I thought of turning around and leaving the way I'd come. I thought of walking past her as if I was just on a leisurely stroll through Ottery St. Catchpole. Instead I said, "Hello." And I said it with the same bewildered expression on my face that she had on hers. Although, from what I remembered, Luna usually looked dazed most of the time. I quickly schooled my features from shocked bewilderment into stern distaste.

"Draco," Luna said merrily, "don't mind the smell. It's just otter dung. We use it as fertilizer, and we'll be away from it soon enough."

Certainly I could slip away as soon as we reached Rome.

Luna picked up a bright orange duffle bag painted with daisies that changed color at an alarming rate—yellow, magenta, chartreuse, purple.

"The Portkey is just over here."

I was almost afraid that it was going to be an otter tail or something else I wouldn't want to touch, but it was just an old rusted garden spade.

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We arrived on a summit overlooking Palestrina. There was a large medieval castle nearby and my hopes rose. It was large enough that I could easily avoid Luna. My hopes were soon dashed as we began the long hike down the hill and into the older part of the city.

"Do you even know where we are going?" I asked condescendingly.

"My great-aunt on my dad's side has a small villa just up this street."

Small? Did she say small? It was suddenly hard to breathe. I felt claustrophobic with the small, turning streets closing in on me.

"Are you okay, Draco?" Luna asked while simultaneously swatting at my head. "Did the Wrackspurts get you? You're looking a little wonky."

I shook my head and ducked away from her hands, still swatting near my ears.

"I'm fine, Luna."

It was strange to think that someone cared what happened to me, even if it was in their own strange way. I couldn't really think of anyone, other than my mum, caring about what happened to me, unless it affected them somehow. Still, the *small* villa accommodations would need to be changed.

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The next day I set out to find a larger villa, preferably to myself. There was nothing of adequate size in Palestrina. Luna accompanied me on my search, guiding us through archaeological ruins in her search for Bulbous Flaccuses. I indulged her because I had nothing better to do, and it was actually nice to have someone to talk to.

My days were spent following Luna in her explorations of the city walls and aqueducts of Rome while I still searched for somewhere to stay. On the fourth day, we got lost, and we stayed lost for quite some time as we discovered that neither of us spoke Italian. The amazing thing though was that I didn't get angry with the ineptness of the situation. I was actually enjoying myself walking around Rome and its environs—and then there it was—a large villa surrounded by olive trees, the sound of the nearby waterfall giving it a feeling of seclusion. I made arrangements to stay in Tivoli, and there I was again, in a big house—alone. I lasted a day before I Apparated to Palestrina, hoping to find Luna.

Sitting on the terrace fashioning a pair of olive earrings, she smiled when she saw me. I wondered if she smiled at everyone. I wondered how she was dealing with everything that had happened over the last few years. I wanted to talk to her about everything, but couldn't think of a way to start without asking a stupid question. So, I asked her to go sightseeing instead, which could probably be constituted as stupid as well.

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We found the Trevi Fountain, walked around the square, and ate gelato. Deciding we had been acting Muggle-like long enough, we Apparated between the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Spanish Steps, and the Piazza Navona. Luna insisted on visiting the catacombs, but had no luck in locating any Carbuncles.

Our last stop was La Bocca della Verità, the Mouth of Truth. I had changed this past year—I had lost friends because of the war and because I was not willing to be the person that some wanted me to be. I had changed more on this trip to Italy, and maybe that had more to do with Luna than with myself.

"I'm sorry," I said as I looked deep into Luna's grey eyes and placed my hand into the Mouth of Truth—and I was truly sorry.

I was trying to think of a way to make up for the way she had been held and ill-treated at Malfoy Manor when I felt her hand slip inside the Mouth next to mine. Her fingers interlaced with mine and gave a light squeeze.

"I know," she said and smiled her dreamy smile.

We removed our hands from the Mouth, still holding on to each other, turned, and Apparated to the *small* villa.

A/N: Written for the Saturday Night Drabble prompt from lyn_f: "Write about Malfoy taking his gf or bf (depending on which way he swings) to Rome. What do they see, what do they do?"

In this case, it is more of a travel companion than girlfriend (at least for now). Sometimes these prompts are more like guidelines. ;)

Bulbous Flaccuses are my own silly invention made up from the last name of a Roman poet, and Carbuncles are small creatures with jewels on their heads.