

Ducking and Weaving

by Melenka

Hogwarts is plagued by an influx of ducks. Harry decides to do something about it.

A fowl notion

Chapter 1 of 1

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It started with the ducks. Actually, it began well before that, but the ducks were key to the escalation, so they were as good a starting point as any.

"See the new ducks this morning?" Ron asked around a mouthful of toast.

"Bugger the ducks," Harry muttered.

Ron tilted his head in speculation. "Nah. Not even I'm that desperate, mate. Besides, think of the feathers..." He attacked his eggs, obviously still working out the physics of mating with a bird.

Harry shook his head. "I'm putting a stop to it. Tonight."

"I'd stay right out of it. Where angels fear to tread and all that."

"Of course you would." Harry rose from the table and stalked out of the Great Hall.

Ron kicked Lee under the table to get his attention, then held up three fingers. Lee nodded, got up, walked over to Ginny, and whispered in her ear. She shooed him away, but a few moments later, they both left the room.

Throughout the day, Ron cautioned Harry to leave things as they were. The ducks weren't hurting anything, and the girls seemed to find them amusing. Harry stood his ground. Ron next attempted to sway Harry by noting that he'd cost Gryffindor points if he should get caught on the grounds after dark. Harry rolled his eyes and did not dignify that with an answer. Undeterred, Ron posited that perhaps the ducks were a test of some sort, and interfering would ensure Harry failed it. Harry countered the test theory with the belief that **not** doing something about them might be seen as failure. Besides, he'd had enough of the quacking. Several dozen ducks made quite a racket.

Both of them made sure to keep their arguments well away from Hermione. No one had said so, but it was widely believed that she'd had a hand in the recent increase in waterfowl on the grounds, though no one could think of why that might be. Unlike the girls who spent time feeding them, Hermione had never so much as glanced their way.

By nightfall, Ron had given up trying to reason with Harry. He closed the curtains around his bed with a last warning to leave the birds alone.

Harry waited until everyone was asleep before getting out of bed. He wrapped himself in the invisibility cloak and snuck out of the room. He plied the Fat Lady with compliments and asked her to keep quiet.

"Oooh, off for a tryst, are you? You little ducklings certainly do get around lately," she whispered. "I'll not say a word." She winked at him before heading to another portrait to admire herself in a large mirror.

The ducks had drawn close together for the night, heads tucked under their wings. One or two looked up as Harry approached, but they were so used to being fawned over that they simply tilted their heads and gave only half-hearted quacks. The fact that the only thing visible was his head seemed to bother them not at all.

Harry pulled his wand from his pocket and pointed it at them. “*Absum*” he barked.

The ducks woke as one and lifted off. It was quite possibly the least graceful launch to flight ever witnessed. They righted themselves and flew off. Harry gave a satisfied nod and turned back to the castle. A few moments later, the ducks landed before him, full of fowl reproach.

He stared at the birds as the last vestiges of sanity bled away. Then he ran straight at them, waving his arms and yelling at the top of his lungs. They squawked and scattered, some running, others taking flight. A few brave drakes dived at him. The fattest couldn’t pull up in time. His body struck Harry’s shoulder in spray of lost feathers. Harry aimed a kick at the fallen duck.

“Mister Potter!” Professor McGonagall stood in the doorway, lantern held high.

Too late, Harry realized he had lost his cloak in the struggle. He dropped his head as McGonagall’s diatribe washed over him, then he slunk back inside, unable to retrieve the precious garment without tipping his hand to its existence.

“We’re going to have to think of something else soon,” Hermione whispered. “The ducks have gotten out of hand.”

Draco wrapped his arms around her and pulled her back to his chest. “I suppose you’re right, but it was such a thing of beauty, setting up Weasley to irritate Potter just so you could sneak out to meet me. I’m surprised you were willing to risk losing the house points.”

“For this,” Hermione turned and kissed him. “I could lose a few points.”

“What are we going to do with all the ducks?” he asked.

“Return them, of course.” She flicked her wand and the ducks disappeared. “Now all the girls will blame Harry for the loss of their new obsession, and Ron will spend days being baffled.”

He set her from him. “You didn’t do this entirely to cover our meetings, did you?”

“Er.” She twisted her finger in her hair, a sure sign of discomfort. “Not exactly.”

“Then why?”

“Because I’m awfully tired of them telling me that I have no feel for strategy. It started with wizard’s chess, of course. Stupid game. When they began trying to one-up each other with practical jokes – paltry by Weasley standards, might I add – they never even thought to include me. Then Ron goes and gets half the students in Gryffindor to bring in even more ducks. What sort of strategy is that? I was going to put a stop to it tonight anyway, but it was quite satisfying to watch Harry flounder first.”

“So, are you going to tell them you were behind the whole thing?”

“No. I’m going to set Harry up to create the next distraction. It only seems fair, after all. I do hope he’s more subtle.”

Draco leaned in and kissed her. “You are a very devious woman. Remind me not to cross you.”

“Outside of the necessary public displays of derision, of course. I’d hate for you to fail me in the strategy department, too.”

“I’m years ahead of that lot,” Draco scoffed.

“In more ways than one,” Hermione murmured.

“Now,” Draco said, taking her hand, “why don’t we retrieve that cloak and find a nice, public place where I can ravish you? I’ve had enough of lurking in the trees.”

Hermione chewed her lip. “What about the noise?”

“Consider this the next step in training to be a spy.” He gave her a wicked grin.

She raised her eyebrows. “And how did you get **your** training?”

“Snape.” He held up a warning finger. “But not like this, obviously.”

“Obviously,” she said. As they made their way back to the castle, she wondered if there was more to be learned from the Potions master than she’d previously considered.

I was asked by Lady Karelia to write about ducks and I am not one to shirk a request. Much thanks to her for the quick beta, but I still bear responsibility for anything that is amiss.