

# Bridge of Sighs

*by Melenka*

Harry and Luna meet in Venice to discuss death, abandonment and things best left alone.

## Remembrance

*Chapter 1 of 1*

Harry and Luna meet in Venice to discuss death, abandonment and things best left alone.

The ticket takers had long since closed the gates, securing the bridge, and the cells beyond it, for the night. From time to time, the moon appeared to set the water aglow, always quickly overtaken by threatening clouds. The rain refused to cooperate, perversely holding out for the right moment to fall, leaving the air heavy yet cold.

Footsteps on hard stone both preceded and followed the creaking of the gate, a clear warning that she was not alone. Luna smiled. The gesture was unnecessary, but he had always gone in for displays of gallantry. All these years later, she found his consistency comforting. So much else had been lost to them. She lit the lamps and turned to face him.

"It isn't her, Harry." The whisper of heartbreak should not start conversations, but it always did with them.

His lips thinned as he met her gaze. "I'll see for myself, thanks."

"Of course." Luna led the way down to the long-abandoned cells. Fear yet clung to the walls, no more able to dissipate than the mustiness of countless floods, untold tears. She opened the door on sorrow.

Harry knelt on the cold stone. With shaking hands, he pushed aside the long hair, a shade of red not found in nature, to reveal the haggard face of a woman too young to have worn it. His breath caught, but he did not cry. Not this time. He was becoming hard.

"Who was she?" He asked as though the answer mattered.

"A drifter, like the rest. It's why I came when I heard, why I sent for you before I saw her. I'm sorry. I should have waited."

"I wouldn't have wanted you to." He looked up at her. "If nothing else, we give the forgotten a proper send off."

"Ten of them so far. Not many, considering the countless people who pass without notice every day."

His shoulders set, the way they did when he was about to start an argument. "You don't have to keep looking, you know. You've better things to do with your time."

"I haven't stopped doing them, Harry. This is just one more hunt for something no one else believes is real." She smiled at him. "I'm quite used to it by now."

He sagged, letting his head rest against the clammy wall. "She is out there. It wasn't a dream. She stood there, just as solid as you, and dared me to find her. And then she disintegrated before my eyes."

"When you find her, you should ask her to show you the spell." Luna stared out the tiny window onto rain-slicked courtyard. "Corporeal apparition has never been

perfected. I'd love know how she managed."

"I'm sure the other ghosts wouldn't mind taking a crack at it." He pushed his hair out of his eyes, despite knowing it would fall right back down. She smiled at the familiar motion.

Luna shook her head. "Has it occurred to you that the girl might not be dead?"

"She told me she was a spirit in need of a marker so she could find peace. Seems pretty clear to me." He sighed and stood. "I guess I keep looking."

"What things seem can be deceptive. Have you forgotten?" The question slipped out before she could stop herself.

"No." He came up behind her, his fingers locking with hers over the ancient bars. "It was 10:17 in the morning, on a Sunday. Your hair shimmered in the sunlight. You smelled of wildflowers and tasted of honey. I'd thought the world would see how we glowed, after. No one noticed, of course, but you continue to shine in my eyes. I can't forget."

She didn't move. "You might try."

"So might you." His heart beat fast against her back. "The road never has been easy for us, has it?"

"That won't change now." She tilted her head to regard him. "Not this time around. We made our choices, our marriages, our children - and all of it good. Whatever might have been is best left behind."

"But you won't stop helping me, comforting me, being there when I need you." It came out as the accusation it was.

"No more than you'll stop turning to me for those things. It's a friendship, Harry. You said so yourself, all those years ago."

"That was before —"

She turned and placed her fingers on his lips. "Before and after are the same, really. It's like waking up from a dream. Things can change while you slept, but you have to keep moving forward."

He wrapped his arms around her and dropped his chin to her shoulder. "I'm tired of chasing ghosts."

"Then stop." She knew he could not. For a moment, she let herself drink in the scent of him, relax into his embrace, forget where and who and what they were. A moment only before she gently pushed him away.

"Rianne is not dead," she said firmly. "You will find her."

"And how am I to do that?" he growled, more over the loss of contact than the subject at hand.

"Perhaps you should ask the Weasleys which of them had a daughter and forgot to bring her home." She almost managed to avoid a biting tone. What she ought to have avoided was touching him.

He shook his head. "That should make the next holiday gathering a bit awkward."

"It is rather out of character for a Weasley to ignore a child. They're a very close family." Luna frowned. "Unless Rianne's father has no idea she exists."

Harry stared at her, mouth working but no sounds coming forth. She waited, as she always did, for his words to follow the pause between realization and acceptance. Pushing him would do no good, though that didn't stop most people. Then again, most people didn't believe in the long-term effects of wrackspurts, even after she'd proven their existence. That their great hero suffered from such a common, low-level malaise could not be considered.

"Charlie!" he burst out. "It makes perfect sense. He won't commit to a relationship, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have affairs. And if Rianne's mother accepted how Charlie is, well, why would she tell him he'd a daughter?" A second later, he had her in his arms as he kissed her on each cheek. "You're brilliant!"

"Only sometimes." She put her hand on his chest to push him back. *Too late, too late. Oh, Merlin!* Tears fell as she gave into the kiss, the sweetness of his mouth, the solidity of muscle and bone and all the things they could not have made whole under her hands.

"I love you," he sighed, stroking her hair.

"And I you." She affirmed what could not be doubted. "Now, go. You'll be missed at home. I'd hate for you and Ginny to have another row."

He reluctantly moved to the door. "I could —"

*We both could, and then what?* She shook her head. "No." The word became a shield, as it should have done years past. She turned away so she wouldn't have to see him leave. Footsteps faded, then disappeared with a pop, no chivalrous gesture needed at the end.

Luna returned the body to the bank of the river. No point in confusing the tourists, after all. Her duty done, she walked through Venice until the first light of morning kissed the city with gold, just as it had the last time she'd woken beside him. She let the memory warm her. It would have to be enough.

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A/N: Originally posted to HPcon\_envy. Written for Bambu with the prompts: Luna and Harry, the Bridge of Sighs, ten-seventeen, and corporeal