

A Lighthearted Legend of Limerick Woe

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It's the Limerick Hex, back and better than ever. Hermione finds a small box filled with... a blue haze.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Anti-Litigation Charm: Harry Potter belongs to Warner Brothers and JK Rowling. Not me, but in the end that's probably a good thing.

Warning: Poetic Abuse

After Voldemort's rather anticlimactic demise, Harry Potter wanted very little to do with the Wizarding world for a long time. It was completely understandable many of the veterans withdrew for a time. Others, like Hermione Granger, threw themselves into the rehabilitation effort.

"After all," she'd said, "the world won't change itself." So after getting her parents back from Australia, and a month and a half of solid rest and mollycoddling at the Burrow, she went back to work. Starting close to home had seemed like a good idea, so with Harry's permission and support she began stripping down Grimmauld Place, board by board. It was to be renovated, subdivided and sold off; all the profits were to be given to the Hogwarts War Orphan charity. But before the building could be renovated, it needed to be checked over.

"Exorcised," Harry had joked, but it wasn't far from the truth.

Remus came to help most days. The werewolf labor laws had yet to be repealed, though they were next on Hermione's exhaustive "Save the World" to-do list. Hermione herself came in every week, from seven to six, Sunday through Friday. She had a floor plan, a schedule, and an ever-growing catalogue of items found, traps defused, and curses cracked. It was color-coded, cross-referenced, and numbered.

Hermione was in the guest suite's sitting room when she heard Remus get in one Friday afternoon.

"Hermione?"

"I'm upstairs," she called. His feet thunked on the carpetless stairs, and she turned as he entered the room.

"What do we have today?"

"It's the same jewelry box as yesterday. I just can't figure it out and I don't want to open it until I can find out what's inside."

"Well," he frowned, "what have you tried so far?"

"Here." She pulled out a list. "You can see, I've tried two variants of the Clarens, a Revelo, and these," she said as she gestured at the blue portion, "Transfigurations of the box itself. Then I remembered the spell we tried with the mirror on the fourth floor, but all I saw was blue haze."

"And you doubt the box is filled with blue haze."

"Exactly."

Remus tapped a finger against his lips, looking into space. "Have you tried a non-visual method of observation?"

"What were you thinking of?"

"A variation on the charm Quick-Quotes uses on their quills. It allows the quill more autonomy than the standard enchantment, but you have to focus it on something specific. There's no guarantee it will work, but if we focus it on the jewelry box, it might tell us what's inside."

Hermione heaved a sigh, but her eyes were bright and eager. "What's the incantation?"

"*Vini, Viti, Scrivi Jewelry Box*" He drew a cloverleaf in the air, ending with his wand pointing towards the box.

"A little presumptuous, were they?"

"It does seem to fit their usual tone."

"How long does it usually take the spell to wear off?"

Remus shrugged. "It could go for years, but after about two minutes it starts to repeat itself. Then you cancel it with a 'Finite.'"

"Well." Hermione pinned the box with a look. "Let's try it." Waving her wand purposefully through the cloverleaf she said, "*Vini, Viti, Scrivi Jewelry Box*."

Their spare quill leaped to attention and began to move across their parchment, leaving behind line after line of script that matched Hermione's own.

The box is ten centimetres in width, twelve centimetres in length, and eight centimetres in height. The main component is mahogany, with silver attachments and silver alloy hardware. The craftsmanship of the silver is typical of Goblin manufacture. There is a scratch on the front of the lid that is 0.5 centimetres long and 0.26 millimetres deep at the deepest point. The interior of the box holds 770 cubic centimetres. The weight is indeterminate. The average density is indeterminate. Inside the box is a blue

The quill fell to the page, inanimate as it had been before the spell had been cast. Both Remus and Hermione eyed it cautiously, and after a few moments of tense silence, Remus sighed.

"I've never seen the spell end on its own before."

"Remus, I know this is foolish, but if I spend another day staring at this jewelry box, I'll go mad. Harry's coming with dinner at six so if anything dire happens, we won't be waiting long. There's no guarantee that there's anything in this box at all; it could be a concealing spell to protect the Blacks' jewels for all we know!" She huffed, almost petulantly. "What do you say we just open it?"

Remus raised a dusty gray eyebrow. "Long week?"

"Very. Now, shall I open it, or do you wish to do the honors?"

"I daresay I heal faster than you do, should the need arise," Remus said ruefully. "I'll open it; you stand back a bit. You do remember the counter-jinxes we used on the cabinet in the drawing room?" Hermione nodded. "In case I become incapacitated, those may be a good place to start." Once Hermione was safely back, Remus picked up the box. With a glance over his shoulder and a sense of formality or possible doom, he lifted the lid. Inside, he saw... a blue haze.

"Hm," he said, and the tiny puff of his breath dissipated the mist, leaving an empty box with dark red lining and a slightly scratched lid.

"Well, that was anticlimactic," said Hermione, and then to her surprise she found herself continuing. "I'd hoped for results more didactic. But who knows if this haze, will affect us for days! Getting cursed is not quite the best tactic." Remus and Hermione stared at each other, wide-eyed. Remus gave her a questioning look, but she shrugged back. He opened his mouth cautiously.

"I hope we can quickly detect, a solution to end this effect. For it seems we both rhyme and use limerick time; mostly ungainly, I think, a defect." On both of their expressions, shock was wearing off, and in its place was alarm. Not only were they speaking in limericks, but they were stretching the form to its outer limits and they'd only been cursed for two minutes!

Hermione made a vague motion with her hands, sort of a flapping. Remus shook his head in confusion.

"Times like these, I say, call for research. Elsewise we'll be left in the lurch. This house has some books, which could bear a few looks. Until then let's hush up, like in church." Remus gave her a look that he hoped said 'in church?' but as they were both too afraid to say any more, she shrugged and both headed downstairs.

When they got there, they communicated with pointed fingers and significantly raised eyebrows, and soon each had a pile of five or six books beside them. Hermione was well into "Finding Your Lyric Voice" by Dischordia Merriweather when she found the first reference to cursed speech, or in this case, singing. Apparently, one such spell had been cast on the entire town of Rumford after their Quidditch team beat that of their neighboring town. Every resident had been forced to their business by the Bree Bumblebee's cheers for one solid week in July of 1623 until a solution was found. She tried to make note of this on a bit of spare parchment, but to her vexation she wrote instead:

In the year sixteen hundred two-three

Rumford's Quidditch team beat that of Bree

Breeites cast the 'Cheer Hex'

Which was cured by good sex,

Or by sleeping inside a yew tree.

Frustrated, she kept reading. The rest of the chapter was completely unrelated however, and further chapters discussed 'releasing one's creative flow.' She put Merriweather's book aside and was just opening the next tome when Remus snapped to get her attention. Snap snappity snappity snap-snap, snap snappity snappity snap-snap. Snap snappity-snap, snap snappity-snap. Snap snappity snappity snap-snap... by the end of it, Remus looked like he very much regretted ever learning to snap at all, but Hermione came over to look at what he had found. Hermione looked at his parchment and found that he too had exactly one limerick written. The last line ended in "oh bugger all." He pointed out one paragraph on the page in front of him, about halfway down:

The Rhymus Maximus Hex, later known as the Limerick Hex, was invented in 1622 by famed scholar and inventor Illyricus Arrhythmia. Though he is best known for his essays critiquing contemporary poets such as Donne and Drummond, his contributions to modern spell work should not be forgotten. (For more on Rhymus Maximus, see

Appendix C, Chart XCVII)

Appendix C had over 200 charts, but chart 97 was thankfully very short. Perhaps Illiyruc Arrhythmia's works should not be forgotten, but they were few enough that those who did could be forgiven. His entire contribution to wizarding society was three spells: the Riddikulus Minimizzo, which instead of banishing a Boggart, made it extremely short; Sinuflarium Effluvia, which caused all of one's bogeys to liquefy, then drip out of the nostrils over the course of six hours; and the Rhymus Maximus, which could be modified to fit any lyrical form the caster required.

The information was quite clear. How to pronounce the curse, how to wave one's wand correctly, even how to set in stasis were all explained clearly and succinctly. There was, however, a distinct lack of a counter-hex. Remus and Hermione's eyes met as they realized this, with little surprise but great dismay. With matching sighs, they went back to their books.

Several hours later, they were both surrounded by piles of books. Remus' were organized by piles, each turned at a distinct angle; Hermione's, by different-colored bookmarks. Hermione looked up to stretch her back and caught a glimpse of the clock. She clapped her hands to get Remus' attention and found herself imitating a flamenco dancer. Clap clappity clappity clap-clap... She gestured towards the door, made a vague eating motion, and by mutual assent they headed for the kitchen.

It was 5:30 when Oin, Harry's new owl, knocked on the kitchen window, a sheet of loose leaf tied to one leg.

"It can't be enchanted," Harry had said with a grin. "It's just so Muggle, it rejects any spells you put on it even addressing. Your owl has to know exactly where she's going."

Remus went to the window, let Oin in, and untied the loose-leaf. He read the message, frowned, and handed it to Hermione.

Hermione, Remus,

Something's come up at work. Can't tell you what, at least not till it hits the Prophet, but anyways we're working late. Sorry, but I have to cancel on dinner. Same time tomorrow?

Harry

She sighed, both disappointed and relieved, and went to the cold cabinet to fetch vegetables. Remus followed her, and though it was a bit tricky to cook in silence, it was infinitely preferable to finding words that rhyme with 'carrots.' They ate in silence as well, though after the long days they'd both had in the past, cleaning out doxies and exorcising the demons of a house filled with resentment and hate, a quiet dinner was not unusual. As always, Remus washed up while Hermione dried and put away, then both settled in for a long night of research.

At eight fourteen, Remus sneezed. Both tensed, waiting on edge for another thirty-seven syncopated sneezes to follow, but none did. With this revelation that bodily reflexes did not apply to the hex, they grinned and ducked their heads back down. At nine forty-five, Hermione coughed once. Remus looked up, and she started to speak. "You know Remus, I have been thinking. Our info might be interlinking. At my marked sections look, and I'll check out your book, so the gaps in our knowledge start shrinking."

Remus nodded, and they swapped books, reading the sections the other had bookmarked. It was easier for both to speed-read than it was to communicate verbally, but as they made their way from bookmark to bookmark, their discomfort grew. When Remus read Merriweather's text, his eyes grew. When Hermione read Mictus Richt's treatise on oral traditions and the curing of bardic curses, she shifted in her seat. Finally by eleven they were both eyesore and uncomfortable, mentally and physically.

"Before my fatigue grows too deep, we really must get us some sleep. At my crusty age, I can't read one more page, or I'll fall from my chair in a heap," Remus said, stretching and closing his book.

Hermione nodded, closing her own book, but she didn't miss how Remus wasn't making eye contact, or how he stiffly walked out of the library before her, climbing the stairs quickly and almost dashing into his room. Hermione instead climbed the stairs deliberately, thinking as she walked. The one thing that all evidence, both personal and textual, seemed to support was that base physical reactions were unaffected by the curse. In fact, according to Merriweather, sleeping inside a yew tree blending Celtic tree magic with the physiological recuperation that came from sleep, was one way to break the curse. Mictus Richt seemed to agree that an action more physical than magical was the key, but he agreed with Merriweather's more base solution, sex. Shagging, making the merry, the horizontal polka, the Texas two-step, knocking boots, or as the French would say, *faire le crac-crac*.

The people of Rumford had had a very trying time of it, figuring out why the married couples and more scandalous members of the community were the first to be cured, whereas the clergy suffered the longest. With the exception of one sister, who insisted until the day she died that she'd been napping in a tree, the nuns spent all week speaking and praying for forgiveness in tragically unfortunate Quidditch cheers. The Sunday liturgy was the shortest ever recorded, and the people were infinitely thankful that the Hail Mary was for once overlooked.

Mictus Richt didn't say anything about yew trees, though. In fact, Mr. Richt was rather explicit. He specified which kind of couples would fulfill the curse's requirements: opposite sex, two men, or a Metamorphmagus in the shape of a man with a man or woman. Hermione bristled at the inherent sexism, and then wondered if transgendered people counted as their chromosomal sex or presented gender. Richt even continued to explain that certain positions were better than others to truly achieve the best results. When he got sidetracked and began a truly filthy epic poem, she scoffed and turned to the next volume, but couldn't forget. She fell asleep with visions of Remus as a Celtic bard dancing in her head.

The next morning found them both up at the crack of dawn, sipping tea and crunching toast, both too jittery to eat more. When Hermione put down her cup, all but the last few drops of tea sipped away, Remus spoke. "The end of the curse may lean or hinge, on a word with no rhyme such as Orange."

Hermione looked at his almost desperate face, and replied, "I think that this curse, will only get worse, if for rhymes we must search, scrounge and forange." Both winced at 'forange' before Hermione continued.

"Remus, you know well as I, the references here do not lie. While most hedge and conflict, Merriweather and Richt, both say that on sex we rely."

Remus looked pointedly into his empty cup, and Hermione squared her shoulders, waiting for an answer. "You're young, inexperienced, pretty. I don't want sex coming from pity."

"You are older, it's true. I could sleep in a Yew, but I'd rather do the nitty-gritty." She blushed Gryffindor red, though whether it was at the meaning of her words or the new and terrible euphemism she'd just created, she couldn't tell. Remus had his mouth open in a surprised 'o,' and shifted a bit.

"That changes things, yes, I'll avow. But as for the when, where or how, I'll have to admit, it's the tiniest bit, peculiar for me, here and now. You've always been Harry's best friend..."

"You're attracted to me, don't pretend!"

"Well Hermione, of course! But we're both under force, of enchantment..."

"Which sex will transcend."

Remus looked cautious, Hermione determined. She stood up, he stood up. She stepped around the table, he stood still. She stood even closer, wide eye to wide eye, then closed her eyes and kissed him gently. And that was that. Her arms around his neck, his arms around her waist, lips to lips and chest to chest. Remus tasted like tea and raspberry jelly on toast with no butter, as he always ate it. Her fingers tangled in his soft hair, and his shoulders felt wide and wonderfully masculine under her arms. She pushed and stepped forward until they were up against the kitchen wall, breathing hard. Hermione was kissing Remus' neck, his hands holding her hips up to his, and she

ground herself against him. He pushed her away, and she hesitated, but grinned when she saw his single finger pointing upwards.

They made it up the stairs in record time, but when Remus' bedroom door closed behind them, their frantic pace slowed. Remus sat on the bed and Hermione joined him, tossing her jumper behind her in a movement more efficient than graceful before she started working on his. Of course the collar got stuck on his nose, and the whole thing turned inside-out in the offing. And of course, they clashed teeth when they tried to kiss; that's what happens when you're smiling and kissing someone at the same time. When Hermione fumbled at Remus' buttons, he undid them himself, baring an over-washed undershirt. *That man and his layers*, she wondered as she shucked her own t-shirt.

Remus bent down to kiss her lips, then her jaw, then her neck, and when he ever-so carefully nipped at her skin there, she couldn't help but arch her back and gasp. When his lips met her nipple, tugging it gently, running the rough side of his tongue across the tip, laying kiss after generous kiss on her skin, she cried out and dug her fingers into his arms. He laid her back on his just-made bed, tugged his undershirt off, and lay over her to tease one nipple then the other with his lips, teeth, tongue and fingertips, kissing, nipping, and rolling between two fingers.

In the brief moments that came between *oh my god* and *yes more like that*, Hermione managed to wrap her hands tight around Remus' back, roaming over his scarred, pale, but fairly muscular body. He released her nipple for a moment to catch her lips in another kiss, sensual and breathy, and she reached between them to fumble with his trousers. Their eyes met, and he paused for a moment before he undid his own zip and sat up to shuck the trousers, as she shimmied off her Muggle jeans.

Then, suddenly, they were naked in bed together. Hermione wasn't a virgin; the summer after Voldemort's demise had been very educational, and on her trip to Australia, she'd found an obliging Muggle boy to help her with her unofficial research not that she told him that he was *research*. She'd had a tumble or two with Ronald in the few weeks before he'd disappeared into "I can't tell you yet, but it's pretty awesome" training. She'd done research on the topic, too. Her parents were too medically-educated themselves to not prepare their daughter with various books on the physiological changes going on during puberty, and she'd done follow-up study on her own. So she was well-acquainted with the topic of sex, and even as her breathing became faster and her pulse raced, she could imagine the little chart that showed the various stages of arousal. But seeing the chart and feeling her fingers shake and her body beg for more, now, more were entirely different things. Hell if she was going to wait for Remus to take the initiative.

She sat up and gently pushed him backwards on to the bed. She took her wand and cast the unspoken protection spell, then put one knee on either side of his narrow hips. His eyes widened as she leaned forward, positioned him at her entrance and lowered herself down. It felt divine. He wasn't huge, but not small either, and as she rocked her hips experimentally, she heard him moan beneath her.

He pulled her down towards him and crushed their lips together, holding her close and saying with his body what he really didn't want to with his voice. Thrusting, gasping, reaching down with one hand to show him how he should touch her clit, Remus murmured, "Hermione, yes you're so good, I want you much more than I should," and Hermione was lost.

"I'm going to come, oh God yes, with your thumb, Ah!" And with a toe-curling, back-bending, crying out to the heavens burst, Hermione felt the spell break. Remus thrust a few last times before she felt his release, and she lay across him in a cloud of post-coital bliss.

"Oh God, Remus, that was amazing," Hermione breathed. Both tensed, lurched out of the afterglow by the familiar rhythm.

"Is it over?" Remus asked, decidedly nervous.

Hermione took a deep breath, slowly exhaled, and said, "I think so." Two sets of shoulders un-tensed, and two minds allowed themselves to stop searching for obscure rhymes and three syllable phrases. They relaxed, free from the curse and safe in each others' arms until reality reasserted its hold.

"Hermione," Remus began.

"We should talk," she finished.

"Yes."

Silence reigned, until Gryffindor bravery raised its proud head once more.

"I don't..."

"This was..."

"No, you first," Hermione said, and Remus smiled ruefully, tiredly.

"This situation is... highly irregular, but I don't regret it. If there's one thing I have learned, it is to appreciate joy in its brief moments. I know this never should have happened, and if you wish to forget it, I will abide by your wishes. But I hope we can continue as we have before, despite it."

Hermione chewed one lip and pulled herself up against the headboard. "Remus, despite the fact that we were cursed, this has been a rather enjoyable experience. If you would like to forget it, that's fine, but I'd rather not forget it."

Remus' expression changed from pensive and resigned to attentive and hopeful. "Oh?"

"Yes. We work well together, you have intelligent conversations, and you're fantastic in bed."

"Hermione... you can do so much better than this. I'm twenty years older than you, and a werewolf."

Hermione sighed. This was a special, patient sigh, reserved for when someone, somewhere was being very, very stupid. "I already know that. I've heard the argument, and with all that's happened in the last eight years, an age difference and your illness really don't matter. Your willingness does. So." She took a deep breath, and dove.

"Are you willing?"

In the face of Hermione's defiant, implacable acceptance, Remus felt his arguments dissolve. A loosening of the jaw, a slight slump in his posture, and he relaxed. He had seen Hermione's relentless labor as they worked together this last year. If this brilliant, persistent (young!), woman wanted him, he knew she would stop at nothing to achieve her goal. So why resist? With her good heart and fierce spirit, he knew he would come to no harm.

Though he wasn't quite sure what exactly he was in for, if it involved Hermione, he was ready.

"I am."

Fin

Author's Note: Hermione's patient sigh is adopted from Copperbadge on livejournal. His stories are some of the best in the fandom, and I recommend Cartographer's Craft, an alternative to Book 7, to anyone who has an open mind and some free time.

I would apologize for the terrible limericks, but I had too much fun writing them to feel at all contrite. Uncountable thanks to the admins here, who work like house elves to keep things running. And of course, many thanks to my beta, Dungeonbutterfly.