

# Convolutions

*by Amita*

Granger and the Malfoys and the Great Spider War. A comedy: sins forgiven; virtue rewarded; the brave and true triumph.

## Getting Acquainted

*Chapter 1 of 10*

Granger and the Malfoys and the Great Spider War. A comedy: sins forgiven; virtue rewarded; the brave and true triumph.

### Chapter 1: Getting Acquainted

"What are you doing here?"

"I could ask the same of you."

"I should think it would be obvious. My concern for the welfare of downtrodden species has become well known, and when the Ministry decided they should employ the Head Girl the summer before her seventh year, they naturally placed me where my interests coincided with theirs." A thought struck her. "You aren't ... are you ... and what are you doing *here*?"

"I am as Miss Smarty Pants should have been able to deduce. And your sentimental and misguided efforts to free house-elves strikes me as a low point in the relationship between the species not as grand as Bengal the Spotted and his Campaign to Protect the Virgins from the Horny Horsies, but possibly more ludicrous."

"And I suppose a soulless Malfoy is going to promote interspecies goodwill. What's your plan? Offer a hundred galleons per Unicorn Horn to turn into aphrodisiacs? How else could your kind propagate?"

"I'm wounded. Heaven protect me from the inspired barbs of clever witches. As it happens, my family is arranging to transfer a large tract of land to the centaurs."

"Why would they do that? Wait, what do you get in return?"

Her interest piqued despite herself, Hermione listened to the details of the land deal. An almost forgotten deed established that the Malfoys owned hundreds of neglected acres of rolling hills, woods, and meadows adjacent to the Forbidden Forest. The land was suitable for hunting, grazing, and crops, and the centaurs were keenly interested. In exchange for acreage of orchards and farmland, the land would be ceded to the Ministry who would turn it over to the centaurs, promoting goodwill.

"But you're giving up land that's no use to you because it's near the Forbidden Forest for valuable land," protested Hermione.

"It's valuable to the centaurs because it's adjacent to the Forest," said Draco.

Hermione harrumphed. "You're still getting more than your giving up."

"We don't prosper because we strike losing bargains," said Draco, "and there is a small detail."

"Don't tell me the centaurs have to pay you rent?" exclaimed Hermione.

"Quite the opposite. The land has become overrun with spiders, and the Malfoy family has agreed to help drive them off the land as part of the deal."

Hermione tried to suppress her alarm. "Spiders? You're going to hunt spiders?"

"We don't prosper because we're wimps, either. Would you like to help?"

"I'm here to heal, not kill."

"Afraid?"

She drew herself up. "I'm not afraid." She paused. "How do you kill spiders, anyway, hex them?"

The spider-killing part was under development. It had to be compatible with the centaur weapons of bows, arrows, and lances; and spiders were difficult, nay, almost impossible, to kill with arrows and lances. In single combat, the centaurs favored trampling them. In mass combat, the spiders had the advantage. The search was on for a potion that was toxic to spiders, and it had to be a fast acting toxin effective within a second that could be used on arrows and lances. No one wanted to spray the land with a lethal agent, and it had to be something the centaurs could produce and use.

The next day, Hermione rounded a corner and stopped, surprised by the strange scene.

*Thunk.*

*Thunk.*

*Thunk.*

"What are you doing?" asked Hermione.

"What's it look like?" replied Draco. "I'm testing this piece of wood for toughness and flexibility. If it passes, I'll use it for some whoop-ass on the elves."

"It looks to me like you're practicing with a bow and arrow."

"Dang if it couldn't be mistaken for that by someone who's unaware of my evil nature," said Draco.

"Is it okay to play Robin Hood during working hours?" she asked.

"This *is* work, Miss Smarty Pants. And who's Robbing Hood?"

It would not do for the Malfoys to use wands against the spiders while the centaurs were limited to arrows and lances. The family had to fight alongside the proud race as equals. Draco offered that Hermione would have more respect for the centaurs if she experienced how much skill it took to wield a longbow. He convinced her it was part of inter-cultural appreciation. A week of practicing together formed a bond between martial artists, and Draco invited her to a Saturday tea and dinner.

Other cultural barriers were harder to cross.

"Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor," said Hermione.

"That's my kind of bloke," said Draco. "There're some barons in Europe and some rajahs in India who neglect their poorer relations, the Malfoys."

On the appointed Saturday, Hermione arrived at the front gate of the Malfoys in time for an early afternoon tea. Draco was waiting and took her to the back lawn where Lucius and Narcissa greeted her.

"We hoped you would join us for a round of wizard skeet," said Lucius. "We were thinking of going bourgeois this afternoon, and it will be the girls against the boys, but my wife is a formidable player."

"All your sensibilities will be satisfied," said Narcissa. "The elves lob colored, dried mud-balls into the air. The elves enjoy making it difficult for us, and the first rain washes away the debris."

Hermione was thinking Draco's parents had received an earful about her social and conservationist attitudes.

"Would you like red or blue for our side?" asked Narcissa.

"I'll take red," said Hermione, thinking they would be easier to see.

"Exactimo," said Narcissa. "Blue balls for the boys."

"We can begin with a simple practice," said Draco. "Wands out!"

A few minutes later, Hermione was thinking this was an excellent way to release stress and aggression. Part way into the game, however, she had doubts about her choice of color. The two wizards appeared to relish turning blue balls into dusty memories. When the game ended, Draco and Lucius smashed the few blue balls lying on the ground that they had missed.

"My husband's never been fond of them," Narcissa told Hermione.

For some reason, that struck Hermione as funny, and she had an uncontrollable attack of the giggles.

During tea and biscuits, Lucius proposed a relaxing game of cards before dinner. "But we've been bourgeois enough for one day. Would you consent to being my partner, Hermione?"

It was Hermione's turn to face that formidable opponent, Narcissa, but she found it comfortable being Lucius's partner. After several rounds of cards, they had a simple dinner: salad, grilled chicken with rice, and lemon pudding. It was time for Hermione to take her leave.

"Mum insists that she be the one to escort you home," said Draco.

"I don't need an escort."

"Nevertheless, she insists," said Draco.

On the way to the girl's flat, Narcissa asked if Hermione would like to tour a museum next Saturday. Hermione replied that more time with Narcissa would be fun.

At nine o'clock the next Saturday, Hermione found herself in front of a museum of natural history. At one minute after nine, she began to stamp her foot. Where was that lady? A few seconds later, she heard, "Good morning, Miss Granger."

Narcissa gave her a small smile. "I see you are impatient and not the type to be kept waiting. I expected as much."

"You did?" Hermione asked as Narcissa bought the tickets.

"Surely, someone as diligent and precise in schoolwork as you is diligent and precise in all things."

Any reply Hermione might have made was lost as the impact of the initial displays and the multitude of possible tours struck her.

Narcissa placed her hand beside her mouth and whispered conspiratorially, "My secret life."

She paused before saying, "I'm fond of the geological strata."

Hermione wondered how a witch could be fond of geological whatever. As they began the tour and the details overwhelmed her, she wondered how it could attract anyone.

"They don't present it right," Narcissa said, noticing her perplexed look. "A view that follows the historical development of the subject is better. Let's walk ahead to Cambrian."

"It looks as if there are two layers," said Hermione. "The lower has nothing in it, and the upper is filled with fossils."

Narcissa nodded. This girl was sharp. "It's the pre-Cambrian and Cambrian division," she said. "There appears to be a sudden explosion of life. It was the first division recognized. It's dated about 550 million years ago."

"Surely, there was something before," said Hermione. "Oh, but it took them a long time to find the evidence."

Narcissa thought this girl worthwhile. They became so engrossed in the associated exhibits and pamphlets about the Cambrian that they forgot about tea time.

Narcissa took Hermione's hand and led her to the next major point of interest. "The two major divisions after this are catastrophes," she said. "One about 250 million years ago wiped out 90% of life, and one about 65 million years ago wiped out 50% of life."

"The dinosaurs," said Hermione.

"Yes, the second one is famous for the dinosaurs," said Narcissa as they arrived at the exhibits for the 250-million-year event.

Later, as they skipped the intermediate exhibits and walked to the third major point, Hermione linked her arm with Narcissa's. The older woman was comfortable and had a fresh but slightly musky aroma. Hermione could feel the subtle swaying of Narcissa's hips. A flash of resentment shot through her as she imagined them swaying for Lucius.

The three geological divisions kept them occupied until it was time for a late lunch. As they sat at a back table, Hermione's knee moved to touch the older woman's. Hermione realized what she was doing and pulled it away, but her knee moved to touch the older woman's again. Hermione pulled it away again. When her knee moved to touch the older woman's a third time, Hermione let her leg rest against Narcissa's. As the younger girl's warmth spread through her, Narcissa nearly spilled her tea.

Hermione said, "There's a duality to things. I wonder if the Cambrian division was an extinction, too. Life that didn't leave obvious fossils was wiped out and replaced by life that did."

## Invitation to the Hunt

*Chapter 2 of 10*

Coffee, no sympathy.

### Chapter 2: Invitation to the Hunt

"I want to go on the hunt, too."

"Excuse me?"

Practice with bows and arrows had advanced to shooting at simulated charging spiders. Now, Hermione, assuming a defiant stance, was giving Draco her most determined look. "I want to join you and the centaurs. I'm as accurate with the bow as you are at short range." She braced herself, ready to reply to his derision.

"You do know that's it's possible to get killed," he said. "The Malfoys and the centaurs are risking life and limb for profit." He sounded genuinely puzzled. "Why would you want to risk your life and limb for our profit?"

"It's to help the centaurs," she said. "We've treated them horribly the last several hundred years. All wizards and witches should be ready to do something to help."

"Is this Hermione Granger to the rescue?"

"What if it is? What's wrong with that? And it's not Hermione-Granger-to-the-rescue; it's Hermione-Granger-lending-a-helping-hand."

Draco was temporarily lost in thought. "You were alone in your campaign for the elves. With this, you get to be a member of a team." He paused. "A member of a team doing good that doesn't include Ron and Harry. Are you establishing your independence?"

"Yes. No. And why do you have to be so smart, I mean, suspicious? And what do you care anyway?"

"You might be surprised at what I care about," he said.

"Then why don't you join me for tea after work today?" she asked.

They both looked stunned. How had this happened?

An hour later, Hermione was in her office, staring blankly at a form.

"Uh, Miss," said the goblin.

"Oh, yes, the next item on the form," said Hermione, returning to the matter at hand. It was a routine application for a small business.

"We need the address, the type of building, and the square-footage," she said.

She wrote down the information and sighed, "I'm not dressed for tea."

"Excuse me," said the goblin.

"How many employees," she asked.

At quitting time, Draco knocked on her door.

"You look bonny," he said as they strolled into the streets of London. "We can do tea, or I can offer you a special coffee."

"Where do we get special coffee?" she asked. "How special?"

"Specialty coffees are an acquired taste," he said.

"Unlike tea, which is natural," she replied.

"Exactly," he said. "One of the milder ones is latte."

They entered the shop, ordered, and sipped their lattes.

"I'm surprised you frequent a non-wizard establishment," she said. "But I suppose you're determined to be sophisticated in all things."

"Sophisticated enough to expect continuous barbs from you," he said. "What are you taking your final year?"

She said that she wasn't certain, and he replied that she meant she didn't know how many. He guessed that she would certainly try for Transfiguration, Charms, Arithmancy, and Potions, and he offered that she was uncertain about History, Defense, Herbology, and Runes. She was surprised he followed her life that closely and asked about his plans, which, she assumed, consisted of Arithmancy, Potions, Defense, and Quidditch and which, she informed him, was rather paltry for a man of his ability. He made a great show of wincing at the barb and offered the defense that sports took a great deal of time and energy.

"I remember Ron and Harry ..." she started to say.

"It's okay to talk about Ron and Harry," he said.

"I remember Ron and Harry coming back to the common room after practice too tired and beat up to open a book, let alone write an essay."

"I can imagine how sympathetic you were to them," he said.

"I was younger then, and if you want to talk about what we did when we were kids, I can remember lots of things about you," she said.

"We wouldn't have to worry about the conversation having awkward pauses and dying on us," he said. "Did you ever think that being sports stars would be good for Ron and Harry in the long run?"

"I didn't then. I was too idealistic, and I thought academic success would be rewarded. Now I see that most people aren't scholars but they can relate to sports."

"There's employment," he said. "And there're girls, too."

"Oh, think of all those starry-eyed girls. I suppose that explains why Mr. Malfoy rides his broom," she said.

"Me? I'm already rich."

The conversation had an awkward pause.

"Doesn't your family miss you this summer?" he asked.

The conversation turned to her visiting her parents and their disappointment when she stayed in her flat for a weekend. She observed that he still lived at home and hadn't cut the apron strings, to which he replied that the apron strings were currently tied around nests of spiders.

"Can I go on the hunt?" she inquired again.

"I can ask," he replied.

"Would you like lunch this Saturday?" she asked. "It can be at my flat. Think of it as increasing your sophistication by observing a non-wizard abode at close range and having a meal not prepared by elves. Not to mention that you can get away from the apron strings and save the price of a meal at the same time."

"How could anyone refuse an invitation so graciously offered," he said.

The next morning at the manor, the lady was unstringing and putting away her bow when she heard someone behind her.

"Your husband missed practice again."

"You dare criticize him, boy?"

"Yes, he's putting us in danger. When we face the spiders, we can't have a weak member of the team."

"He's busy."

"Blonde or brunette?"

Bellatrix whipped out her wand and pointed it at Draco. Suddenly, it was in his hand and at her throat, and the look in his eyes caused her to step back until she was against the wall. He followed her with the wand at her throat. A strange feeling went through her. When had her nephew become this powerful? She realized she was breathing heavily, realized he was looking at her bosom rise and fall, and realized she didn't mind. She licked her lips.

He trailed the wand down her throat and between her breasts. "Your husband's a fool."

She didn't protest.

He leaned closer and whispered, "The fire in those eyes."

She softened, put her hands on his arms, leaned forward. And bit his nose.

"Bitch," he yelled, tossing her aside.

She made a noise somewhere between a triumphant yell and a wild cackle, hiked up her skirt, and sprinted out of the shed and across the lawn. Draco performed a quick healing spell for his injured beak and dashed after her. The hot pursuit became warmer as the sight of her flashing legs sent jolts of admiration to his base of his spine.

Bellatrix screamed when only a few yards later, she felt his arms go around her waist. Damn, he was fast. She tried to keep running, but she couldn't break his hold, and she was falling toward the waiting grass. She hit the ground and tried to twist free. By the gods, he was strong. She was in a secure grip that wasn't hurting her. They began rolling down the hill toward the lake. She grunted and strained. She heard him chuckle as she writhed to get free, as she writhed and her breasts moved against his chest. Her breasts hadn't moved against a chest for a long time, such a long time. She groaned and struggled to break free as she tried not to notice that it felt good to have her breasts against a male chest, that she wanted to have her breasts against him, that he was between her legs, that she could feel his maleness, that his maleness was pressed against her, that she liked it and tried not to want it, that her thighs were squeezing him as her skirt rode up, that her skirt was up and her smooth, silk-covered ache was pushing against the bulge in his trousers, that her legs were around him and her hips were undulating and her knickers were getting moist, and she was rubbing against what she wanted.

Draco broke loose and pulled away.

She lay on the grass panting for a while before sitting up and saying, "Well, well, the little boy doesn't know what to do with a woman he's just wrestled into submission."

She watched him stand and assumed he was going to leave in an insulted snit, but when she glanced up, he was giving her a fond look. She took his outstretched hand and let him help her to her feet. She heard him say, "You're very tempting, Auntie. You know I've always admired you."

"Are you making fun of me?" she asked.

"Absolutely not," she heard him say. He stepped closer. She felt an arm go around her waist and his fingers combing her hair behind her ear. "Absolutely not," he repeated as he embraced her and stroked her hair. His holding her was comforting even though she was thinking she had never liked affectionate contact.

They walked back to the house holding hands.

It was Saturday noon.

"Give me some space. Let a master do his work."

"Honestly."

"You can watch if you want to," said Draco, taking a board, a knife, and some vegetables out of a sack.

"I wouldn't mind watching you cut off your thumb," said Hermione, eyeing the large knife.

"Blood-thirsty Gryffindor. Why don't we skip the salad, put away the frying pan, and tear into the raw meat with our claws? Oh, I know why not. No one could compete with a primitive Gryff, and you want to play nice hostess."

"Your insights as a civilized wizard and your manners as a guest are impeccable," she said. "I'm having fun already."

"Well, get ready to have more fun as I introduce you to the novel idea of washing our food before preparing it."

"Next you'll be suggesting that we wash up, too," she said.

"I wouldn't mind scrubbing you," he said.

"Wow. Insulting to flirting in a single leap. I am impressed."

Despite herself, Hermione was impressed as she watched Draco prepare the American-style salad she had enjoyed when she had dined at the Malfoys.

He noticed her interest. "Mother and Father sometimes have a large number of guests who want to assemble without publicity. That means we can't hire a caterer and I have to help the elves."

She was too surprised to be sarcastic. "You help the elves?"

"I help elves. I hunt spiders. Did you think that all I did was parade around waving my silver spoon?"

"Let's not fight," she said.

"Demanding wench," he said.

"Yes, I am," she agreed.

Hermione's plans were to have salad, pork chops, and potatoes and then to go someplace for dessert. Draco mentioned that his father was fond of the non-wizard boat tours and the boats served a variety of refreshments.

Two hours later they were leaning against the rail and watching the city float by when she said, "The department is having a costume party next Friday."

"Who are you going as?" he asked.

"What do you think of Little Red Riding Hood?" she asked.

She related the non-wizard fairy tale.

"Just think," he said, "you could get some boy to play the wolf and then cut him open at the end of the evening if he danced like grandma." He looked out over the water. Teasing her was so easy. It wasn't fair. When he looked back, she was appraising him. "What?" he asked.

"I suppose you've already asked one of your rich, pureblood girlfriends," she said.

"No, I'm not even sure I'm going," he said. He glanced her way. She was still appraising him. "I am not going as the wolf," he announced.

"You could go as another person," she said.

"Ron Weasley? You want me to go as Ron? That's kinky. Why don't you just ask Ron?"

"I was thinking of someone else," she said.

"I refuse to do Harry Potter," stated Draco.

"I wouldn't ask you to," she said.

"Well, who?"

She hesitated.

"You may as well tell me right away instead of making me drag it out of you," he said.

She bit her lower lip. "Your father?"

He rolled his eyes. Whatever went through the minds of females? "As long as you don't ask me to come as my mother," he said.

Hermione gave a small start.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

"No, no, nothing at all," she said.

"It's a bit cool on the water," said Hermione, edging closer to Draco.

"This will help," said Draco, surreptitiously performing a warming spell for her.

Hermione sighed. "Perhaps if you spend some time as your father, some adult male wizard will rub off on you."

"Excuse me?" he said.

"For all the action out here, we may as well go inside where we can sit and be warm," she said.

That evening at the manor, Draco's mum insisted he write a thank-you note. It was good practice, and it was good for his soul.

Dear Ruth Helen Hermione,

I shall forever treasure the evening we crossed the bridge hand-in-hand and joined the promenade on the Champs-Elysees. Oops, wrong girl.

I fondly remember shredding the lettuce into small bits with a sharp blade although I would rather have shredded your bra and fondled your bits.

It was fun preparing a tomato in your kitchen even though it wasn't the tomato I wanted to peel.

Preparing a bed of lettuce and tossing the salad with the dressing was exciting, especially while thinking about tossing you on a bed and doing some undressing.

I've always been fond of potatoes and all other round and firm things that I can sink my teeth into.

Thanks for the pork loin. It was succulent. Visions of your succulent and dripping loins are dancing before my eyes.

Everything was elegant and in its place. Has anybody ever mentioned what a cock tease you are?

The boat ride for a sweet was a good idea. And riding you would have been even sweeter.

Lustfully Sincerely,

Your Frustrated Grateful Dragon

PS: Can't write more. Time to play footsies with play a round of cards with Auntie.

## Odd Man In

*Chapter 3 of 10*

A gathering of Eagles.

### Chapter 3: Odd Man In

"Who's the damn genius responsible for this?"

"Didn't you ever want to play Wild Indians when you were young?"

"No."

"You could have been their Medicine Man."

Severus sent three arrows into the center of the target.

"You're witching them, old chap. Try aiming," said Lucius.

"Yes, like us lesser mortals," said Bellatrix.

"I don't appreciate taking up the slack for your damn husband, either," said Severus.

"You're getting part of the land as an investment in return," chimed in Narcissa.

"Visions of wealth are dancing in my head," said Severus.

"We were thinking of deeding you the peach orchard," said Bellatrix. "It fits, don't you think, you veritable peach of a man?"

"Don't rile him, sister dear," said Narcissa. She turned to Severus. "Should we get a crossbow for the cross?"

Severus notched an arrow.

"At least no one is asking you to be a spy this time," said Narcissa.

"Yeah, disguised as a Death Spider," said Bellatrix.

Severus let fly an arrow that split the one already in the center of the target.

"You're still witching them, old bean," said Lucius.

Hermione listened to all this while being appalled that they were teasing a professor and jealous that she couldn't join in. And she was adjusting to working with Bellatrix Lestrange. Draco had informed her that she could become a member of the hunting party if she swore to keep its secrets, and for reasons she didn't yet understand, she had agreed.

Now, Draco winked at her as if to say, "They're only adults. Let them play."

They changed to moving targets.

"How intelligent are spiders, anyway?" asked Severus. "Do they use cover? Do they have tactics? Will they try to ambush us?"

"We should ask the centaurs," said Bellatrix.

Hermione was proud of her professor.

The next morning, Severus and Hermione joined the others at Barracks-Malfoy, and the group proceeded to the Forbidden Forest where the centaurs had laid out a three mile walk through rough terrain for conditioning. The trek had been followed by two hours of target practice. Afterwards, Severus and Lucius declared they deserved a spot of relaxation, showered and dressed, and left for lunch and an afternoon at The Club.

"Care for a hot tub?" Narcissa asked Hermione. "I know you're hungry, but we can have a glass of wine while we soak."

Hermione merely nodded. The aristocracy was proving more energetic than she had expected. She followed Narcissa to the kitchen, watched her open a bottle, accepted a glass, and took a sip. The sip was followed by a healthy quaff. Hermione grinned. "That was good."

Hermione thought Narcissa looked benign and motherly when Narcissa said, "It's quite a change from books to field sports, but you're young, and I suppose all those stairs at school keep you fit." Narcissa refreshed the girl's glass, took a sip herself, and said, "If your muscles are sore, I can give you a short massage before we climb in the tub."

Hermione flexed her shoulders. "My arms are getting stiff. I'm not used to the longbow."

By the time they reached the outdoor hot tub, Hermione had finished her wine and was feeling mellow. She stripped and stretched out on a pile of fluffy towels. Let look who may. The massage went from her neck to her shoulders, to her upper back, to her arms, and to her entire back. She had to be helped up and into the tub. The two girls soaped and scrubbed each other.

"The boys are talking about spears," said Narcissa when the two were finally ensconced by the lake on a quilt, wearing silk robes, and with another bottle of wine and the lunch hamper.

"Spears?"

"As a last line of defense," said Narcissa.

"Boys just like to poke things," said Hermione, giggling. She shook her head. "What a way to go: under a horde of spiders with one of them impaled on my spear."

Hermione looked up to see Narcissa looking concerned.

"Promise me you won't be foolish," said Narcissa. "Coming with us is braver than you have to be."

Hermione reached up and stroked long blonde hair. "I won't be foolish."

Hermione raised herself and sealed the agreement with a kiss on thin aristocratic lips. "I promise."

Unknown to Hermione, her face was one of invitation as she lay back on the quilt, and she was only mildly surprised when Narcissa leaned down. Hermione resumed stroking the older woman's hair. Their breaths intermingled; their breasts touched; their legs nestled; their lips met. Hermione's body weaved as it cried out for contact. The nuzzling began softly, gained in intensity, and slowly subsided as their psyches found peace in their companionship. Hermione had not known, had not imagined, the pleasure to be found in holding someone special.

Meanwhile, back at the manor, Bellatrix greeted Draco as he stepped out of the shower and said, "Your mum and your friend took a lunch basket down to the lake."

He grabbed a towel and held it in front of him.

"I'll turn my back, okay?" she said. "Although you'd think you'd be proud enough to show off."

"I'm the very model of propriety, I am," he said as he tied his bathrobe. "What would you like for lunch?"

"Besides you?" she asked.

"What about leftover steak-and-kidney pie and fried tomatoes?" he asked.

"No wonder people complain about British cuisine," she said.

After lunch, Bellatrix said she would check on Draco's mum and his friend to make sure they weren't spelling each other's hair into twine ... or snakes. She decided there was no danger of that when she arrived in the middle of their intertwining. She departed unseen, found Draco on the couch in the reading room, and informed him that the two appeared to be getting along very well.

"That's great," he said, looking up from his book.

"What are you reading," she asked, sitting beside him.

"Hermione lent me some of her old favorites," he said. "I'm on the second volume. Care to look at the first?"

She picked up 'Nancy Drew and the Secret of the Old Clock' and began reading. She found it interesting enough but not as interesting as the person next to her. She moved closer and read some more. She moved again, and her thigh was against his. He looked at her, gave her a small smile, and put his arm across her shoulder. They went back to reading. Eventually, he was stroking her hair, and her head was on his shoulder. They continued to read. At the end of a chapter, he put his book down to rest his eyes.

"Did your mum ever show you how we used to dance when we were young?" she asked.

He shook his head no.

She showed him how to tap out the rhythm on the coffee table. She stood, pushed the rug aside, and was barefoot on the marble floor. Her left foot swept in front of her; her right foot swept in front of her. Her body did a left shimmy, then a right shimmy. Her hips began to sway. The dance slowly grew. Draco had a sudden image of Sirius banging out the rhythm as the three Black sisters did their enticing best. Now, his aunt's hands were over her head, and her dark tresses framed her face. She turned and swayed and weaved. He could barely picture his two aunts and his mum in full adolescent heat in the privacy of the old mansion twirling and swirling and provoking. Now his aunt was dancing for him, for him alone, showing how she would gladly move for him.

The dance was over.

"Very good, Auntie," he said.

She put the rug back in place, arranged herself on the sofa, embraced Draco in a quick smooch, and lay down with her head in his lap. She raised her leg and let her bathrobe slide up.

He watched the rise and fall of her breasts, admired her display of leg with glimpse of knickers, and decided Nancy Drew lived in a more innocent world.

Narcissa had seen Hermione off and had returned to the house to catch the last of her sister's dance and her arranging herself in Draco's lap.

*Great*, thought Narcissa. *My sister is vamping my son, and I'm snogging my son's friend who happens to be a girl.* She thought about Lucius and Severus going to The Club for lunch and the afternoon. It amused her to think that if they were after women of questionable virtue, then they would have done better to have stayed at the manor.

## Boys' Night Out

*Chapter 4 of 10*

Virile, wow, virile. I hope.

### Chapter 4: Boys' Night Out

It was the evening of the costume ball. Draco had morphed into Lucius as Hermione had requested, had taken a bath, and was lounging in the reading room when Narcissa entered.

"Is Father out again this evening?" asked Draco.

Bellatrix's youngest sister nodded and sat on the couch beside him. She sighed. "You're going to leave me pretty soon too."

"I feel guilty," he said. "If I had known you would be free, I would have found you an escort to this dance."

"If you could find one," she said.

"No problem there," he said. "I've been looking at the non-wizard fairy tales. They're filled with beautiful women. There's 'Cinderella and Her Dwarf Step-Sisters,' 'Snow White Meets the Seven Beautiful Beasts,' and lots and lots of attractive girls waiting to be rescued from their evil stepmothers before they turn into a pumpkin."

"I could go as an evil stepmother," she said, "or a pumpkin. Do the pumpkins get good lines?"

"Fairly good, but the step-mothers get the best," he said, putting a reassuring arm across her shoulders. "We all know how seductive evil is, and you would certainly be the most seductive one there." As she made a face at him, an idea struck. "I wish I had thought of it earlier. You could have gone as my evil stepmother, and I could have been rescued by some ravishing princess. We could have invented a new category of fairy tale."

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" she said accusingly.

His inspired description of the fairy tales had inspired her, and she smirked and said, "What if I practiced being evil?" She wrapped one arm around him and tickled him in the ribs with the other.

"Yah!" went Draco. But he refused to be a sissy and ask for mercy. His fingers dug into the ribs of the youngest Black sister. She screamed and tried to escape, but he grabbed her and pressed her into the back of the sofa where he had her trapped in a full length body press. She tried to tickle back, but she couldn't hold out, and she was soon squirming and yelling for him to stop.

He stopped. She was breathing heavily and pressed against him. As her breathing slowed, she gave him a melancholy look, kissed him on the tip of his nose, and began stroking his hair. He held the sad and lonely lady. Her lips briefly met his. When he returned the favor, her tongue flicked out. They shifted and were now nestled together. They lay quietly, breathing the same air and marveling at how pleasant the contact was.

Needs stirred inside the melancholy female. She lay there as the warmth seeped through her until she first felt comfortable and secure. Next was the exchange of affection, and she let the tip of her tongue touch the corners of his mouth, and when he accepted it, she gave him a caressing nibble that tended his lips, his cheek, his eyes, his nose, and back to his lips now open for her as he let her achieve the feeling of companionship that let her relax in his arms.

How easy it is to underestimate what seem the softer emotions that oft appear to give way before the hard edge of commands and external force, but that lie dormant beneath the surface to grow unnoticed until it is they who are directing the harsh commands and steely force.

Thus it was that our fair lady believed that she had reached her desire and that her desire was a comfortable and innocent companionship. So innocuous were the next stirrings that she did not notice either her small shifts into more and more intimate contact or the initial pangs of longing within. Not even when the small shifts became

gentle moves and the initial pangs became tiny pools of warmth did our melancholy lady suspect what was coming, but only noticed a growing feeling of well-being.

It was only when her moves centered on brushing her breasts against his chest and pressing her inner thighs against his legs that she realized the warmth was pooling in her intimate self, but her long suppressed needs told her rational mind that something that felt this good could not be bad.

Then she was moaning and sliding against him and covering him with her kisses, and her rational mind could not keep the soft emotions from taking his hand, guiding it up her skirt, and placing it on the smooth fabric covering her sex. His finger rested between the silk-covered folds and he discovered the circular moves that stoked her passion as within him rose equivalent soft emotions of pleasing an admirable lady who wanted his attention. And these soft emotions more than sustained the effort needed to tend her sensitive spot as her whole body and her whole being expressed appreciation for his kindness until the soft emotions within him grew into the steel of enjoying driving a desirable female into rut where she writhed and whimpered for him and her face contorted as her soft desires took command of her and she couldn't stop and she smiled at him and then the soft needs consumed her and her face went feral, her pelvis made brutal jerks, and her voice keened and ended in a choked sob. She was gripping him hard enough to hurt, but it felt good.

She was still. He could see a flush spread over her. He could feel her heart pounding. He had not known dignified and proper women could behave in such a manner. He held her, thinking she had revealed herself vulnerable to him and thinking he should protect her against the world.

She held him, the contact prolonging her blissful state. When she was merely happy and content, she sat up and gave him a fond look. "That was sweet of you," she said.

Completely out of his depth, the only thing he could think of to say was, "Are you okay?" The whole experience was shattering enough that he didn't even realize that he had an unsatisfied erection.

He straightened his clothes, and the boy masquerading as a wizard discovered it was time to meet the others at the ball. He left the house in a daze.

When he arrived, Ron with Parvati, Harry with Luna, and Hermione were waiting for him. "You're late," they said.

Once inside the building, the three girls announced they were going to the ladies' room.

"Space-cadet, socialite, and prissy-missy," said Ron when the girls had gone.

"You bring your porn?" Harry asked Draco. "By the end of the evening, we're going to be as frustrated as hell."

"Porn and booze," said Draco.

"We'll take you back to the house," said Ron. "We'll have to blindfold you until you're safely inside, but then we can get pissed and see who can wank the furthest."

"No funny stuff while I'm blindfolded," said Draco, "or I'll destroy what I brought, and you won't want to miss it."

"I got pics of boobs you wouldn't believe," said Ron.

"Mine are couples shagging, all angles and quite moving," said Draco.

"Remember, for the wanking contest, it's measured from the toe-line," said Ron.

"Right, from the toe-line, not from the end of our peckers. Doesn't that give you a six-inch advantage?" Draco asked Ron.

"At least," said Harry

"I'd give up the porn for a decent conversation with a girl who likes me," said Ron.

"That's never going to happen, boys," said a voice behind them.

They turned to see Arthur Weasley dressed as a Killer Clown from Outer Space.

Draco drew on his assumed persona. "We never thought it would, old chap."

Arthur stepped back and then said, "Good imitation, Draco. Well, you boys enjoy your evening." He walked away.

Spacey, Social, and Prissy returned. Draco noticed their hesitation when his assumed persona struck them. He was thinking that he might be able to have a little fun before he and the other boys broke away.

After two dances, Ron had abandoned Parvati for the refreshment table, and she was watching a mature wizard as he sipped a cup of punch and let his eyes roam the ballroom in a confident manner that said he knew any lady would be proud to be his partner. She watched him set the cup down and begin touring the room, greeting people as he passed them. Her heart beat faster as he came closer. She wondered which lucky girl he would choose. Then he was in front of her.

"Miss Patil, will you honor me with a dance?"

She nodded and managed to stammer, "Call me 'Parvati.'"

She let herself be swept onto the floor. She had thought he would show what an accomplished dancer he was, but he kept to simple steps, and this conveyed that he was more interested in his partner than displaying his skill. She found him easy to follow, and as she focused on him, the rest of the ballroom receded.

"You dance well, Parvati."

"Thank you," she said, feeling a warm flush.

The number ended. "I would like to have the next one with you," he said, "although I do not want to monopolize such an attractive lady."

"I would like another," she said.

His hand on her back was perfectly respectable, but she knew it could easily move lower. She might not complain if it did. As they turned, she let her breasts brush against him. It was natural. It was unavoidable. She wanted another chance. Another turn. Another brush. She liked it. Did he mind? Did he know what she was doing? Another turn. In the simple moves, her legs moved against his smoothly, without entangling. She was closer. Her breasts constantly brushing against him. Her legs moving next to his. The dance ended.

Everything was in a haze. She was aware that he had walked her to the refreshment table for a punch and that she had said that she needed some fresh air, and they were on the balcony. He was asking about her, and she was muttering something about Divination and something and Herbology and whatever and Magical Creatures and anything to keep him talking to her and keep him with her, and she was glad when he waved his wand for privacy and held her closer and with supreme confidence placed his lips on hers, and she moaned into his mouth when he embraced her and gave her the attention she had always longed for, and then he was whispering what an admirable lady she was with her fashion sense beyond her years and how hard it was to find someone who realized how important details to grooming and clothes were in the circles in which he traveled and how proudly he could enter any room with such a beautiful and fashionable companion by his side, who had the elegant figure to grace any outfit said his lips on her neck and his hands cupping her breasts and his fingers unzipping her to let her bodice fall open and her silk bra to slide down to let his lips and tongue tend those dark nipples he assured her were perfection itself on a perfect body now making animal noises and weaving in time with the worm moving from

behind her navel toward her more intimate self as a hand touched the inside of her knee and slowly and caressingly moved up and up her golden thigh until the worm and the hand were close, very close, and Parvati thought she should protest for virtue's sake since she had never before allowed anyone under her skirt, but instead she placed her foot on a nearby bench to allow freer access to her aching void and the protest became an intense moan as the overpowering male smothered her lips with his and as one and then two fingers slid into the waiting space which opened into a welcoming cavern that became the focus of her world as she weaved at his command commands she had not known she longed for while feelings she wanted to go on and on and last forever were whipped to an unbearable intensity by a commander stirring her essence at his pleasure, and when she knew she would scream with the agony, a wave crashed against her and carried Parvati Patil to a far shore where she lay on the beach of her master like a survivor of a storm.

She was aware her breath was ragged and her heart was pounding. She was not aware her skin was flushed, her eyes were shining, and her lovely self was glowing. She was becoming aware that Draco was fastening her clothes and arranging her hair, and as she held him, that he still had an erection.

"I didn't do anything for you," she said.

"Perhaps later," he said. "We need to get you back before you're missed."

She walked with Draco back into the ballroom expecting everyone to stare at her and shake their heads in disapproval, but no one appeared to notice them. The two spotted Ron by the refreshment table and gave each other a farewell squeeze of their hands before separating.

A few minutes later, Luna Lovegood heard someone beside her say, "Are you checking the decorations for hostile creatures?"

Luna looked at the mature persona and said, "There are lots of different kinds of plants here: some from the forest, some from the fields, and some from the lakeside. There's a chance of intermingling what hides in them."

"Yes, we wizards do like natural decoration, and I suppose there is a chance we are fostering some strange combinations. But this isn't the first time we've used these plants."

"You think I'm worrying needlessly," said Luna.

"I see nothing special about this time. Do you?"

"No, they are being very circumspect," said Luna.

"I was hoping to entice you away from your vigil by asking you for a dance," he said.

"You want to dance with a loony Ravenclaw? And I don't dance very well."

"Think of it as a Slytherin tactic," he said. "Any creatures hiding in the decorations will think you're no longer observing them. And I would be proud to have you as a dance partner."

"You're saying that to humor me and make me feel better," she said.

"Of course, I am," he said. "Is it working?"

"A little," she said.

"Then may I have this dance?"

"Okay."

A minute later, she asked, "How am I doing?"

"Well enough. I'm enjoying myself. Can I be so bold as to ask for more dances?"

"Slytherin to the core," she replied. "The creatures will think I'm having so much fun that I no longer care about them."

Several dances later, she wanted to rest. He guided her to a table in the corner that was well positioned for observation while he retrieved some punch, grapes, and melon slices.

"Have you chosen your advanced subjects for next year?" he asked. He was fighting to keep everything light-hearted. The friendly beauty of Parvati had nearly stripped away his evening's veneer of sophistication, and the eerie attractiveness of Luna had blindsided him. His mantra that they were little girls with nothing to offer was giving ground before his desperate wish that they did.

"I'm not certain. I keep changing my mind," she replied.

"Most Ravenclaws include Charms and Transfiguration because of their fundamental nature and Arithmancy because it offers a deeper view of the world," he said, "but I've heard you have great rapport with animals."

"A perceptive and kind remark," she said. "It makes me wonder about the evil accusations I've heard about you."

"In Potions and Arithmancy, I'm competing against Ravenclaws, and it's nearly killing me," he said. "Were you considering either one of them?"

"No, my mind works in a different manner," she said. She cocked her head. "I've heard about your skills and hard work in Potions and Arithmancy. Even the Ravenclaws are impressed. Are you being modest in an effort to convince me that you're an easy-going, regular bloke, not the hard-driving, ambitious person that I've always thought you were?"

"Relaxed, easy-going, wouldn't hurt a fly," said Draco, leaning back languorously in his chair.

"A clever disguise," she said. "I often wish I were the type to offer support to those of great ambition, but I think I make them nervous instead."

"I find you comfortable and relaxing," said Draco, realizing, to his surprise, that it was true. "I think you would be an asset to those of truly great ambition." He yawned prodigiously. "Unfortunately, that is not I."

"You do put on a good show," said Luna, putting her hand on top of his.

Draco was wracking his brain for ways to keep the conversation going, to unobtrusively keep holding her hand. He was thinking Ron might be correct: friendly conversation with an understanding girl was better than porn. He was also shifting position to hide a growing erection.

"Are you thinking about what to say to me now that I'm holding your hand?" asked Luna.

"Yes, but I'm starting to think that with you I should just blurt out whatever comes to mind and let you sort it out."

"An interesting experiment," said Luna. "It appeals to me unless you're thinking low and base thoughts hardly worth uttering."

"I was thinking of holding more of you. Is that low and base enough?"

"Borderline," she said. "But titillating."

"Would you like a few more dances first? We can lull the creatures in the decorations into a false sense of security and ambush them when they make their move."

"You're making fun of me," she said.

"No, I'm teasing you," he said, standing and leading her to the dance floor.

It slowly dawned on Luna that he was treating her as a girl, as a girl he liked, and she liked it. She let herself brush against him as they danced, and she found that she liked that he enjoyed it. After all the years at school where she had been an outsider, it was new and different to have someone relate to her as a girl.

But then the years of rejection and derision came crashing down on her.

He stopped dancing. "Are you okay?" he asked.

"I'm fine," she said.

"Well, you looked as if you were having fun, and then you looked as if everything was terrible. Are you sure you're feeling well? We can rest. Do you want a drink of water? Do you want to go to the ladies' room? Hermione and Parvati are standing right over there. They can take you."

"I'm really fine, Draco."

He looked skeptical. "Well, let's rest. Would you like a punch? Is it too sweet?"

"I want to dance some more," she said.

The next number was slow, and as they danced, he noticed her somber appraisal of him. "I hope I meet with milady's approval," he said.

"I'm still considering it," she said, "but you'll be the first to know." She moved close to him.

He held her lightly. He was thinking that girls were a weird combination of strong and strange and fragile.

When the number ended, Luna took his hand, and the two of them walked to a deserted balcony by silent and mutual consent.

Still holding his hand, Luna said, "This has been a nice evening, Draco. I thought I would have fun trying to spot the animals mingling in the decorations. I didn't know I'd be asked to dance by someone who wanted to talk to me."

"I haven't said that much," he said. "I've seen you around school and thought you looked interesting and attractive, but I never managed to meet you."

She moved closer. "Do you really think I'm pretty?"

"Very."

"Do you want to kiss me?" she asked. "I've heard girls aren't supposed to ask, but this may be my only chance since everyone else avoids me."

"That's their loss," he said, giving her a kiss on the forehead and then, as she continued to look expectant, one on the lips."

She cocked her head. "Does it take practice?"

"Yes," he said. He put his hand gently on her waist and combed her hair behind her ears with his fingers. He slowly lowered his head toward hers until their lips were millimeters apart. He let her close the distance.

She fumbled with his lips as she wondered what in the world to do. She fumbled some more. She rather liked it. Since he wasn't pulling away, she decided he didn't mind her clumsiness, put her arms around him, and pulled him into a tight embrace and energetic kiss. Her nipples were brushing his chest and getting taut. She noticed he didn't seem to mind that either.

She came up for air and said, "I'm sorry I'm clumsy, but I'm having quite a nice time. I hope you are."

"I think it's the person, not the technique," he said. He leaned in and nibbled from her ear, down her neck, and onto her shoulder.

She made a delighted little sound and weaved, with her developing mounds against him. They both rather liked it. She grabbed him and kissed him passionately. He felt her erect nipples; she felt his erect member.

A flushed Luna stepped back and gave the situation some serious thought. "I want to go on and on but I've never had a boy pay any attention to me before and I have no idea what to do and I'm afraid my inexperience will let me get carried away."

"I think I know what you want," said Draco.

She gave him a quizzical look.

"You want to be held and treated like an attractive girl that I admire and lust after, which you are, you know, but when the evening is over, you want to still be a virgin," said the adult persona. "And you want me to never tell anyone what we did."

"Yes," nodded Luna.

"That can be arranged," he said.

"Do you think so?" she asked. "That would be marvelous."

"Allow me," he said. He clasped her hand, held it to the sacred sky above, and proclaimed, "Wizard's honor." He lowered her hand and looked her directly in the eye. "That should do it," he said.

She took his hand as he led her upstairs to an unused room with chairs and sofas where they cast the spells for secrecy. She thought it would be awkward after the rational discussion, but it seemed natural when he led her to a sofa, placed her in the middle, and sat in a corner. There was some distance between them. He waited while she waved her wand to banish several varieties of creatures known to pester snogging couples.

"I like your hair," he said.

"This?" she asked, stroking it with her hand. "This washed-out blonde mess?"

"I keep seeing it at school. I want to run my fingers through it. Sometimes, I think about waking up with it draped over me my companion, Luna, lady of insights, helping me

and the Malfoy family reach new heights."

"However would I do that?" she asked.

"Your freshness, your innocence, your strength: a constant inspiration."

"You're being too serious," she said. "You're supposed to inveigle me into some heavy snogging by feeding me lines about how attractive I am."

"Of course, you're attractive," he said, moving closer. "But a lot of it is inner beauty that will never fade."

"Couldn't you just tell me I'm pretty?"

"You're very pretty," he said, putting an arm around her and leaning close.

"That's better," she murmured.

Their lips met again in a clumsy kiss that sent an electric shock through both of them.

*I really like him*, she thought.

*I really like her*, he thought.

*Does he think I'm sexy?* she wondered.

*Does she think I'm sexy?* he wondered.

"I like your breasts," he said, trying to be a bold and confident bad-boy.

She blushed.

"I bet they look very nice," he said, wondering if he should try to unbutton her blouse.

She looked expectant.

"Very, very nice," he said, running his fingertips over the blouse-covered peaks in an attempt to cover his lapse in aggressiveness.

She gave a long, low sigh. He cupped them with his hands. She pushed into him and moved sinuously. He wondered if this was the signal to continue. He reminded himself that he had agreed to a limited ravishment and began fumbling with the buttons. She impatiently unbuttoned her blouse. He thought that was encouraging. Then he noticed that spacey Luna had a firm and full figure. His lips moved to the resilient flesh that was showing. She unfastened her bra and let it drop. What little rationality he had left registered that as very encouraging as he engulfed her with his lips.

Primal urges began replacing rational considerations of how to be a bad boy as Luna pressed his head against her and began moaning and weaving. His hand found her knees and nudged them apart.

Luna had thought that having a boy pay attention to her would be nice, but she didn't realize it would be this nice. He was clumsily kissing her and fumbling his way up her spreading thighs, and she was having a good time. Her body was taking on a life of its own with moans and wiggles, not to mention a growing tension and an increasing sense of warmth and dampness. Her back arched when his hand reached the junction of her legs and pressed against her practical cotton knickers. She lay back on the couch as he began nibbling the inside of her knees. She wondered if things could feel too good, and he had to push her legs apart as his lips and tongue moved toward her private place.

"Oh, I shouldn't. I shouldn't," she said when he began tugging at her knickers, but she lifted her hips, and he slid the garment down her legs where it remained on one ankle.

Her hands were applying gentle pressure against his head and her thighs were offering some resistance as he began nibbling toward her revealed center, but when he was halfway there, the coiled tension inside her reached critical and her legs sprung open. She closed her eyes and made small sounds as he nibbled the rest of the way up her glorious thighs and groaned when his tongue touched her intimate self.

Draco was hoping his adult persona had some residual memory of how to go about this. What little he knew was gentle, slow, and steady. He was encouraged by the sounds and moves Luna was making. He kept at it. The sounds and moves became more intense. His spirit soared at the thought of driving marvelous Luna Lovegood into ecstasy. He experimented by sliding a finger into her. Her wiggling increased. He pulled his finger out and tried two arranged vertically. When they were mostly in he turned them and pressed the tips of his fingers against the upper wall. He was rewarded by Luna going wild. It was all he could do to keep his tongue on the lady's nub.

There was a gasp and then a wet and muscular clenching of his fingers. There was another gasp and another wet and muscular clench. There was a third gasp followed by the wet, muscular clench. Then there was a panting Luna with damp hair and wet thighs. There was a happy and content Luna with flushed skin and sweet smile.

Luna pulled Draco into snuggling position as she swam in a sea of bliss. He had been so good to her: treating her well and keeping all his promises. She kept reminding herself that he was only for this evening. She hoped that someday she would find a boy like him that she could keep.

They cleaned themselves and dressed.

"I'm so glad you got to the feeding-me-lines part," she said.

"The other part was true, too," he replied.

She looked thoughtful. "I don't know if I can handle that. I would have to think that an evil Slytherin Malfoy has a heart and soul and possibly is someone I could really like."

"Is it more comfortable if I'm a bad boy who led you temporarily astray?" he asked. He pontificated with his finger in the air. "But now that reason has returned, you realize who your real friends are and can regard this evening as merely one of strange and beautiful memories accompanied by dreams you wish were true but know are impossible."

"I wish you had let me come to that conclusion by myself," she said. "Your showing depth and sensitivity is really messing with my mind."

"Suppose I suggest that you forget I said it."

"That would help. Thanks," she said.

He took her hand and walked her back to the entrance to the ballroom where they discreetly separated to avoid suspicion. They worried that Harry had missed her, but he was deep in a discussion of sports with a group of wizards.

Luna wandered over, made of show of being neglected, and coaxed Harry onto the dance floor. Draco wandered over to the punch bowl while fighting down thoughts of what a marvelous person Luna was and reminding himself that he was only a bad-boy fling to her.

Absently sipping his punch, he was certain the triple-whammy of youngest Black sister, Miss Patil, and Miss Lovegood had left him a quivering blob of protoplasm. How was he to hold himself together the rest of the evening?

"There you are," said a commanding voice behind him. "Where've you been?"

"Right here," he countered, thinking he had found what was needed to put starch back in his psyche. "Have you finished your gossip fest with Parvati and Ginny?"

"Well," said Hermione defensively.

Draco knew he had made a lucky strike. Time to continue the offensive. "That's okay. A bit of a break is good. Care for a dance?"

*Nothing like a brace of the bossy,* thought Draco. He discovered he had enough left in him to dance decently if he concentrated on it.

The rest of the evening passed uneventfully, and the group was making their farewells at the entrance to the dance hall.

Parvati told Ron she had had a fun evening and thanked him for bringing Draco.

"He didn't bother you, did he?" asked Ron.

"No, he behaved the way a true adult wizard should with a girl," said Parvati. "And some of his dance routines are breathtaking. I'll always remember this evening."

Luna shook Harry's hand and thanked him for the evening. She turned to Draco. "I, too, will remember this evening as the night that a young Slytherin behaved beautifully." To everyone's amusement, she kissed him on the forehead.

Hermione made her goodbyes with singing in her heart that having Draco disguise himself as Lucius had caused him to act like a gentleman to her friends. And she was beaming from knowing the other girls were jealous that she got most of the dances with him. She ignored the feeling that he had been too decent during the evening and shrugged off the twinge from thinking she wasn't attractive enough for him to act just a little bit improper. She had hoped he would at least make a few risqué remarks that caused her to blush, and on the dance floor, she had longed for a few naughty touches. But perhaps he didn't care that much for girls. After all, the three boys seemed eager to leave. She still had hopes that the real Lucius had feelings for a bookish witch, which he was willing to express instead of leaving her with an incomplete feeling.

Some time later, when they were finally safe inside an upstairs room of the creepy mansion, the three boys each took a swig of strong drink to begin banishing the evening's frustrations.

Draco stepped up to the line on the floor. The evening sequence danced in his mind: full, weaving, mature form; knowing kisses; whimpers of an elegant lady thick, raven hair; sweaty, golden skin; moans of a beautiful girl damp, blonde tresses; sweet, content smile; taste of an aroused witch.

His load shot across the room.

"Wow," said Ron and Harry.

They never matched it.

## Girls' Day In

### *Chapter 5 of 10*

A narrator of sensitivity would not relate this episode.

#### **Chapter 5: Girls' Day In**

*How in the world did they entice me into this?* Hermione asked herself as she sipped her wine and enjoyed the shade and breeze of the outdoor café. They were in a remote part of the country, and all three were blondes for disguise, Narcissa naturally and Bellatrix and Hermione by charms.

"We are not going to foolishly throw our lives away," Lucius had announced before the morning practice. "We will have our wands, and if arrows and spears fail us, we will use them."

Hermione had been wondering what the centaurs would think when he had said, "No agreement with the centaurs or piece of land is worth losing any of us."

She had been thinking that was a great sentiment but had been questioning its value to her when the adult wizards had declared they needed to show the students the necessary deadly spells. Narcissa and Bellatrix had decided they would instruct Hermione while the wizards had taken Draco in hand. She had been certain that she would be a klutz but had discovered the game of skeet had improved her aim. It had been a matter of teaching her a one-syllable spell from the dark side that shriveled the insides, and it had been a matter of developing the necessary mental stamina that let her continue hurling the curse. When, quite literally, she no longer had the mental wherewithal to implode a pumpkin, they had returned to the physical discipline of bow-and-arrow practice.

*How in the world did they entice me into this?* Hermione asked herself again as they waited for their lunch to arrive.

"You look thoughtful, dear," said Bellatrix as she refilled the wine glasses.

"I was thinking wizard-skeet seemed an innocent pastime until it helped me throw those curses this morning," said Hermione.

"I thought most games came from combat," said Narcissa.

"There's Quidditch," said Bellatrix. "How many games have a set of balls just to hurt other players?" She reflected. "Or should I say, 'Have the balls to hurt other players'?"

"Overthrow of the Matriarchy," said Hermione.

"What?" asked Narcissa and Bellatrix.

"It's just something that popped into my head," said Hermione. "Does Quidditch celebrate the overthrow of some Matriarchy?"

"They 'score' by getting their 'balls' into this round opening," said Narcissa, "and it's done by 'chasers.' But they don't get many points. It's just the handmaidens."

"It's farfetched, but do beaters equal bangers," suggested Hermione. "No, wait. It's the final storming of the castle. They're the last ditch defenders. They can interfere, but their efforts get no points."

"We all know what the golden snitch represents," said Bellatrix. "One nails the queen, and the game is over."

"And we're all golden blondes now," said Hermione, giggling into her wine glass.

"Ah, yes, but who's the queen?" asked Narcissa. "Whose castle gets stormed?"

"No one is doing much storming these days," lamented Bellatrix.

"We could practice for the big day," suggested Narcissa.

Hermione smiled and nodded and then turned reflective. "If the big day ever arrives."

"Are you telling us the boys are as loutish as the men?" asked Bellatrix.

"You mean, the men are louts too," said Hermione with disappointment in her voice.

"We may have a long time to practice," said Narcissa.

They were musing about practice leading to perfection when the waiter arrived with their order of kabobs and another bottle of wine. Thoughts about perfection had the two adults thinking the youngster was odd-girl-out, and Bellatrix asked Hermione, "What are you doing in such evil company?"

"Well, ...," began Hermione, shocked by the question and too fatigued by the morning's practice to dissemble. The wine had its effect. "I'm having a good time," she announced.

"Are you saying our past doesn't bother you?" asked Narcissa.

"What do you want me to do, spank you?" joked Hermione.

Hermione thought the two older women were taking the joke much too seriously.

Bellatrix's eyes were shining. She placed her hand on top of Hermione's and said, "I'm game."

"We do want you to have a good time," said Narcissa.

Deeply touched, Hermione blushed.

The Black sisters decided the occasion would be intimate enough that they should go one-on-one with Hermione. They drew straws to see who would be first. It would be Bellatrix.

"You're looking thoughtful again," said Bellatrix.

"You're thinking that six months from now, we will face each other across a battlefield," said Narcissa.

Hermione nodded.

"It's the way of the warrior," said Narcissa.

Halfway through her kabob, Hermione noticed a pair of adoring eyes and felt a set of toes on her calf. She gave the oldest Black sister a friendly smile.

Bellatrix moved closer to Hermione and whispered, "Have you always been a good girl?"

Hermione nodded.

Bellatrix continued, "Being a good girl is meaningless if there're no bad girls. It's an empty and lonely existence for nothing." Bellatrix breathed more fumes of enlightenment. "You're missing out. You're letting a whole area of knowledge slip away from you."

Hermione processed the new thought. Bellatrix licked her ear.

"Besides, no one need know that you have acquired a vast amount of information, that by your own initiative you have broken free of artificial restrictions."

Bellatrix checked that no one was looking and waved her wand for a concealment spell. She took the girl's right hand and placed it under her skirt, just above her knee. Hermione gasped at the feel of the older woman's smooth skin and firm muscles.

"Do you like that?" asked Bellatrix. "I like it. Did you ever think that both would like it?"

Bellatrix leaned closer. "Were you thinking of spanking me, my dear? What would you like me to wear? I have on black silk that will move and ripple as I twist under your punishment. It contrasts with my pale skin and shows my round shape. But would you prefer dark purple? I will be face down and spread eagled for you. You can make me put a pillow under my hips that presses against me and excites me as I squirm from your lashes."

Hermione looked into deep, dark eyes, and her will turned to water.

Bellatrix nuzzled Hermione. "I will guide you. I will teach you how to make your wand vibrate and how to flick it to sting." Bellatrix licked her lips. "You are new to this. You will begin, and you will be fascinated by the sight of a woman moving under your ministrations, but when you hear me start to moan and see the beginning of surrender in my eyes, you will speak the release word and stop. Freed of my bonds, I will pull you down to sit on the bed beside me. I will comfort you and reassure you. When you are ready to continue, I will go back to being bound helpless before you."

Hermione's eyes were wide. Her hand slid up to where Bellatrix's thigh became rounder.

Bellatrix nibbled her ear. "Reassured, you flick your wand in a considered and measured manner. You vary the cadence until you find the one that causes my whole body to move sinuously. My lips part. I'm moaning. You notice I'm aroused, and the dominant, animal wells up inside you. Your wand flicks and flicks; you didn't know you would receive such deep pleasure from making me wiggle for you."

Hermione's hand moved nearly to the junction of the older woman's thighs. Bellatrix's breath in Hermione's ear felt warm and humid; the space under her skirt felt warm and humid.

"I'm crying out and straining against my bonds. My face is strained and contorted. You lash at me with your wand, not believing what is happening, not believing you're doing this. My muscles tighten. You see my thighs quiver. I groan and lie still. The black silk between my legs becomes shiny with its wetness."

Bellatrix's lips were on Hermione's. Her tongue was in her mouth. Bellatrix cupped the young girl's breast and massaged it in time with the hand under her skirt. The older woman's hips rolled. Her kisses devoured the young girl. Her muscles tightened. She groaned into the mouth of her partner. Her thighs quivered. Hermione held the older lady as Bellatrix's skin became flushed, her muscles became soft, and the black silk between her legs became seriously damp.

Hermione cuddled the woman who had become special to her.

Hermione noticed that Narcissa had moved closer. Her nostrils were flared, her eyes looked shiny and feral, and she said, "Perhaps we could retire to the privacy of the manor." Narcissa placed her hand on Hermione's shoulder. The young girl saw the bestiality in the elegant face and the claws in the aristocratic fingers. She shivered in anticipation.

Back at the manor, Narcissa poured a measure of potion, dropped a long coarse hair into it, and said, "Let me see if I can do something special." A minute later, the other two witches were facing Fenrir halfway into a transformation.

The eyes of the Fenrir-Beast raked Bellatrix.

*Unfair*, pouted Hermione. *She's had more time to develop her breasts. Mine are worth considering. Even Harry sometimes stares at them.*

The Fenrir-Beast flashed a toothy grin. Bellatrix gasped and stepped back.

*Sure*, thought Hermione. *Go for the obvious beauty with the sultry eyes. Her hair is just as frizzy as mine. So what if she's got the cutest ass in the British Isles. I bet I'm tighter and firmer where it counts.*

The predator growled. Bellatrix emitted a shriek.

*A siren call of lust*, thought Hermione. *Pretend to run, dearie, so you can wag your tail.*

Bellatrix did turn to escape, with the Fenrir-Beast watching appreciatively.

*Don't just stand there like a dumb beast with your tongue hanging out*, thought Hermione, fascinated by the fluid flow of fabric following the fleeing fair Frau.

Hermione growled. *Catch her for me. I mean, catch her for us. Oh, hell, you know what I mean.*

The Fenrir-Beast was on the scurrying lady, the impact carrying them to the bed. Bellatrix squealed. They wrestled lusty grunting, blouse ripping open, skirt riding up.

*I can help*, thought Hermione, feeling tension grow behind her navel not sure, exactly, which one she wanted to assist or how.

The grunting became moaning. The tussling became undulating. The Fenrir-Beast had pinned the flushed and panting witch. Hermione sat on the bed, entranced. The Fenrir-Beast extended its long, almost prehensile tongue. It went under the silk and caressed a breast. Hermione watched the material fold around the snake of a tongue as it circled and fondled the lovely mound. Bellatrix tilted her head back. The Fenrir-Beast drew back to admire a lovely face becoming soft. The tongue tended the other breast moving under the silk like an obscene creature from the erotic deep while Bellatrix weaved like an obscene creature. Her skirt rode higher, and the Fenrir-Beast came up between spreading legs until milady gasped when an obscene creature prodded the thin material covering her erotic deep.

*Hey, I'm here, too*, thought Hermione.

Then Hermione felt the Fenrir-Beast in her head as it searched for her equivalent memories. She traveled back in time. There were flashes of Ron and Lavender snogging in the common room, memories of the lonely fifth year, and recollections of the Yule Ball with the short innocent snog afterwards. The Fenrir-Beast stepped forward through the next two months until it located the February evening behind a greenhouse. Her blouse was open and his hand was on her knee as they had been for the last two weeks, but this evening his lips nibbling her lace-covered breasts seemed particularly sweet. His hand moved higher than she had allowed before. She was exhausted from her friends fighting and their reluctance to take her advice, and she needed the attention and the consolation. His lips were on hers, his tongue was in his mouth, and his hand was feeling its way up the sensitive skin. She tried to close her legs but his hand held them open and kept climbing and it felt so good and she wanted to be wanted and she opened her legs and she gasped as his fingers trailed across her now damp garment and she tried to squeeze her thighs shut but his hand was still there and stroking the spot she thought only she knew about and it kept stroking and she moaned and spread her legs and two fingers slipped under the cotton and into her and she was trying to say no while her hips matched his rhythm and soon she was groaning and arching her pelvis with her desperate need and there was an explosion behind her eyes and her knees buckled as she clenched and soaked his fingers.

Hermione returned to the present to discover her own hand in her knickers and keeping time with Bellatrix wiggling on the rod prodding hers.

*I'm not jealous*, Hermione told herself as she watched the hand-claw rip away the impeding garment. It flew over its shoulder to land on the floor.

*It's a wonder it didn't go splat*, thought Hermione.

Then the Fenrir-Beast was in Hermione's mind again, and she could feel Bellatrix parting for her. Never in her life did Hermione believe she would push into slickness and sink into silkiness, that she would come out of the cold and enter warm coziness while a lovely lady moaned. Hermione's pelvis thrust forward and she moaned in symphony - the universe moving in harmony.

Hermione wanted a cock. She wanted to mount a lusty Bellatrix, wanted to spread a willing Narcissa, wanted to ride an eager Ginny. She wanted to feel them parting for her, wanted to hear the way they moaned, wanted to see their faces in the grip of coupling.

Now, she could see Bellatrix in the grip of coupling enthusiastic coupling with her pale skin and round shapes spreading and squirming as the Fenrir-Beast pressed against her and aroused her while she moaned and her face contorted and the wiggling became more intense until all control was lost and Bellatrix smiled and her thighs squeezed and she cried out and was still. Hermione watched the Fenrir-Beast enjoy Bellatrix in orgasm.

The Fenrir-Beast gave Hermione a big toothy grin and licked its chops. Hermione grinned and licked her chops. The Fenrir-Beast was in front of the young girl, pulling her knickers off and tossing them over its shoulder.

*I really didn't hear them land*, thought Hermione.

The hand-claw ripped off her blouse and top.

*My breasts, my perky breasts. Tongue them*, thought Hermione, but the Fenrir-Beast growled and Hermione Granger blushed with excitement as her knees parted to display smooth inner thigh and engorged nether lips

She saw the nostrils of a long and hairy snout flare as it took in her sex reek. She gasped as the long snout prodded her intimate self.

*Yes, oh yes, tongue that*, thought Hermione.

It did.

"Yah!"

*Keep control, girl,* Hermione told herself.

It did it again.

"Yah!"

The Fenrir-Beast gave tongue; Hermione gave tongue.

*Go, wolfie, go,* cheered Bellatrix.

As it peaked and became almost unbearable, Hermione imagined Lucius between her legs with his eyes watching her as his tongue drove her wild.

*I give you your Indian names,* thought Bellatrix, *Parsel-Tongue and Dances-With-Wolves.*

Bellatrix watched Hermione have an orgasm.

The Fenrir-Beast stood, found inspiration in the scene before him, and conjured a second cock.

Hermione stared at the weird-wolf and tried to get the jingle out of her head.

*Double your pleasure; double your fun.*

*More than one cock is better than one.*

The Fenrir-Beast growled, grabbed the girl's ankles, and lifted her legs to fully expose her. The heads of the cocks pushed at the entrances.

"Eek!"

Hermione had had many romantic fantasies about how she would lose her virginity, but none of them matched this. Among other things, she hadn't squeaked.

Then there was the feel of her flesh spreading, slowly spreading with a loving touch, spreading and allowing entry, a tingling entry, slowly spreading and experiencing being filled, filling as she tingled and squirmed. There was the look of the Fenrir-Beast as it pushed itself deeper and deeper into a soft, resilient Hermione who was tingling and squirming and filling the room with sounds from her beastly deep.

Hermione's fantasies had been quiet, lofty encounters where she stroked the hair of the considerate and handsome wizard who was taking her to new heights.

*I'll stop making these undignified noises as soon as that thing takes its thing out of my arse,* she thought.

The tingling transmuted into the most incredible sensations as two cocks took her to a new place.

*But there's no hurry,* thought the girl.

Meanwhile, the thing of that thing was having a grand time as the guest of honor at a premiere opening.

*Interesting,* thought Bellatrix as the girl's squeaks became cries and turned into moans.

*Fascinating,* thought Bellatrix, watching the girl's face turn ethereal and then contorted as the plunges into firm softness went from gentle to assured to demanding.

*Enthralling,* thought Bellatrix as the girl smiled, smiled and romped, romped and wailed, wailed as the world simultaneously exploded and melted inside her.

"Ahhrooo," wailed the Fenrir-Beast as it exploded and melted inside the girl.

*That was the beast, not me,* Hermione told herself. *I didn't really howl, not like that anyway.*

The Fenrir-Beast sat between the two women and began to change. Narcissa was back smiling, flushed, and lovely.

Hermione put an arm around Narcissa and kissed her on the forehead. Narcissa responded with a hug that strummed the fibers of the young girl's being. Bellatrix joined the effort.

*Wow,* thought Bellatrix. *Sisterhood is great.*

*Wow,* thought Hermione. *Auntie Bellatrix and Auntie Narcissa are great.*

*Wow,* thought Narcissa. *These two are great. Wait 'til Lucius gets in their pants.*

## Obstacles and Courses

*Chapter 6 of 10*

With a song in their hearts.

### Chapter 6: Obstacles and Courses

The chosen six, carrying their bows and arrows and spears, met before breakfast the next Monday to traverse the five mile hike and obstacle course through the Forbidden Forest that had been laid out by the centaurs.

On a steep incline, Hermione started to slide down the slope. Lucius grabbed her arm and held it until she regained her footing. When they came to a large tree that had

fallen across the trail, Lucius gave Hermione a boost to the top of the trunk where she lowered a short rope for him. Hermione noticed that Severus and Narcissa followed their example and so did Draco and Bellatrix. When they came to a deep and fast flowing stream, Lucius stripped down to his boxers, tied a rope around his waist, and gave the other end to Hermione. The water swept him quite a distance downstream before he made it to the other side, but once he and Hermione had secured the rope, everyone else crossed easily.

The last leg of the hike found Lucius singing lustily.

In blizzard or storm,  
In sun warm and bright,  
The day hot as hell  
Bone-chilling be the night,  
Our bodies may be weary,  
But spirits never fade,  
No, never fade;  
Fearless, the wizard  
Like the whirlwind he strikes.

Hermione gave Mrs. Malfoy a puzzled look.

"My husband is fond of lost causes, and I could almost love him for it," said Narcissa. "But I'm not sure that's a good thing."

Hermione wondered if the lost causes or the almost loving him wasn't the good thing. Nevertheless, Hermione and the others joined in the marching song.

At the end of the trail, they collapsed on a grassy slope by a stream.

"Remind me, once again, why I'm doing this," said Bellatrix.

"Out of the nobleness of your heart," said Draco.

She swung at him with her bow, but he ducked.

"This is stupid," said Severus. "We'd be more valuable on our brooms as reconnaissance."

"We're working on it," said Lucius. "The centaurs are coming around."

They were reminded that magic had its uses as they opened their kits for a breakfast of cold juice, hot tea, warm scrambled eggs, and crisp toast. Hermione noticed that the pairing continued through breakfast.

They decided the first practice should be with the new weapon, and they spent the next half-hour thrusting spears into spider shaped objects. That was followed by an hour of archery practice with moving targets. Hermione and Lucius discovered they were more effective if Lucius was the primary archer with Hermione as backup. She noticed that the other two women had come to the same conclusion with Severus and Draco. The pairings lasted as they finished the morning with elementary maneuvering and shooting with the centaurs.

The centaurs assured them that spiders appeared to have no tactics except for attacking in a swarm. The centaurs also assured them that they were keeping the exercises a secret and not stirring up the spiders in any way whatsoever. The campaign to clear the land should catch the spiders by surprise.

The three pairs of bedraggled trainees arrived at the Malfoy estate a little after noon, and the men and women repaired to their respective hot-tubs to soak their tired and sore muscles.

After Narcissa was dressed, a house-elf informed her that Severus was in the library. She found him lounging in a leather chair and reading a book.

"Would you like lunch by the lake?" she asked.

"Love to, if I can walk that far," he said. "Where do you get your energy?"

She smiled. "From you."

They picked up a quilt, packed a lunch basket, and strolled to the shore. Halfway there, she took his hand. A mild shock went through her at his touch, and when they arrived at the lake, she stood confused while he spread the quilt.

She couldn't sort out her feelings. How had this happened? How had she gone from a radiant bride with high expectations to inviting the company of another man? She had a hazy memory that in the midst of many social events, her husband had gradually drifted away. She remembered trying everything, some of which she recalled with embarrassment, to be more pleasing to him.

"I've always liked the view over the lake," she said to hide her jumbled thoughts as she sat and accepted a plate with slices of fruit. She absent-mindedly munched some fruit while being torn between wondering how to find out if this reserved wizard had any feelings for her and wondering if she should.

The plate was empty. "You ate all the honeydews," he said accusingly.

"There's other fruit," she said.

He crossed his arms and glared out over the lake a wronged man.

"I can peel you a sour grape," she offered.

Instead, she opened a bottle of wine, poured two glasses, and said, "I'm being trained as a warrior-princess full of woodcraft and deadly battle skills. I will hie me into yonder forest, bring down game, skin and gut it with my fingernails, and bring it to you as an offering."

"Good plan," he said. "Is there a ham sandwich to tide me over till you return?"

"Mighty warrior-princesses never go anywhere without them," she said, digging into the lunch basket.

She put the sandwich and a dill pickle, "for complete nutrition," on a plate and asked, "Won't teaching seem dull after this?"

"This may be less dangerous," he replied, "and the company is better." He sampled the pickle. "Won't masked balls seem dull after this?"

"This may be less dangerous," she replied, "and the company is better."

"Good one," he said.

Five ducks paddled close and then waddled toward them. The two tossed pieces of bread and fruit for them. After some initial squabbling, the ducks were in a line and getting their tidbits one at a time from left to right. While feeding them the last of the lunch, Narcissa was thinking her husband hadn't touched her for several years, but despite his liaisons, she had never considered being anything other than a dutiful married woman, a mother, and a hostess. True, there were other girls, but that wasn't going anywhere, and it looked as if the other girls were going to take up with her son and husband.

Severus was watching the departing ducks. She had to know if he was thinking about her at all, and she said, "A Sickle for your thoughts."

"I'm not certain they're appropriate," he said. "I was thinking that seeing your determined and rugged side this morning made you even more attractive."

She was both glad that he was thinking about her and dismayed at how much she liked it.

He lay on his back on the quilt, looking at the sky. She copied him. Then she was lying on her side, facing him. Then she was closer. Then she was very close. He reached up and stroked her hair. Then she was snuggled against him with her head on his shoulder.

After a while, she began running her fingers through his hair. She was nibbling him. She was caressing him with her lips and fingertips. She was all over him and kissing him passionately. He reciprocated. Her entire being celebrated. Finally, she stopped and sighed and cuddled him. They held each other, enjoying the romantic phase of their relationship.

She surreptitiously checked to see if he had an erection. Yes, he did. Good. If he hadn't had one, the warrior-princess would have scalped him with her fingernails.

About the time Severus was discovering his lady of the lake had gobbled all the honeydews, Bellatrix discovered her honey in the reading room duly waiting for her. She observed him from the doorway as he lay on a rug in front of the fireplace. She had an urge to gobble him up, but she was coming to appreciate the fruits of slowly building a relationship.

"Hey," she said from the doorway. She walked over and kneeled beside him. "Are you ready for lunch? We can eat on the patio. After this morning, I'm ready for something nutritious."

"Are you talking about one of your green monstrosities?" he asked.

"It's called a chef's salad, and it's very good," she informed him.

"After this morning, I'm ready for several beers and an aspirin," he said.

"That will put you to sleep."

"That's okay, too," he said.

The tugs of her heart had their effect, and she embraced him. She lay with her head on Draco's chest, listening to his heart beat. It was enough. His presence quieted her, and time passed as she lay next to him.

Draco, stroking his lady's hair, noticed the wildness leaving her eyes, and he was glad. He wasn't certain her insane streak was a good thing even in battle.

"I like it when you relax," he told her.

"I'm not sure I should," she said. "Family duties press."

"You're competent enough that you can remain calm and handle them," he said.

"You're telling me that I get too worked up, that I go overboard, aren't you?" she said. She raised her head and looked at him fondly.

He raised his head and brushed her lips with his. Years of loneliness met adolescent yearning. Her lips followed his as he lowered his head. Slowly building a relationship be damned. She needed this. Who cared about his inexperience and clumsiness? His affection for her was filling in and smoothing over cracks in her psyche she didn't know she had.

His ardor had changed their position from her being on top to her stretched out beside him to his being on top. She liked it. She felt his hand roam over her: her hair, her neck, her shoulder, her arm. She reveled in it. She had been deprived of human contact for so long so long. Now, someone wanted every part of her wanted her attention, her company, her affection wanted to hold her.

For Draco, nothing else existed at this moment except for this lovely and desirable woman. She was everything. Her affection was completing him. Her combination of firmness and softness was driving him wild. He had to touch her intimate self. He paused, raised himself on his elbow, and looked fondly at her as his hand made it way over the outside of her skirt to her knee. He let his hand slide under her skirt and touch the inside of her knees. She looked back at him with longing and raised her knees. She let him nudge them apart. His head was swimming. Did he dare? Would she let him? His hand moved slowly up her thigh. It was incredible. Would any woman let him do something that was so wonderful? His hand moved further up. Oh, the feel. Her skirt slid down the slope revealing her thighs and a glimpse of knickers. His head was reeling. His hand moved up the smooth skin. She was letting him. This was unbelievable. His hand reached the smooth, silk-covered softness between her legs. It felt warm and moist. Could he hold his hand there? Could he hold her there? She placed her hand on his in approval. His heart was pounding. Never in his wildest dreams did he ever believe he would get his hand between his aunt's legs. And they were such lovely legs. And it was such a lovely place.

His aunt guided his hand until a finger lay in the cleft in the silk garment caused by the folds of her sex. His aunt guided his hand into a slow circular motion. "Yes, like that," she whispered to him.

Draco was floating in another world with just Bellatrix.

His aunt was rolling her hips in time with his hand between her legs. The beast within him wanted more. He moved his other hand to the top of a breast. Would she allow this, too? He cautiously let his hand move lightly over her breast. He caught his breath when she arched her back to press her breast against his hand. Would she allow this? Did she like it? He cupped her breast with his hand. He had always admired her breasts on the small side, but shapely. Now, she was unbuttoning her blouse and unhooking her bra. She was bringing his lips to her breasts.

Bellatrix loved the way he lavished attention on her, both tender and eager. Who cared if he was clumsy? She liked this wizard, and he liked her. She could feel her guard going down and her concerns and anxieties slipping away. His attention had her on a new plane where everything was okay and he smelled wonderful. She moved and sighed and became wet for him.

Bellatrix was floating in another world with just Draco. She had been a wife to her husband and a mistress to her lord, but she had merely endured their stabs at intimacy. It was what was expected of her. Now, someone she wanted was paying attention to her, was doing the nicest things to her, for her.

Draco's finger slipped under the intimate garment and from there slipped into his aunt. It was unbelievable that she allowed this, but she pressed against his hand with thrusts of her hips accompanied by primal noises. Did girls get excited, too? His aunt acting like this should have been embarrassing, but he liked it. He really liked it when

she wrapped her arms around him and covered his lips with hers. He had always admired his aunt and thought her beautiful, and now this beautiful woman he had always wanted was all over him and moving as if she couldn't get enough of him. Her moves and noises became incoherent. She felt extra wet. She was still. He wondered if she was okay. His finger insider her felt contractions. He realized he had given her an orgasm. Nothing could be better.

Draco held his aunt, stunned at what he had done.

Bellatrix was thinking how good it was to have a lover.

"That was sweet," she told him. "Do you mind?" she asked as she unbuttoned his trousers and reached in.

Draco had never felt anything like those strong, gentle fingers. He wanted it to go on and on. It did go on and on with the most wonderful woman in the world. Then it felt better. Then it felt even better. Then it felt too good, and he made a sticky mess in his lover's hand. She kissed him and held both him and his limp member in a loving embrace.

"We have to change, dear," she told him.

In her room, she remembered that she had been destined for her husband and he had sampled the charms of his property. The Dark Lord had taken her twice, but those had been acts of power and possession. Draco's slowness with her was partly due to his inexperience, but the more experienced lady was now able to recognize a romantic nature and its need for more than sex. Her more mature self rather liked that.

She reflected that Draco was young and would change during the next several years. She hoped they remained compatible: it would hurt to lose him; she didn't want to think about losing him. It was a measure of Draco's influence on her that she thought about others and wondered about Narcissa and Hermione. She had seen Narcissa set off to find Severus and supposed Hermione had done the same for Lucius.

Bellatrix was correct. Once Hermione was out of the hot tub and dressed, she asked an elf where Lucius was.

Lucius was on an upper story balcony watching Severus and Narcissa walk to the lake. He saw Narcissa take her companion's hand. Lucius thought it about time that Narcissa reached out for someone. The problem was that very few wizards were worthy of her. But Severus, by his own efforts, had turned himself into an aristocrat one of intellect and power instead of wealth, but an aristocrat nonetheless. Lucius thought it sad that Narcissa wasn't the type to have helped Severus become the outstanding person he now was. She had been raised to respond to success, not the struggle for success. Lucius wondered if his friend would be less bitter if his life and struggle had been less lonely. He wondered if the struggle for success would have enriched Narcissa. Lucius heard approaching steps and turned away from the scene at the lake to greet Hermione.

"I wondered if you would like a change," she said, "something different. I know I can't offer anything to match this place, but sometimes a change is nice."

"That sounds good, Hermione. What did you have in mind?"

"We can have lunch at my place," she suggested. "There's stuff there already, or we can pick something up on the way. I can get whatever you like. Or we can get something to eat on the way. What would you like?"

"Good idea," he said.

"I can fix anything you like, but it's not a magic flat. I'd like to cook something for you. I hope you don't mind."

"You're right. Something simple," he said.

"A tin of soup?" he asked. She nodded. He waved his wand.

"Some slices of fruit, a bottle of wine, and some petit-fours?" he asked. She nodded. He waved his wand.

"I accept your gracious offer," he said, putting the lot into a bag. "Let us go."

"A comfortable place," he said when they had arrived.

He divided the fruit and petit-fours among the plates she handed him and poured the wine while she opened the tin of soup. He was standing behind her while she stirred the soup. Then his arms were around her waist. She would have been glad to stir the soup forever. Then she felt things stir inside her and decided there was more to life than stirring soup. She finally brought herself to say, "I think it's warm enough." For a few minutes, she had been tempted to let the soup boil away while he brought her to a boil.

After lunch, Lucius said, "My wife tells me that you like a massage after the morning drill."

Hermione wasn't sure what to say. How much had Narcissa told her husband? She said, "Your wife was very kind. I don't do sports, and I'm not used to all this activity."

"We both, we all, appreciate your helping us," he said. "Would you like a massage?"

Her insides churned at the thought of his hands all over her. She stumbled out, "Just a minute," got a quilt, and stretched out on it.

He began with her neck. She was smiling by the time he moved to her shoulders. When he started on her back, she said, "Just a moment," sat up, and took off her shirt. "Don't peek," she said as she unfastened her bra and lay back down on the quilt. He resumed the massage. She didn't want him to quit. He could keep his hands on her forever.

"I'm falling asleep," she said.

"Don't leave," she murmured.

When she woke, he was reading in a chair.

"Fascinating character, this Nancy Drew," he said.

For the first time in her life, she thought Lucius Malfoy might be human.

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Lucius's song is adapted from Panzerlied.

Ob's stürmt oder schneit,

Ob die Sonne uns lacht,

Der Tag glühend heiß

Oder eiskalt die Nacht.

Bestaubt sind die Gesichter,  
Doch froh ist unser Sinn,  
Ist unser Sinn;  
Es braust unser Panzer  
Im Sturmwind dahin.

# The Meadow

*Chapter 7 of 10*

The first day of battle.

## Chapter 7: The Meadow

"Ack!"

"Omigod!"

"Yahoo!"

Whack. Slash. Stab.

The three witches high-fived each other over the dead and broken spider.

*Mighty Merlin, grant me strength,* prayed Lucius.

"The spiders don't know when it's Monday," Lucius had announced the previous week. "We can go to war on schedule and still catch them by surprise." Now, he wasn't certain what the spiders knew, but it seemed to be a typical Monday for the witches. He was thinking that any other day of the week would have been fine.

He was also thinking that everything turns out different. The first different thing had been the centaurs. Lucius had followed his hero, van Falkenhayn, and had presented the global picture to his allies. The land they planned to reclaim was roughly twelve miles east-to-west and six miles north-to-south. It was bounded by a river on the North, woods under the control of the centaurs on the East, a ridge on the South, and a creek on the West. The spiders were apex predators, and the ecology could support five of them per square mile. Hence, they had to eliminate at least three hundred ferocious opponents.

"They outnumber us," the lead centaur had said.

"They more than outnumber you," Lucius had replied. "Every one of them is a capable warrior. How many capable warriors do you have?"

The centaur had replied that they could gather eighty-one mature fighters. Under the cool gaze of Lucius, the chief centaur conceded that they might be able to field more effectives if they made an effort. The effort consisted of twenty-two young bucks that would fight under the direction of three Aunties.

"They leave supervision to the Aunts," Narcissa had observed.

"Very smart," Bellatrix had said.

"Sensible people," Hermione had added.

Still trying to apply the lessons of history, Lucius had convinced the centaurs that the young bucks could form an artillery brigade under the firm control of the older females. He and Severus had devised an explosive warhead to be fired by longbow that had a range of one hundred yards. The centaurs had liked the idea that the artillery brigade would not be in the front lines. Lucius and Severus privately had thought that things would get more desperate than that.

The spiders had adapted different hunting tactics for the different terrains. The northeast corner was a flat meadow bounded by the river on the north, the centaur forest on the east, and a stream running southeast to northwest that emptied into the river. It was nearly a triangle with five miles along the river and six miles along the forest. With no natural cover for a large predator, the spiders had turned to concealed trapdoors. The centaurs didn't want to fall into a trap and they didn't want to leave any spiders behind them as they swept through the triangle. They had agreed that Lucius and Severus could conduct reconnaissance by broom and use cameras that located all the spider holes.

The flyover had found seventy-nine spider holes in the triangular meadow. The witches and wizards had claimed the long and irregular row of eleven holes bordering the river. It was the first day; they were fresh; and it was the best time to cover the distance. They had gone in with brooms slung on their backs and wands hidden in their sleeves. They had carried bows and arrows, spears, and sacks of smoke and fire grenades. The centaurs had followed suit and had organized ten storm-trooper units with six members each, which left twenty-one mature centaurs plus the twenty-two bucks and three Aunties as rear guards and reserve.

Then there were the witches.

As the first spider had come out of its hole, it had lurched toward Draco.

"No, you don't," Bellatrix had yelled, stepping forward and making a downward sweep with her spear that took off two of the spider's legs.

The crippled beast had spun towards Lucius.

"Get off him," Hermione had screamed, copying Bellatrix's downward sweep and taking off the back half of the creature.

Narcissa had stepped coolly forward and put the blade of her spear between the animal's eyes.

The women had decided that they could handle spiders, that attacking a disoriented spider was better than waiting for it to attack them and then trying to impale it with a

spear, and that they weren't going to let a spider get close to their wizard. Now, after the males had tossed smoke and fire grenades into the hole, the females of the species were waiting in ambush. The men had decided to not argue, keep out of the way of the deadly blades, and live with the embarrassment. The witches shouldered their spears and marched to the next spider hole. The wizards followed, lugging the sacks of grenades.

The witch-wizard team cleared the eleven holes in five hours; they were covered with smoke, cuts, and bruises; and they were ready to drop from exhaustion. The centaurs had eleven injured, four of them badly enough they would not fight again.

Narcissa assumed a heroic stance with her spear. "They should have included some Aunties on the teams," she announced.

The triangular meadow, judged the easiest part of the campaign, had been cleared.

The enchanters left the centaurs to patrol and returned to the manor where they took a potion for their aches and pains and began the afternoon, chastely enough, with the women in their hot tub and the men in theirs.

A pain-free, scrubbed, and towed-to-a-pink Hermione went in search of Lucius. A house-elf informed her he was in the study. She found him reading a magazine, and she sat in an adjoining chair.

"I don't have anything exciting planned," said Hermione.

"This morning was exciting enough," said Lucius. "Would you like to have lunch with me and join me in the workshop? We need more explosive warheads for the centaur bows."

"That would be marvelous," said Hermione.

Bellatrix went to Draco's bedroom where he had managed to dress before collapsing in a chair.

"Worn out already?" she chided. "No time or energy for the lusty part of being a warrior?"

She watched him stand and assumed he was offended and leaving, but she felt him grab her hair.

"Ow," she said.

She heard him say, "Why don't I give it a try?" as he pushed her to her knees with her face close to his groin. She heard a hoarse, "Unbutton my trousers, Auntie."

She felt a shiver go through her as her hands, seemingly of their own volition, fumbled with the buttons, and a voice from faraway said, "You haven't done this in years, have you?" She shook her head no.

She unbuttoned his trousers and leaned closer, inhaling his scent. Its genetic compatibility went through her aristocratic nose; it traveled down her patrician spine; it pooled and formed a pure bred ache. She reached into his trousers. The feel of him dropped into the pool below her navel, and waves of lust washed through milady, rippled through her breasts, and spilled out of her open lips.

The aching need of her moan reached the boy and almost caused him to change from gripping her hair to stroking her hair, but he recalled the nature of his aunt and kept his grip.

Bellatrix, still in a daze that he was letting her do this, demanding she do this, caressed him with her lips and then her tongue as he grew larger and firmer until she could no longer resist someone who was treating her with a combination of affection and imperiousness that she had never experienced before. Yielding to what she longed to do, she engulfed him and reveled in tending him as befitted a lady eager to please. She lost herself in what had been denied her and was now permitted her by a worthy wizard. She would show him that she, Bellatrix, was the equal of any.

She heard him gasp, "I'm going to come, Auntie," and she changed to stroking him with her hand. She watched with wild eyes as he cried out, his muscles contracted, and his sperm shot out of him.

Apprehension caught up with Bellatrix. Similar activities with the Dark Lord or her husband had always led to a round of torture or cruel taunts, but Draco took her hands, pulled her to her feet, and put an arm around her waist in a gentle embrace. His other hand massaged her temples as his fingers combed her hair. "That was sweet," he said as his face moved close to hers and he began nuzzling her.

*I'm falling into a trap. You can't trust wizards.* she told herself, but she couldn't resist returning the embrace. The gentle affection continued, and after a minute, she was floating.

He floated her against the wall. She liked it. Her lips sought his. He was a bit out of breath when he shyly asked, "Would you like to make love to me?"

She grabbed him and began to devour him.

*Oh no,* she thought, *I don't know what to do. I'm being too clumsy.*

She loosened her grip and tried nibbling him. He stroked her hair and told her she was beautiful. She was thinking he was being gracious about her clumsiness. He whispered she was a classy and loving lady. One hand gently kneaded her back and held her against him while the other travelled to her waist and then lower to caress her hip. His whispers were calming and arousing; his hands were soothing and provocative.

She unbuttoned her blouse. *Oh, I hope he likes this. Oh, yes. Oh my, those hands.* She unfastened her top garment. *Kiss me, sweetheart. Yes, like that. I like it when you do it.* She thought this could go on forever, but her inner core was taking control, and her hands lifted her skirt and pushed her knickers down. Her hands guided him to her receptive self.

She was looking her lover in the eye when he parted her folds and she moaned for him. She was looking her lover in the eye when he pushed into her. Her mouth opened with the shock of his entry; she made small animal noises.

*Omigod, what am I doing?* she thought, but Draco was holding her tenderly as he made small circular motions. His affection and his passion seeped into her, and she sighed with pleasure.

*Can I really have this?* she wondered as Draco filled the long-neglected void in her life.

*Oh, I don't care,* she thought as her hips began moving with his.

*I want this,* flashed through her mind, and she drove her body against his.

Without warning, a white light exploded in her brain. She was not aware that she cried out and clenched Draco as her knees buckled and she sagged against him.

As Bellatrix regained awareness of the world around her, she waited for the unkind words that described the type of woman she was, but Draco was holding her and telling her she was sweet and lovely and sexy. Moving in a dream, she let him lead her to his bed.

"Show me how lovely you are," he said.

She removed her blouse, her bra.

"Oh, yes," he said.

Enjoying herself, she dropped her skirt and lay back on the quilt. Draco undressed and knelt between her legs. He lowered himself until his nose touched hers. His lips fumbled with hers. His lips and tongue tended her breasts as she sighed. He returned to her lips. His tongue parted them. His cock parted her fleshy folds, and he sank into her. They were moving together. They were both making small, soft noises. Her face softened. The lines in her face vanished. The cruelty and insanity that had been a part of her adult life began to retreat. She was a little girl for him. The little girl felt good. The little girl felt wonderful. The little girl felt bliss flow through her.

*A romance orgasm, she thought.*

Bellatrix held Draco. She heard him gasp, and she knew her spasms had sent him over the edge. She was glad he was coming inside her. For the first time in her life, she was enjoying the whole messy affair of sex.

After lunch, Bellatrix and Draco joined Hermione and Lucius in the workshop where Bellatrix and Draco turned out arrows.

"This steel is almost as hard as you are," she whispered to him.

About the time Bellatrix had found Draco, Severus located Narcissa on the back patio. She looked a mix of serious and melancholy. She said, "Let's go someplace else. Can we go to your place?"

"Certainly," said Severus.

When they arrived he said, "I can offer you tea, wine, anything. What would you like for lunch? The kitchen staff will be happy to fix whatever you want."

"Tea," she said, sitting at the table.

When he joined her, she said, "Severus, I'm getting involved, emotionally involved with you. I want to know how much I'm going to be hurt."

"I don't want to hurt you at all," he said.

"I'm going to get hurt. The question is how much," she said. "Of course, there's the remote possibility that you could make me very happy, too."

He considered the last statement. "Then I should say that I'm emotionally involved with you."

"Seriously?" she asked.

"Very seriously," he said.

She sipped her tea. "I can't be an unfaithful wife. I'm not built that way. I'm devoted to one wizard."

*Well, except for the occasional hen party, she thought*

She paused. "But I can leave my husband. Then I'll be free."

"Where will you go?" he asked.

"That was your cue to invite me here, you thick clod," she said.

Oops.

"Forgive me," he said. "I'm not used to this."

Well, neither am I," she replied, "but I'm still making plans that include both of us." She sighed. "Men. They never think about relationships."

Severus was thinking that living with a woman meant living with her anger.

She narrowed her eyes and glared at him. "I know what you're worried about. It's not your reputation. You think I'll gobble down all your melons."

"I'd love it if you came to stay with me," he said. "I'll take the hit in the fruit department."

"What about tomorrow afternoon?" she asked. "I can tell Lucius and pack the essentials tonight."

"Um, okay," he said.

Her eyes narrowed again. "I don't have to move in with you if you'd rather not. I'm independently wealthy. I can find my own place."

"No, I want you here," he said. "We'll have lunch, and we'll inform the Headmaster."

Oh, Sev," she said, hopping into his lap.

He held her, feeling lucky and terrified.

She ran her fingers through his hair. "Can the kitchen staff fix French onion soup?" she asked. Pause for reflection. "With French bread and melted Swiss cheese?"

She snuggled. "Do you think they could sauté some asparagus first?" she asked. Pause for reflection. "With butter and mushrooms?"

She kissed his forehead. "Would you like to finish with plain vanilla ice cream, sweetie?" she inquired. Pause for reflection. "Perhaps with some nuts and a little chocolate sauce."

He asked if there was going to be any trouble leaving Lucius. She replied that Lucius would probably welcome her leaving and he hadn't asked her to before because he hadn't been serious about any of his liaisons. Prompted by his professorial instincts to protect students, Severus asked about Hermione.

Narcissa looked into the distance. "He seems serious about her. I haven't seen him act this way before."

"You're not upset about them?" he asked.

"I'd be completely happy for them if she weren't so young, but it might work out for them anyway," she said.

"I take it that you're not worried about your son and your sister either," he said.

"That's the least of my worries. In fact, it's not a worry. They seem to be doing each other some good, and I'm surprised anyone can do my sister some good," she said.

"The way they're going, they may have some good offspring," he said.

"We need more family members," she said. "And don't look shocked. Have you seen the Malfoy and Black family trees?"

"I saw a Black family tree, and it seemed normal," he replied.

"That thing? That's a laugh. Didn't you notice the short life spans used to try to make it work?" she asked

"I always wondered about that," he said.

She shook her head. "By the gods: all the concubines, all the cousins."

"I thought your motto was 'Always Pure,'" he said.

"Didn't you ever read Machiavelli?" she asked. "You can get away with anything if you act pious." She gave him a serious look. "Were you really worried about that, dear?"

"Well, yes."

She took his hand. "By Black standards, we're a wholesome couple."

After lunch, they informed the Headmaster and returned to his, now their rooms to arrange them for her moving in. They had re-shelved his books to clear several tables when he noticed her looking at him.

"Yes?" he asked her.

"I never thought it would be this rational," she said. "Of course, I never thought I would find anyone."

"Maybe the shock and surprise will hit us later," he said.

"I'm thinking we'll have to go over our finances, and I'm thinking I'm willing to tell you everything. I never told Lucius what I inherited or what I did with it. But I want you to know."

"I like having a rich witch," he said. "Yours is yours to keep. I'll never have to worry if you're staying with me because you can't afford to leave."

"Speaking of leaving," she said, "have you considered leaving this damp, gloomy dungeon and taking your house to a tower. I know the northwest one is free."

"Leave a cozy dungeon for a windy tower where we'll freeze our asses off?" he asked.

"But this tower has marvelous views, the type you would like the frigid, uninviting lake on one side and the bleak, intimidating moor on the other," she said.

"I'm overwhelmed by your sympathetic sense of humor," he said.

"I can put matching-mood material around the windows," she said, "heavy and somber drapes that pull you into the pit of angst and then change to lacey and inspiring curtains that remind you that you have me."

"Wives," he moaned. "They're never happy with what they've got always, the home improvement."

"See, you're getting used to me already," she triumphed.

When the rooms were ready, he said, "I should be at the Manor when you tell Lucius. We should face everything now because we have to face the spiders in the morning."

"Are you going to stay at the Manor tonight?" she asked.

"No. Nothing compromising. A clean break and a fresh start," he said.

Later that evening, Draco was persuading Bellatrix to spend the night with him.

"What if I toss and turn?" she asked.

"It's more fun when you do," he replied.

"Wizards," she said, but she admitted to herself that she liked the idea.

When she climbed into bed, he coaxed her into snuggling with her head on his shoulder. She was going to tell him this was awkward, but it felt soothing, and before she could say anything, she slipped into dreamless sleep.

Draco, the romantic, was reconsidering. Perhaps it was okay to approach some women through their sex.

## The Lower Woods

*Chapter 8 of 10*

The second day of battle.

### Chapter 8: The Lower Woods

"We're going to have to shoot up," Hermione announced. "At the spiders," she added. Everyone nodded agreement. For some reason, that made it seem harder.

Between the triangular meadow to the east and rectangular grassland to the west, lay an irregular quadrilateral of woods. It was about three miles wide on the north side

bounded by the river. It was about seven miles wide on the south side bounded by the old forest, and this boundary had been the site of skirmishes between the spiders and centaurs for decades. The wooded area was divided into upper and lower parts by a limestone outcropping one-hundred yards wide that ran almost east-to-west. A stream flowing into the river formed a boundary between the woods and the meadow. The spiders in the woods were ambush predators that used webs in the trees and bushes. It would be a bow-and-arrow day.

In their favor, the trees in the woods were not as dense or tall as the trees in the forest. The tops of the trees were within bow-and-arrow range, and the spiders, while hard to spot, would not be completely hidden by foliage. Also in their favor, they could use the limestone outcropping as a natural boundary. They would have preferred to have begun at the limestone and pushed the spiders south into the centaur herd waiting in the forest, but that would stretch the skirmish line as the battle progressed, making it difficult to keep an unbroken line. They would begin at the seven mile boundary of woods and forest and push north to the five mile long outcropping of limestone. Moving north also meant not aiming into the sun. Repeated flyovers had estimated seventy two spiders in the lower woods.

"My arms are about to fall off," Draco whispered to Bellatrix after the team had dispatched the sixth spider.

The first day had taught them the effectiveness of spears, especially in the hands of a witch between a spider and her wizard. The men took turns with the bows while the women guarded the archers. The seventy-five mature centaurs able to fight the second day had split into fifteen groups of five each and had copied the tactic. Each group had three spearmen and two archers.

"Nonsense," said Bellatrix. "You used your short arm more than this last night, and it didn't fall off."

Draco felt renewed energy.

After the second spider, Severus had said, "We're going to run out of arrows."

Narcissa had thought a bit of subtle, wand-less magic was in order. Now, at the end of their flight, the arrows appeared to catch a breeze that returned them unharmed to the ground in front of them. When Severus had given her a suspicious look, she had idly remarked that it would be a shame if the men ran out of ammunition. "A thousand bow shots and a thousand love shots make the true wizard."

The spiders were becoming more difficult to kill. The shrieks of the initial casualties had alerted the rest. And some were escaping. Clearing the upper woods was going to be deadly. Once again, Lucius and Severus wished they had been able to begin at the limestone boundary and drive the spiders south, but they dared not risk a break in the line: it was essential that the sectors be completely cleared of spiders and established as centaur domain. Behind the skirmish line, the young bucks had formed into three groups each under the control of an Auntie, and they patrolled for any missed spiders.

The witches and wizards were responsible for the eastern strip that paralleled the stream. It was four miles long, but since they were less mobile than the centaurs, their corridor was only a quarter of a mile wide. The proximity of the stream, however, made this strip a rich hunting ground, and five hours later, when they arrived at the limestone boundary, they had eliminated nine spiders.

They were dead tired, but they would clear the upper woods tomorrow and the grassland the next day. Everyone had agreed they should conduct a continuous campaign before the spiders could react.

The humans retired to the Manor and let the centaurs patrol the newly won territory, nervous centaurs that might shoot at anything that wasn't a centaur.

Back at the Manor in the hot tub with Bellatrix and Narcissa, Hermione was fretting. What if Lucius bathed quickly and left with Severus? What if he had an appointment with some mistress this afternoon? She washed, hopped out of the tub, and left to search the Manor.

"I think our young friend is anxious," said Bellatrix.

"She's afraid Lucius will wander off without her."

"We know that wizards will wander off without us, but there's nothing we can do about it."

"We may as well enjoy our hot tub."

"If they're still here, it's a pleasant surprise."

Hermione raced to the study to find it empty. Her heart sank. He had abandoned her. Hoping against hope, she dashed to the door outside the hot-tub room for the wizards. She strained. Could she hear all three of them? Were they laughing while she was waiting in anguish? Heartless. But she thought she could hear all three of them. She dashed back to the study. She pretended to read a magazine. Perhaps he wouldn't come to the study. Perhaps he wouldn't even look for her. She jumped to her feet when he walked through the door.

"Did you want to make some more explosive arrow heads?" she blurted out.

He gave a small start. "Um, sure."

"Maybe you don't want to do that. Maybe you want to do something else? Do we have too many of them already?" she asked.

He shook his head, remembering the lessons of artillery history. "We haven't used them yet, but when we do, we will use them at a prodigious rate," he said.

He came back to the moment, and his senses took in the radiant young witch. "Let me relax a moment and cool down from the bath," he said. "You're right about the arrow heads, and we should use what energy we have left to produce another batch."

He collapsed in a reclining chair, and she sat on the floor beside him.

"But we need to be both relaxed and alert while we make them," he said. "Can I offer you a massage before we have lunch?"

"Okay," she said.

He snapped his fingers, and a clean quilt appeared. She stretched across it while his hands began at her neck and slowly worked their way down her back. Her nipples and sex responded and pressed against the expensive lace garments she had purchased the week before. They were designed to have a short shelf-life. She had wild and satisfying fantasies about getting her money's worth as Lucius fulfilled the designer's intentions.

But she didn't.

Back at the hot tub with Bellatrix and Narcissa, Bellatrix stepped out of the tub and made an effort to dry slowly. She walked sedately to her room where she put on a modest skirt and blouse. She twirled in front of the mirror, tried a more revealing blouse, went back to the original modest one, considered a shorter skirt, rejected it in favor of the one that flattered her hips, and made her way calmly made her way, she told herself to Draco's room.

A sharp pain shot through her when she entered and saw him standing in the middle of the floor in his boxers. She was across the room and in his arms. She was clutching him and kissing him and telling him how handsome he was. He held her and stroked her hair until she calmed down enough to merely have him in a tight clench.

*Romance isn't all hearts and flowers,* thought Bellatrix.

"You're tense," he said. "It's those bloody spiders lurking in the trees. Let me give you a back rub."

"Okay," she said.

He led her to the bed. She stretched across it while his hands began at her neck and slowly worked their way down her back. Her nipples hardened. Her silk undergarment was tight across the best spot. She had wild and satisfying fantasies about the specially chosen garments having a short shelf-life.

And they did.

He leaned down and kissed her cheek. She took his hand, kissed it, and smiled at him. She parted her legs and scooched down the bed to raise her skirt, revealing her silk-accented roundness and her damp readiness. She felt him between her splayed legs. His cock must have fallen out of his boxers because she felt its tip move up her inner thigh. Oh my. It moved up her other thigh. He was caressing her with his cock. The next time it stroked its way up her sensitive skin, it glided across the damp fabric covering her sex oh yes and then traced its way on the silk stretched over the cleft of her derriere. Yes, yes. It seemed to vibrate as it moved over the tightly stretched garment. He did it all again teasing her with what he could give her.

He nibbled on her neck and whispered in her ear, "My, aren't you lovely."

It was going to be fun with Draco.

She rolled over, tore her modest blouse open, and unfastened her bra. She pulled his head down to the valley between her mounds. Oh, his lips on her. It could go on and on, but the ache became too great.

"Take me. Take me, sweetheart."

The wildness in his eyes as he pulled her knickers off absorbed the wildness of her soul. The heat in his eyes as he sank into hers burned away the craziness of her being.

She was mounted a lovely, sane woman mounted by her lover.

Well, almost sane. His wild driving in and out of her broke through her rational defenses and drove all reason out of her sloppy wet pounding mixed with the animal sounds of a mature woman in rut generating enough heat in the pit of her being to drive her crazy driving her undulating in mindless copulation until she lost control and a strange peace spread through her.

Well, certainly lovely as she lay flushed and sweaty and panting making the low moans of a lady whose lover was moving in and out of her as he savored the look and feel of her. He was dipping into her, enjoying having her. He was moving with greater and greater urgency. He couldn't stop. She was glad he couldn't stop. She felt complete when he uttered a soundless cry and mated.

She held her chosen wizard.

Meanwhile, back at the dungeon, Narcissa insisted Severus take his shower while she fixed tea.

"Oh, Severus," she said, entering as he finished drying and dropping to her knees to take his cock in her deft fingers that soon had it growing. Her eyes were shining as her lips engulfed him and her tongue did wondrous things.

His lady tending him was a lovely sight. He stroked her hair as her head bobbed and weaved and his tension grew.

"Sweetheart, I ... ," he began.

His wet cock felt the cool air as his lady shifted to running her tongue along his shaft while her fingers played an enticing rhythm, but he was past the breaking point, and they watched him spurt across the room.

She was on her feet, embracing him and whispering endearments. She had pleased her wizard. He could do no more than hold her and stroke her hair. When he had recovered, she told him that tea was ready for him in the living room. His practical lady took out the wand she had remembered to bring and waved it to clean the shower room. She ran warm water over a washcloth, cleaned and dried his member, and said she would join him after her shower.

"Really join you. Don't get dressed," she said.

He was sipping tea in his dining area, alternating between elation that she meant what she had said and despair that he could lose something so precious to him, when she entered.

At first, she looked disappointed since he had dressed. Then she noticed how he had dressed: a simple white shirt left unbuttoned and black boxers provocative. Just for her. She approved.

She smiled at him and sat in his lap. The small moves of her derriere and thighs as she finished drying her hair were rather nice. That and the elegant lines of her face were rather giving him an erection. The elegant lines of her face evinced the sweet melancholy of romance as she softly embraced and nuzzled him while he accepted the affection that she seemed eager to offer. As it slowly entered his mind that she wanted this, he returned her embrace, stroked her hair, and made soothing noises. He could feel her relax as he returned her tenderness. Why hadn't he noticed this woman before? Why had it never occurred to him how much he cared for her?

He could feel her relaxed state begin to tense and coil as affection was joined by passion and her cuddling was becoming an aroused stirring. He told himself that it was okay to relax some of his self control, to run his hands over her, to run his hands over all of her. All of her was acceptable to him. No part of her should be missed. There was no reason to deny himself any part of her, any part of her wondrous body. And the best part was that she liked it.

She was straddling him. Her hand reached down and guided him into her. Entering her was the best thing ever. He moaned with her. She was moaning. He loved the sound. His desire for her. The feel of her. Her small sounds. He was certain he couldn't last, but the recent oral sex had him holding out well.

*Crafty Narcissa*, he thought.

Crafty Narcissa was in full glory: eyes shining adoration; face radiating desire; voice whimpering need; body joining his. Severus could leave content if the universe chose this moment to vanish. But it got better. Her face contorted. She gripped him. There were measured moves with soft whimpering. There was a small squeal. He felt her breath, her heart, her ripple. Her fine skin was slightly flushed. He was thinking the experience hadn't been very intense for her, but he hoped it had been satisfying.

As he held her, he became aware of a stinging, wet sensation in his back. He removed his shirt to discover small, crescent-shaped holes bloody, small, crescent-shaped holes. Perhaps her experience had been more intense than he first thought.

"I've got to be more careful," she said with less remorse than one might think.

They took out their wands. She repaired his back while he removed the blood from his shirt. He tossed it in the laundry heap. She asked if he wasn't going to throw it away since she could buy him a new one, but he shook his head no.

She tapped her bare foot. "My husband is not going around with holes in his shirt."

*'Charming' is the word*, thought Severus as he admired his mistress, messy and disheveled from sex, laying down the law.

"Well, he's not," she asserted.

"I want to save it for special occasions," he said.

"The anniversary of our first shag?" she asked. "I didn't know you were such a romantic. Just how difficult are you going to be to live with?"

He wanted to say, "You should have thought of that before you invited yourself over, and I'm not your husband," but something told him that would not improve her mood.

Instead, he stepped closer and whispered, "Very difficult. I'm a secret romantic, the worst kind. I'll always be surreptitiously admiring you." He stepped very close. "And lusting after you." He put his hands on her waist and nuzzled her neck.

"That's not fair, Sevvie."

"If I played fair, I wouldn't have a chance," he replied. "My only hope is that my aristocratic lady has a soft spot for me."

"Right now, her soft spot is all hopeful," said Narcissa.

"Is it getting more hopeful?" he asked as his lips moved to the other side of her neck.

"I think so," she sighed.

She walked him to their bed where she stretched out and pulled him on top of her as she parted her legs. He entered easily. He could feel the pads of her fingers on his back as she was deliberately more careful this time. He wanted her passion again, but the whole feel of her was too much, and he let himself sink into everything she was offering. Her expression was the peace and harmony of getting what she wanted. He couldn't help himself. It rose within him. He let himself enjoy his lady. It was the first time. He wanted many more.

They were showered again and on the sofa when she said, "The spider campaign is probably playing merry hell with your pre-term prep."

"I can stumble through," he said.

"But isn't there a lot to do," she asked.

"I have to check the supplies, inspect the equipment, and ...," he began before he noticed her disappointed look and continued, "but you're right, it is a lot, and time is short."

She brightened. "Perhaps I can help."

"It's all in my head," he began again, but she had leaped up and fetched parchment and quill.

She was the very model of efficiency as he dictated the necessary preparations and lists of supplies. The contrast of intellect and passion amused him. Life was going to be interesting.

Later that night, with her snuggled around him, he wondered what his passionate helpmate was thinking.

"If you insist on keeping that shirt, let me mend the holes," she said.

## The Upper Woods

*Chapter 9 of 10*

The third day of battle.

### Chapter 9: The Upper Woods

*Poetic conceit*, thought Hermione.

The clouds were low. The drizzle had started in the middle of the night. Crafty Narcissa had cast a wand-less spell to keep the bows, strings, arrows, and spears dry. She also had used a spell that made their cloaks and trousers pincer resistant. "I should have thought of this earlier," she had said.

The campaign for the upper woods would begin at the limestone boundary and push north to the river. Once again, the witches and wizards had a narrow strip by the stream.

"Wood-fairies' jewelry," said Bellatrix as they viewed the water droplets on the webs.

The other five winced. *Revenge will be ours*, they vowed.

The first spider off the mark dropped from its bush, went rampant with its forelegs in the air, and charged. It screamed and convulsed as three poisoned arrows went through it.

"What if they all charge at once?" asked Draco.

"It'll be a short day," said Lucius.

*A short day for us*, thought the witches.

They were three-fourths of the way to the river when Hermione said, "I think I hear something." She turned and moved toward a sound behind her. Then it was quiet. She walked cautiously, holding her spear ready in case it was a spider. There was the sound again. As her eyes scanned a thicket of bushes, she stepped on wet leaves covering a patch of mud. Her feet went out from under her, and she slid to the bottom of a gulley.

"Omigod, where's Hermione?" asked Narcissa.

"She said she heard something behind us," said Draco.

"We've got to find her."

Hermione was getting to her feet at the bottom of the gulley. She looked around, all senses alert. She couldn't hear anything. Then the dead branches overlooking the gulley began to move. She tried backing out of the low spot she was in, but her feet were slipping on the wet leaves and mud. The dead branches became six spiders. She tried scrambling up the slope with both hands and feet, but the slope was too steep. The spiders were spreading out. She tried jumping to grab a branch and pull herself up, but the branches were out of reach. The spiders were ready to charge. Hermione braced herself and decided which one she would take with her.

She heard people calling her name. "Here," she yelled. "I'm in a gulley. There're spiders." She gripped her spear and tried to find solid footing. The spiders reared for their charge.

Blinding flashes and whip-like cracks knocked Hermione off her feet. *I'm not even going to take one of them with me*, she thought. She scrambled to her hands and knees. The spiders were gone. She looked around to see Bellatrix at the top of the gulley with her wand still poised.

"I'm glad to see you," said Hermione.

Bellatrix nodded, grabbed a branch for support, and reached down to pull the girl to higher ground. Bellatrix cried out that she had found her, and they rejoined the others.

"I hope the centaurs didn't see me use my wand," said Bellatrix.

"At this stage of the game, I don't think it matters," said Lucius.

By noon, the skirmish line had pushed the remaining spiders into a pocket of tall grass and scattered trees. It bordered the river and was fifty yards wide and three hundred yards long. The centaurs and wizards were in a quandary. They had been picking off exposed spiders one by one, but now an unknown number of them were hidden in the grass. If they entered the pocket, the spiders could ambush them. If they drove them out, the spiders could charge the line en masse. Either way, the casualties would be unacceptable.

"How many do you think are in there?" asked Lucius.

"I think one or two spiders escaped from each of the sixteen squads," said Severus. "Between twenty and thirty."

They placed the seventy-five adult centaurs around the perimeter. The artillery brigade of young bucks would first walk a barrage from the middle of the pocket to the west end with two lines of shells that bisected the pocket and were about five yards apart. Then they would walk a barrage from the middle to the east end. The brigade, escorted by the witches and wizards and staying behind the perimeter guards, would take thirty volleys to cover each half.

*Warfare by the numbers*, thought Hermione.

"We'll hope warfare by the numbers is beyond their ability to cope," said Severus.

When the barrage reached the west end of the pocket, five spiders charged out to be mowed down by the perimeter guards. When the tactic was repeated for the eastern half, four spiders charged out to meet the same fate.

"Now for the hard part," said Bellatrix.

Thirty five adult centaurs plus the witches and wizards would sweep the pocket from east to west while the rest of the centaurs guarded the perimeter. Once again, the witches and wizards had the strip by the water. Before the sweep began, Narcissa and Bellatrix took Hermione aside for a whispered conference. When the sweep began, the three witches stepped forward and swung their spears like scythes amazingly effective scythes that cut wide swaths, leaving no place for any spider to hide.

*There isn't a spell that our Hermione can't master*, recalled Severus.

An hour later, it was over. Three live spiders had been found still lurking in the grass.

The rugged terrain of gullies with slippery leaves and mud had been hard on the centaurs. Between spider attacks and falls, they had nine walking wounded.

*We came close to having a much greater loss*, thought Narcissa and Bellatrix.

Leaving the centaurs to patrol their new territory, the witches and wizards returned to the manor.

After her shower, Hermione was hurrying to the patio for lunch where the elves were fixing kabobs. She came around a corner and ran into Draco. Before she could stop herself, she blurted out, "Didn't stray far from Bellatrix today, did you?"

"It's the comrade-in-arms thing," he said calmly. "And the one time we separated, she saved your ass."

That was insufferable. "Never going to cut the apron strings, are you?" she replied.

He was still calm. "It's not like you aren't all over my father. What are you after, purse strings?"

She was in his face. "You horrible brat. Didn't anyone ever teach you manners? Maybe I should."

"Are you going to hex me with your wand?" he asked.

"No," she replied as she grabbed his shirt, "I'm going to shake some sense into you."

She yanked on his shirt. It came out of his trousers, but he stepped closer and yanked on her blouse which came out of her skirt. Their hands touched each others' bare skin.

"Oh," said Draco.

"Oh," said Hermione.

Her arms went around him; her lips found his; her tongue flicked out. It went through her mind that this was Draco. Her breasts were against his hard chest. She wanted more. She was pressing against his growing hardness. Oh, no, she wanted it. She told herself not to as she weaved against him. He began unbuttoning her blouse; she ripped it open. He nuzzled her bra; she ripped it off. Her breast was in his mouth. Oh, gods, no. Oh, gods, yes. Her hands fumbled with his trousers. He felt impossibly hard, impossibly big. She panicked she would never get it out. She panicked she would never get it in. He had her against the wall. Her torso was twisting. She shouldn't do this; she couldn't do enough. Her fingers were in his trousers and wrapped around him. She was afraid of what was going to happen; she was afraid it wasn't going to happen. His hand was under her skirt and moving up the inside of her thighs. She told herself she should be saying no as she spread her legs. His hand was at the moist junction. She definitely should be saying no. Her tongue slid into his mouth as his finger slid under the cotton and into her. She should stop moaning and grinding against him. She shouldn't arch her back to let him pull the garment down; she shouldn't kick her legs to let it fall to the floor.

Then he was holding her hands above her head with one hand and spreading her slickness with the other. She saw the wild look in his eye as he did what both knew

would never happen. The husky grunts of Hermione being penetrated excited him. He looked at the intelligent face, full of surprise. He raised her skirt to watch the ivory shaft plunge deeper and deeper between the round thighs and into the sopping wet curls. He was in, all the way in the Head Girl.

Hermione began rolling her hips. It was terrible; it was wonderful. She looked into his smoldering eyes and went to a wild place. She didn't know she was giving him a contorted smile. Everything became unbearable. She was mindless and clutching. She was brutally demanding. Everything became a liquid bliss.

She regained awareness of her surroundings to see the strangest look in his eyes, a look both dominating and helpless. He had to have her; he couldn't stop. She wrapped her arms around him. Her body moved up and down as his passion drove him into her and his groans joined her sloppy wet noise. Then he was looking at her in the strangest way as if he realized she was a beautiful girl, a beautiful person, someone he could build a life with. He stopped. She felt his sweat. She knew he was having his moment inside her.

The impossible had happened.

Two peaceful, content, and confused people arranged their clothes, checked their appearances in a hallway mirror, and joined the others for lunch.

After lunch, Severus announced that he had to attend a staff meeting at school. Hermione announced she had to go shopping for school supplies. More accurately, she needed some time alone to think through recent events. If nothing else, there was the important question of who really counted as her first wizard, Fenrir-Beast or Draco?

Draco, too, was in a daze. If he had thought about it, he would have realized that she was, but it had never occurred to him that Miss Smarty-Pants was a real girl. His world had been shaken. It smarted from getting in her pants.

Draco entered the reading room to find his aunt and his father in discussion.

Bellatrix the forever forethoughtful stood to make a point. "You will certainly scout this afternoon."

Lucius no stranger to strategy rose to the challenge. "We don't want to alert the spiders that we plan to take more ground. The woods are a natural boundary. The spiders might conclude that we will stop there."

Bellatrix the occasionally irritating replied, "Not certain of your riding skills? Afraid of falling off your little broom into a nest of nasty spiders? Here's Draco. He rides very well. Don't you, sweetie?"

Draco the dutiful son voiced his opinion. "I'm certain my father can give me pointers."

Lucius always the helpful father said, "My first is that a Malfoy doesn't ride any old thing. Spirit and refinement are important."

Draco defender of the house of Malfoy added, "We're used to the best."

Bellatrix never guilty of false modesty declared, "But can you ride with the best, or will the best ride you?"

Lucius of commanding presence returned, "It would be their best ride."

Bellatrix steadfast in her faith said, "I would knock you off your brooms and sweep you out of the sky."

Father and son eternal sportsmen promised, "Never."

Bellatrix whose path was clear ran cackling to the storage shed, mounted her broom, and sped across the lake.

Father and son whose demeanor betrayed no doubt sauntered to the shed, and the dynamic duo whose howls were a veritable call to the wild blasted into the blue yonder.

Narcissa had seen her sister dash to the shed and race across the lake and had wondered what was going on. She saw her husband and son stroll to the shack and take off in pursuit. A few minutes later, Bellatrix was speeding toward the safety of the house with Draco and Lucius gaining. Bellatrix strove mightily, but the two wizards were on either side of her with a grip on her broom. Approaching the house, Lucius and Draco, still holding Bellatrix's broom, did a loop followed by a barrel roll. Bellatrix squealed.

*Let's see if it ends the same way. Well squealed is well finished,* thought Narcissa.

As they headed toward the house, Lucius waved his wand and the front door to the manor crashed open. The trio entered the foyer at high speed.

*No broom-riding in the house,* thought Narcissa, recalling one of the strict rules of Draco's childhood.

Narcissa heard Bellatrix shriek as the wizards flew their prize up the stair wells, and she heard the clatter as the trio and their brooms more or less landed on the bed in the Master Bedroom. Narcissa told herself that a person of refinement wouldn't hope they had left the door open in their eagerness. They had.

*Checking that my sister is okay,* thought Narcissa.

Her sister didn't seem to be injured although she was obviously in deadly peril. She was lying on her back with Lucius propped on his elbow on her right and Draco propped on his elbow on her left. Neither was touching her, only offering admiration for her flying skill while the lady, accepting the outcome with good grace, was running her fingers through their silver locks. Their admiration turned to her teamwork, her bravery, and her contributions. Bellatrix's defenses were going down. Their admiration included her loveliness and her sexiness. She held Lucius for a long and longing kiss and then turned to hold Draco in an affectionate embrace. Both wizards were holding her and nuzzling her and murmuring adoration.

*Notify the 'Book of World Records,'* thought Narcissa. *They're going to make history's biggest wet spot.*

Their hands on her arms and tracing the aristocratic lines of her face were no longer enough for Bellatrix. She unbuttoned her blouse. They helped her remove it. Now their hands could slide across the purple silk holding her breasts, smoothly slide with the silk filling with the provocation. She brushed against Lucius to let him feel the growing arousal until he pulled her to him and plundered the mouth of the lovely lady. When it seemed Lucius would go wild with desire for her, she broke away to press into Draco. It was her turn to go wild with desire. Her tongue was parting his lips. It was darting between his teeth. Her leg was up; she wanted to feel Draco against her inner thigh. The two wizards fumbled with the fastenings of her skirt. It was off.

*A fine display of teamwork,* thought Narcissa.

The two wizards alternated between giving Bellatrix tender affection and removing garments. The restraint of the wizards had its effect as the witch went wild from the withheld foreplay. She grabbed Draco's cock; her lips went around it; it was wet; she straddled him. Her face turned as pretty as a little girl's as she slowly lowered herself and his erect rod vanished into her. Displaying more teamwork, Draco pulled Bellatrix down to lie on top of him while Lucius positioned himself behind his sister-in-law. Narcissa saw Lucius mutter a spell and his cock become compact and glistening, and she saw Bellatrix's look of surprise when she felt his rod at the pucker of her bum. Bellatrix could not stop riding Draco, and her mouth opened as her moves forced Lucius into her.

*Ah yes, slither-ins to the core,* thought Narcissa.

Narcissa listened to her Bellatrix's high pitched sounds that became low moans and saw her Lucius's look of triumph as the witch impaled herself and he sank into her

warm softness. Both wizards were all the way in the lady who was kissing Draco and moaning while Lucius gripped her delightful roundness as she twisted in pleasure. Moans and twists of pleasure that went on and on, moans and twists that went on and on until she reached a plateau of passion where the wizards captured her spirit and drove her to an intensity that could not be sustained.

Narcissa watched her husband succumb to the rhythmic clenching of her sister in orgasm. His fingers gripped her as he spurted into his exquisite sister-in-law.

As the trio recovered, they discovered that Draco was primed for another round.

*An hors d'oeuvre of Granger helps one with the piece de resistance, thought Draco. Or is it an oeuvre of hors helps one resist the piece?*

Despite the play on words, Draco wasn't certain he was as sophisticated as he was pretending to be. He had been carried aloft by the teasing and the broom chase, and he had been excited by the foreplay and the double penetration of a lovely lady, but he was thinking he was not as special to her as he once thought he was. Recalling Miss Granger, perhaps women were more wanton and less romantic than he had been led to believe.

Things became even more complex when Bellatrix reached out to him and pulled him close while cooing that he was handsome and loving and that she wanted him more than any one else, while handling his erect member and guiding him between her opening legs. He was thinking it would be ungentlemanly to not play the game he had joined, and he told her she was lovely and gracious and special as he raised her feet in the air to make her present her furry slit, and when he began his entry, she was lovely and gracious and special, and he held her hands down and rode her like the stud he was pretending to be, and she liked it and went wild under him, and he let himself enjoy her shape and feel and sound, and he let himself enjoy his rising tension, and he thought he felt the ripple of her orgasm as he exploded in her.

Wow, thought Narcissa.

As Narcissa stepped away from the scene of the three cuddling, she heard Severus return. It occurred to her that she had chided Severus for his lapses as a partner, but she was also guilty. She could have left for the school when he had instead of staying at the Manor. She covered her slip by telling him that she had been checking that she hadn't left anything behind.

"Had you," he asked, willing to help her pack.

"No, there's nothing for me here," she said.

## The Hill

*Chapter 10 of 10*

The final day of battle.

### Chapter 10: The Hill

"Yoo hoo! Spidey! Here we are! Spidey! Yoo hoo!"

A few minutes later, Hermione saw movement on the horizon. "Well done, Bellatrix. Here they come."

"It's a bright, sunny day. We're easy to see," said Narcissa.

*Bloodthirsty witches*, thought Lucius.

*I'm surprised they're not mooning them*, thought Severus.

The spiders roamed the rolling hills of the grassland in hunting packs. There was no hope of catching them, and any part of a skirmish line could be overwhelmed if one or more packs turned on them.

A week ago, Lucius had said, "By the time we get to the grassland, the spiders will know we're here, and they'll know what we're doing."

"We've flown over the grassland in reconnaissance," Severus had said. "We don't think there's a permanent nest there. The younger spiders cross the creek and use it as a hunting ground."

"That means that when we take the grassland, we'll be challenging the entire horde," Narcissa had said.

"Yes, but we hope only the young spiders who hunt there will defend the territory," Lucius had said. "Nevertheless, that's a lot of spiders."

"And we can't catch them or out maneuver them," Bellatrix had added.

"They will have to come to us," Hermione had said.

Thus it was that the centaurs and humans were on a flat-topped hill awaiting the charge. At dawn, the centaurs had destroyed the two bridges the spiders had built over the creek. The spiders could still cross, but they would arrive in a trickle instead of a solid mass. Or so the defenders hoped. They also hoped the hunters were impetuous and unorganized youngsters.

Before dawn, the centaurs had put in posts on the hill slope and strung wire between the posts. The centaurs hated fences, but the war had beat upon their sensibilities. The centaurs had even allowed the wizards to use their wands to hone the wire into razor sharpness and cover the posts with barbs before coating everything with poison. The reality of facing hundreds of charging spiders had arrived.

The fence was placed sixty yards from the flat top of the hill. All the centaurs were now armed with the explosive arrowhead that had a range of one hundred yards. The fence would slow the spiders and cause them to present a massed target within range. Or so the defenders hoped

*No*, thought Narcissa, *waiting for the spiders to arrive is not worse than facing them when they do arrive. Enjoy your last ten minutes of breathing freely.*

When the first group of spiders arrived at the fence, Lucius moved the young bucks under the iron discipline of the Aunties to face them. Several spiders tried the wire and

died. A second group of spiders joined the first. As their excitement rose, several spiders tried climbing the poles, ran into the barbs, and died. When the spiders were nicely bunched with several digging at the poles, the Aunties ordered spaced volleys that began at the back of the cluster and moved forward, trapping the spiders between the explosions and the fence. It was a lesson by example be calm, be methodical, and don't waste ammunition.

It was a good example for the first hour which saw three more groups appear and be caught between the artillery and the fence. No spiders appeared the second hour.

"This can't be good," said Narcissa.

"They're probably rebuilding the bridges," said Lucius.

They heard the spider horde first. Then they saw it as it swarmed over the rolling hills.

"They're coming at us as if our existence is an affront to right-thinking spiders everywhere," said Bellatrix.

The mass of spiders hit the fence, died by the scores, and circled the hill, looking for an opening. The centaurs aimed into any large clump that formed. Maddened by frustration, explosions, and mob hysteria, the spiders tore at the fence. In several places, the pile of dead spiders was forming a ramp that would let them over the wire. Other parts of the fence were close to collapse. Soon, the defenders on the hill would face the spiders coming at them from all directions.

"It's time for the gamble," said Lucius.

With a wave of their wands, Lucius and Severus blew away the section of the fence in front of the northwest corner of the hill that had a steep approach covered with loose gravel. The spiders poured through the breach into the massed fire of the centaurs.

Throughout all this, to her astonishment, Hermione was keeping count. She had estimated two hundred fifty in the last horde. She thought fifty had died on the fence. She thought another one hundred had died from artillery before Lucius and Severus created the gap. "Only one hundred left," she told herself.

In the midst of what should have been the desperate final engagement, Severus ordered a patrol and detailed Hermione to go with it.

Her inner self raged. *They're depriving me of the final moment.*

One of the young bucks, angry at being sent away from the action and as rebellious as any youngster, offered Hermione a ride on his back as he and a small group galloped around the top of the hill. They arrived at the east side of the hill in time to see a section of the fence waver.

*We didn't know those spiders were here,* thought Hermione as the fence went down.

She sent a flare with her wand. One of the Aunties was the first to arrive. The other two Aunties gathered the young bucks.

Hermione could see the spiders were going to reach the top of the hill before the artillery brigade could arrive to stop them. As Hermione fitted an explosive arrow to her bow, the first Auntie charged the horde. Spiders were trampled and scattered. Their attack was diverted as they swarmed over the demon in their midst. The centaur screamed as the venom hit. She went down. She frantically pushed spiders off her face. Her hooves flailed in the air as they opened and scattered her still-living body.

*We want to go with grace and dignity,* thought Hermione. *But it's not going to be that way.*

"Form ranks." The command by an Auntie cut through the stupor of the bucks, and they arranged themselves into two staggered rows. "Fire by volley."

"Rank one, fire."

"Rank two, fire."

The other witches and wizards appeared.

"Come on," yelled Severus as he waved his spear and ran to place himself between the bucks and the spiders.

*We're infantry,* thought Hermione

*"Can we take the town?" asked the General.*

*"We have cavalry, my General; we can take the town."*

*"We do not have infantry, my General; we cannot hold the town."*

"Rank one, fire ... Rank two, fire ..."

Grim working automatons that were once young bucks. Burning body parts of spiders. Flashes of shining steel. Flames and smoke and slaughter reaching to the bright, blue, uncaring sky.

There were two final volleys before everyone realized there was nothing left to shoot at, no living thing in front of them.

It was quiet. Bellatrix began to tremble. Narcissa sank to her knees, then to her hands and knees and began retching. Hermione stared straight ahead, not knowing she was gripping Lucius hard enough to leave bruises. Draco held Bellatrix as she shook uncontrollably. Severus brought water to Narcissa and helped her to her feet.

A wild-eyed Narcissa looked around. "Did we win?"

After the wizards had calmed the witches, the six mounted their brooms and flew reconnaissance over the grassland. The centaurs, stunned by what had been accomplished, did not protest. Finding no spiders, the adventurers flew from the hilltop to the kitchen of the manor where they opened the Champagne.

"I haven't asked before, and I don't want to be crass," said Hermione, "but how much land are we getting?"

"Only half as much as we conquered," said Draco.

"Your share is six square miles," said Lucius.

Hermione looked puzzled.

"At today's prices, it's worth about three million Galleons," said Lucius.

Hermione's wine glass shattered on the kitchen floor.

"It's usually the fireplace, but this is more domestic," said Bellatrix throwing her glass to shatter on the floor.

The others followed suit.

"Keeps the glass out of the ashes," said Narcissa, waving her wand to clean the floor tiles.

"We're ... We're ...," said Hermione. "But you were already," she said, looking at the four aristocrats.

Hermione and Severus exchanged glances. They had done this to help their friends; the money wasn't worth risking their lives; but now that they had done it, the money would change their lives.

Things clicked in Hermione's mind. The difference to Severus and her was monumental while the difference to the other four was incremental. They could have made the incremental difference in a safe manner, but they had chosen danger. More things clicked. Why couldn't her other friends counter their opponents with such well-planned operations? The arrogance of the aristocrats no longer seemed empty.

She accepted another glass of Champagne.

"Operating expenses are high for agriculture," said Lucius, "and you will have to save most of the profits from the good years to get you through the bad years, but you should be able to take one percent a year for your living expenses."

"Besides, there's nothing quite like being a landowner," said Narcissa.

Hermione let them pour her another glass. *Who cares if I'm tipsy?*

They had moved to the drawing room to relax and catch their breaths before soaking their aches away in the hot-tubs. Hermione was on the couch with Lucius.

"My tub is smaller, but my place is still comfortable," Hermione informed Lucius. "And cozy."

He looked into shining eyes. "Yes, it is," he said.

*I'm sure your 'place' is very cozy,* he thought.

He turned and told the group that Hermione and he would be going to her flat just as Severus and Narcissa stood and announced they were leaving for the castle.

Bellatrix twirled her finger in Draco's hair. "We're alone. Think one hot-tub will do? I can sit in your lap." Her fingers stroked the growing bulge in his trousers.

Right here. Right now. He ripped her shirt open. He cupped her breasts. Her tongue was in his mouth. He tore her bra off. His tongue was on her nipples. She was on the rug. He pulled her trousers off. She encouraged him. He yanked her knickers down. She opened her legs for him. He plunged into the war-torn, bruised, dirty, disheveled, most beautiful woman in the world. She moaned. She rocked as he rode her. Bliss exploded in his head. She was flushed. She must have come while he was gripping her ass and gushing into her. She smiled. Bath time.

Meanwhile, back at one of the private baths for professors, Narcissa had pushed her favorite soap button, the red ruby one, and was reaching across Severus to push her favorite bubble button, the pink pearl one, but Severus had his own favorite buttons to push.

"That's not fair, Sevvie. I want my bubbles."

"So do I."

"That's boobies," she said. "You aren't getting impatient, are you?"

"What's there to get impatient about?" he asked.

"Insensitive clot," she said.

She reached down to hold him. Oh my, perhaps he was getting impatient. She was thinking he should learn one of the virtues as she straddled him. She was determined to be an example as she slid onto him and an involuntary sigh escaped her. This felt so good that she knew it was best to wait patiently for your special wizard. She was making soft satisfied noises as she moved against him. She was patiently embracing him and murmuring that he was her darling and covering her lover with gentle kisses, and surely, he could see there was no reason to rush any of this. The moment she had patiently been waiting for arrived, and the small of Narcissa's back arched with a will of its own as she clutched her wizard and whimpered her need for him until the ecstasy of patience descended upon her and the world dissolved to Severus in her and in her arms. Then she patiently held him as his excitement grew and grew until he moaned and gripped her and completed their coupling. The agitated water stilled; they held each other; a froth of her favorite pink pearl bubbles graced them. Virtue rewarded.

The third couple was more hesitant.

When Lucius and Hermione had arrived at her flat, Hermione had a moment of anxiety. What did she do now? What did she want? She reminded herself that she wanted to seduce him or, better yet, she wanted him to seduce her. How did one go about this? She fell back on routine and asked, "Do you want some tea?"

"Tea would be good," he said. "We can sip it while we have our bath."

*We? Bath?* she thought. That was encouraging.

While she was filling the kettle with water, he stepped up behind her and put his arms around her waist. She sighed and leaned back into him. She liked the feel of him against her. His left hand left her waist to stroke her hair.

"Do you mind?" he asked. He waved his wand and the water in the kettle was boiling.

*Oh, do that to me,* she thought.

Then his arms encircled her. She put her arms over his so that he would not lose his grip and pressed back against him. She felt his member growing and did a sensuous wiggle.

*Do you like it? Do you want it?* she thought.

She moved his arms up to her breasts. He held them softly, almost teasing her.

"You're very pretty," he said quietly.

She shook her head no in disbelief. How could she, a bookish witch, be pretty?

"Yes, you are," he insisted. "I'll show you."

Remaining behind her, he guided her to the full-length mirror in the hall. She saw an ordinary-looking girl with a handsome wizard's arms around her. Keeping his right arm around her waist in a possessive manner, his left hand brushed her hair back.

"Aristocratic. Intelligent. A wizard could spend a lifetime enjoying your expressive face," said Lucius the conqueror.

His lips and tongue nibbled from below her ear to her shoulder where he nipped her. She thought she looked a bit dreamy and flushed. Her nipples pressed against her bra, and she wondered if that was obvious in the mirror. As she silently lamented her modest bust, his hands fondled her breasts through her shirt.

With one hand on a breast, the other swept back some bushy locks to reveal more of her face. He admired her reflection in the mirror and whispered in her ear. "Classy lady."

She wanted him to have her. She was helping him unbutton her shirt. It was off. His fingertips seemed to vibrate as they traced the top of a young witch's breasts. Her head leaned back as those marvelous fingertips explored under her bra. Then his hands were unfastening her trousers to reveal the black lace trim of crimson knickers. His eyes seemed to shine, and she was glad she had decided to dress with style under her campaign clothes. She kicked off her shoes. The trousers slid over her hips and down her legs. She kicked off her trousers. He admired her reflection in the mirror and whispered in her ear. "Beautiful, sweetheart."

He unfastened his trousers and let himself press against her. Only a pretty silk garment separated him from what she wanted him to have. She leaned her head back and moaned. She moved sinuously. She couldn't help it.

His hands slid down the form that was doing its slow weave, across her abdomen where lust was pooling, and over her silk covered void crying out for attention. They reached the tops of her legs. She put her hands on his as his fingers caressed her inner thighs. His left forearm and hand moved to her breasts while his right hand shifted to silk-covered folds. Delicate movements had Hermione moaning and wanting more. Delicate movements matched her rhythm as she twisted in his intimate embrace. When he whispered that she was the woman he wanted, all prudence left the young witch, and her hands pressed his exploring fingers against her as she sought more of the unbearable ecstasy. Her movements were no longer delicate.

Her mind blanked out.

He felt her pounding heart as he held her. She sagged against him while a red flush covered her face and breasts.

He checked his still-erect cock in the cleft of her silk-covered ass. He was surprised he had not had an orgasm. He managed to say, "I want inside you." He waltzed her to the bed and pushed her, face down, on the quilt. Her writhing against his cock had pushed him to the edge of reason. He lusted for this bossy little witch. The roused animal said, "I want to take you like my bitch."

*She knows what she is*, he thought as she murmured, "Yes, yes," and her hands pushed at her knickers and she shimmied them down to mid-thigh.

He would be slow and tease her. He was at the young girl's furry slit. He held her firmly frustrating the struggles of his bitch in heat to impale herself as he slowly dipped into her, slightly deeper each time, relishing every sound and move. He was completely in. He could feel her spongy patch. His slow descents into her gave it a rhythmic massage. Her face was becoming soft. *She's beautiful*, he realized.

Long slide in. Accompanying sigh. Pulling out, wet and glistening. Ache to be back in. Slowly. Sighs becoming moans. Building pressure. Holding out to feel her spasms. World narrowing to unbearable pressure. Her smile. He sank into her and stayed as she squirmed.

He made the small moves against her sensitive spot that took her for the long ride up her slope of passion, welcoming the sighs becoming moans. He fought the building pressure to gush into her, filling a desirable mate with his sperm. He wanted to experience this woman's spasms. He saw her smile. He had dreamed about Hermione Granger wriggling on his cock. He watched her face contort and her fingers grip the quilt. He felt her intimate ripple. It was wonderful.

He wanted to be nestled between her thighs when he completed his possession. He pulled her knickers off and arranged her on her back sliding back in with her sighing and looking at him and spreading her legs wider. He began moving in and out. He couldn't stop. He let her watch him as he felt the pressure build until he was pounding her and it was too much to contain. "Oh, Hermione."

He held her, feeling something more than physical satisfaction.

*This woman is dangerous*, he thought.

*I do not want to fall in love with Hermione Granger*, he thought. But he continued to hold her. She seemed to like it, showing no signs of wanting to part from him.

After their bath, they decided to go out for lunch. The sex had helped, but the horror of battle was still inside them, and they wanted to be reassured by the bustle of other people that existence was still ordinary. As they stood by the door ready to leave, she straightened his tie and adjusted his collar.

*She's already acting like a wife*, he thought. *Bloody hell, I like it.*

He took her to a hotel restaurant that was slow and pricey but reliable, where she surprised herself by ordering and devouring a large steak.

"I'm becoming a primitive predator," she said.

She became thoughtful. Could she talk to this man, confide in him? It was time to find out. "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course."

"It's about my land although I'm not certain I should bother you," she said.

"I'm flattered that you ask," he said. "My reply is that I make my living by managing land and investments."

She looked hesitant.

"You're thinking we may become opponents in the coming conflict, and you're wondering if you can trust me," he said.

She nodded yes. It occurred to her that she was more cautious about her land than about her sex.

"The Malfoy family has been prominent for almost a thousand years. Empires, wars, revolutions they've come and gone. We're still here," he said. "We're investors and executors and advisors, and we prosper because we can be trusted."

"And conquerors," she added.

"On occasion," he admitted. "But investing and creating good will is better for long-term survival."

She looked skeptical.

"You see us at a low point," he said. "For the last one hundred years, the family talent has run thin. We made poor decisions, and then we made desperate decisions to rectify the poor decisions."

Hermione had the wild and immodest thought that she could be a worthwhile addition to the Malfoy family talent. It was a new perspective on things.

Lucius continued. "There are a number of items to consider. You are new to land ownership, and you need to learn how to manage it. The next year will be difficult since you will be at school and you will want to concentrate on your studies. Eventually, it might be better to sell some of the land and make diversified investments, and it might be better to divide your wealth between the wizard and non-wizard world."

"You have non-wizard investments?" she asked.

"Considerable," he replied. "But discretion is necessary. The non-wizard government will want to tax your new wealth tax it very heavily and you have already paid a heavy tax to the wizard government."

She remembered that they had only received half the acreage they had conquered. The centaurs had helped, but the Malfoys could have hired wizard mercenaries and kept out of danger themselves.

They covered the various types of contracts, the costs for land management, and the fees for brokerage in case she wanted to diversify. She wasn't happy about the bribes needed to surreptitiously acquire non-wizard assets, but she was even unhappier about being taxed again. They could be patient since she was not yet an adult in the non-wizard world.

The non-wizard world! Her adventure and wealth! *Omigod, what am I going to tell my parents?*

Their business discussion had made her more relaxed around Lucius, and it had made her more admiring of him. *This doesn't have to be romance*, she thought. *He's merely an admirable and comfortable companion. And he's sexy.*

"Do you want to stay the night?" she asked.

"Very much," he said.

She hesitated. "Maybe you shouldn't," she said.

"You look troubled," said Lucius.

"I've been waking up in the middle of the night. I think I've been screaming about spiders, but there's no one to ask," she said. "I sit and stare into the dark."

"We all stare into the dark," said Lucius, "but we don't have to do it alone."

The next morning, Hermione went with Lucius to meet the others and consult with the centaurs about the newly conquered land. The centaurs reported that the spiders were keeping to their side of the stream. The centaurs were careful to show no hostility whatsoever to spiders who respected the new boundaries.

"You're invited of course," said Sylvia, one of the war-Aunties who had trotted up to Hermione.

"Invited?" asked Hermione.

"The victory celebration tomorrow evening," said the centaur. "We'll have rabbits and greens from the meadow, nuts and berries and squirrels from the woods, and seeds and pheasants from the grassland."

"A new-territory feast," stated Hermione.

"Yes," agreed the centaur. "And memorial ceremony for the fallen Auntie."

Hermione and the others spent most of their time until the celebration sitting in front of a fireplace finding solace in the company of fellow veterans, dreaming the fire, and sipping sherry to ease the aches and take the edge off the terrible memories. They circulated at the feast and found that only a few older centaurs did not accept them. When they left, it was late, and they were exhausted.

"May I escort you home," Lucius asked Hermione, "and stay?"

Hermione smiled yes. She was discovering there was nothing like a wizard for keeping one's feet warm.

Hermione climbed into bed with Lucius, wrapped herself around him with lascivious intent ... and fell asleep. When she woke the next morning, her head was on Lucius' shoulder, her arm was around him, and her toes were a delicious temperature. *It's only a temporary fling; becoming attached to Lucius Malfoy would be folly.*

He looked so peaceful that she couldn't resist running her fingers through his hair and nuzzling him. He woke, but he was not peeved. He nuzzled her back. They progressed from gentle kisses to loving kisses to passionate embraces with her lying on top of him. He raised her night gown and let her straddle him. She kissed him and made small noises as he slid in as if he belonged with this witch. She knew it would always be easy for him.

*Omigod, he feels good.*

He made gentle love to her as she enjoyed the affection, reached her plateau, and went wild. The bolt of bliss shot through her. Lucius held the flushed and panting Hermione until she returned to earth whereupon he rolled her onto her back, put her feet by his ears, and rode her until she was, once again, writhing for the keeper-of-the-warm-toes. She hoped Severus and Draco were taking equally good care of Narcissa and Bellatrix.

It had been a strange summer.

END