

Five Creatures Luna Believes in That Hermione Doesn't

by *kellychambliss*

Luna has a gift for attracting fantastical creatures and for keeping secrets.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This story was written for the "Five Things" fest on LJ; the title was requested by the recipient. Said recipient (who dropped out of the fest before posting started) really, really, *really* wanted a fic focusing on her OTP (revealed later in the story), but she listed a range of other characters she liked, too. For fun, I decided to try to include as many as I could. Plus a lot of creatures. So it's all rather crowded...and plottier than these five-things fics usually are. And it definitely ended up rather sillier than I planned. But Luna does that to me, for some reason.

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Five Creatures That Luna Believes In That Hermione Doesn't*

(*But One That She Might)

By Kelly Chambliss

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"It's a gift," Luna's father told her the first time it happened, during the summer before she entered Hogwarts.

She and her father had been hunting Blibbering Humdingers near the Humdingers' preferred habitat: a marsh in Poland where the Lovegoods had set up camp. It was her father who first heard the Humdinger rustling in the reeds.

But it was Luna towards whom the Humdie turned its two-snouted, beet-coloured face. And then...and then, as Luna and Xenophilius stood motionless and hopeful, holding hands and breaths, it had actually...really and truly...blibbered at her.

Mr Lovegood had been most impressed. "You must be a *cogocaeacus*," he said. "Someone who draws people and creatures to you without their being quite aware of your presence. It's a rare gift indeed, my dear. And very handy in our line of work."

That trip may have been the first time a rare creature had been drawn to Luna, but it wasn't the last; she saw or sensed many of them at Hogwarts. Nor was it only beasties who came to her. All over the school, in the places considered secret and secluded, people carried on personal conversations in Luna's hearing, although they never seemed aware that she and the creatures were nearby.

Luna never meant to eavesdrop, but often she had no choice. When she first found herself forced to overhear people, she would move or speak so they would know she was there. But this method had backfired more than once: people often got angry if they saw her after they'd started talking; sometimes they would even accuse her of listening on purpose. So now she usually just kept quiet and still, and no one was the wiser or the worse for it. And she did learn some interesting secrets.

She was also often surprised to find out just how unobservant people were. Recently, for instance, she'd learnt that almost everyone had been unaware of a certain romantic relationship at Hogwarts, a relationship that she'd assumed was common knowledge...at least to anyone who paid attention.

As a rule, however, not many people *did* pay attention; this was an important truth Luna had observed in her fellow humans. It was something to do with fantastic beasts, she was certain: the less people believed in rare creatures, the more oblivious to the real world they tended to be.

In fact, the very people who were most likely to describe *her* as "dreamy" and "moony" were the ones who took the least notice of the life that swirled around them.

Luna enjoyed this paradox.

But she hadn't been pondering paradoxes on the day she'd been sitting in the special window seat, the one that moved around the castle to provide different picturesque views. Instead, she'd been looking out at mist-covered hills and thinking about the upcoming Quidditch match between Hufflepuff and Gryffindor. Professor Flitwick had asked her to provide the commentary. Not long after she sat down, though, she became aware of

Ron and the Wrackspurt

"I dunno, mate." Ron Weasley's voice filtered through the window-seat curtain behind which Luna rested. He sounded dejected. "I mean, we never said anything to each other that was official, like. But I guess I thought..."

"You thought it was an understood thing? And now she doesn't seem interested in you anymore?" Neville Longbottom said in sympathetic tones. But then his voice boomed out sternly, "You should never assume!" Apologetically, he added, "Well, that's what my gran always says, anyway."

"No offense, Nev, but your gran is..."

"I know. What I mean is, maybe you should say something to her. Outright. Tell her how you feel. Make sure you both have the same view of things."

"I would, except...hell, it's probably too late now. And anyway, I did try. But every time I open my mouth, it's...I dunno...my brain goes all woozy, and it's like I don't even know the words anymore. I might as well be speaking Mermish, you know what I mean?"

"I think so," said Neville. "That's how I felt just before I asked Ginny to go to the Yule Ball with me. You're just nervous, that's all."

But that wasn't all, Luna knew. Ron's problem was more than nerves; it was clearly a Wrackspurt. They floated in through your ears and made your brain turn fuzzy. No wonder he lost focus. She considered opening the curtain to explain, but then decided it wouldn't do any good.

Because Hermione didn't believe in Wrackspurts.

And of course Ron was talking about Hermione. He'd been taking her for granted again. Luna would have been happy to tell Hermione that it was the Wrackspurt's fault that Ron hadn't been more attentive to her, but she knew that probably wouldn't help Ron's case. Even if he had a case to make, which he didn't.

Of course, he didn't know yet that he had no case, because as usual, he hadn't been paying attention. Apparently Neville hadn't, either; ever since he'd got involved with Ginny, he didn't have much interest in anything else.

But Luna had been paying attention; she had seen the slow but inevitable drift of Hermione's affections away from Ron and towards someone else. And Ron was right.

It was too late now. For him.

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This point was made even clearer the next afternoon, when Luna went to the library to do her Ancient Runes homework. She must have been sitting in deeper shadow than she realised, which would explain why the verret didn't see her when it crept out from under the Arithmancy stacks.

Or at least, Luna assumed it was a verret. She couldn't quite see it, but she thought she caught a whiff of its tell-tale sweet scent, the one that worked as a vapourous form of Veritaserum, but that affected behaviour instead of words. It caused people to act on their deepest desires, which was why Luna felt that it was a good thing verrets were so rare.

Often it was better to keep one's deepest desires private. Her father had once told her an interesting tale about the time a verret had sat under the chair of Ron Weasley's Auntie Muriel...

And now something similar was happening with

Vince and the Verret

Vincent Crabbe and Millicent Bulstrode had come into the library rather noisily, but although Madam Pince scowled at them, she didn't say anything. Vince in the library was practically unheard-of; Luna thought that perhaps Madam Pince remained silent because she didn't want to discourage this first sign of his academic interest. Or perhaps she just wanted to avoid a confrontation with Slytherins.

For his part, Vince ignored Madam Pince. He ignored Luna, too, which was typical and which suited her. She'd never thought they would have much in common. But although Millicent had sometimes spoken to Luna in a gruff, not unfriendly way, today she seemed too involved with Vince to notice that they weren't alone in the dim nook.

Millicent was chuckling. "Did they really think no one would see them? Snogging their brains out right next to the Quidditch pitch? You and I weren't the only ones near there, either; other people saw them, too. Now the whole school will know, even though they're clearly trying to keep it such a big secret. They didn't even think to hide under the stands! And Granger is supposed to be so smart."

Vince grunted. "There's plenty ways of being smart, me mum says. Book-smart's only one of 'em."

"And plenty of ways of being dumb, too," snorted Millicent. "Even if you're book-smart. Maybe especially if you're book-smart. And speaking of books..." she went on, glancing around. "What is it you need to look up, exactly?"

"Newt-tail reductions...that's what I left out of my last potion, and Professor Snape said I would be 'well-advised' to find out how to make them before the next lesson. He's been awfully shirty lately, so I thought..."

"Quite," nodded Millicent, reaching towards a bright-green volume. "Maybe in here..."

The caramelly-sweet smell of the verret was getting stronger, and Luna was not surprised to see Vince's face flush as he inhaled.

"Er, Millie?" he said. "Didn't you think it was kind of hot, though?"

"What was hot?" asked Millicent absently, flicking through the book.

"Them kissing. I mean, even if they are Gryffindors. They looked good together."

Millicent glanced up, amused. "Why, Vince Crabbe! I do believe you've got a romantic streak. Don't let Draco know."

Vince reddened further. "I don't...I mean...I do..."

Suddenly he put his hands on either side of Millicent's face and kissed her soundly. For quite a while.

At long last he stepped back, and Luna would have been hard-pressed to say which of the two of them was more astonished. Vince's eyes were popping, and Millicent looked as if the rainbow-billed burspuckle, that rarest of mammals, had just appeared unexpectedly before her.

"I...er...I dunno what come over me, Millie," Vince said finally, his face almost purple. "I...I..."

"Are you sorry?" asked Millicent.

"Erm...do you want me to be?"

"Not if you liked it."

In answer, Vince drew a deep breath and kissed her again.

The green library book slipped unnoticed to the floor, and Luna silently wanded it back to its place on the shelf. It wouldn't do to have Madam Pince come over just now.

Well, thought Luna as she watched Vince and Millicent walk out of the library hand-in-hand, maybe a school verret would turn out to have its uses after all.

She wondered if perhaps Hermione had smelled it, too, and that's why she was now suddenly willing to act on her heart's desire when she'd kept it hidden for so long...well, hidden from everyone except Luna, that is. It was easy to see hidden passions if you knew where to look.

Luna knew where to look. And Hermione's passion had been particularly simple to spot.

But the more Luna thought about it, the more she decided that the verret probably had little to do with Hermione snogging her brains out next to the Quidditch pitch.

Because Hermione didn't believe in verrets.

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Millicent hadn't been joking when she said that the whole school would soon know about Hermione's snogfest. No sooner had Luna left the library to go to dinner than she came across Ginny Weasley arguing with the Gryffindor Fat Lady. Luna grimaced in sympathy. Arguing with portraits could be difficult, because they usually won by virtue of simply stalking out of the frame.

But then she saw a sparkly blue blossom in the fresh nosegay the Fat Lady was holding, and she knew that this time, the portrait's occupant was unlikely to be going anywhere. Not with *that* flower nearby. In fact, Ginny would be lucky to break away from

The Fat Lady and the Flunkrumus

in time for dinner.

"Now really, my dear," the Fat Lady was saying testily to Ginny, "you cannot make me believe that you're as ignorant as you pretend. She's your friend, after all. My friend Violet would never keep something like this from me, and Hermione wouldn't keep it from you. You can tell me, love."

"But honestly," Ginny said, sounding testy in her turn. "I don't know what you're talking about. Hermione doesn't even like Quidditch."

"Not Quidditch itself, dear. The Quidditch *field*. They were snogging in the middle of the Quidditch field. While Bludgers whizzed all around them."

Vince and Millicent hadn't said anything about Bludgers, which was further proof to Luna that the blue bloom in the Fat Lady's posy was a flunkrumus.

Unlike the verret, the flunkrumus was not rare at all. If anything, it was all too common. A little creature that was half plant, half animal and looked like a flower, it reproduced by sending out spores.

In soil, the spores germinated and grew, but in human brains, they "sprouted" only in the form of imagination. Whoever inhaled the spores would not only become insatiably curious, but would also feel compelled to add invented details to any narrative.

Luna's father often said that during the creature's fertile season, people would be wise not to believe anything they heard. Or anything they read in any newspaper except *The Quibbler*. (*The Quibbler* was safe, because every spring, Mr Lovegood took a special spore-blocking potion that made him impervious to the flunkrumus's effects.)

But who would have guessed that a painted flunkrumus could have a similar effect on a painted portrait? Because clearly the flunkrumus spores were responsible for Fat Lady's claim that the snogging took place on the Quidditch field rather than next to it and with Bludgers whizzing around. Luna was looking forward to telling her father about this discovery.

Meanwhile, Ginny was saying "fussbudget" in a loud voice to the Fat Lady...the common room password, evidently. Poor Ginny: Luna knew that the portrait would be unlikely to open for anyone, password or no password, until she got more information about Hermione. And sure enough, when Ginny said "fussbudget" a second time, the Fat Lady simply folded her arms and set her lips.

"Look," Ginny all but shouted, "I don't know anything about Hermione snogging Bludgers on the Quidditch pitch, but if I see her at dinner, I will ask her to come tell you the whole story. Now will you let me in?"

"Don't do it, love," said the Fat Lady's friend Violet, who had shown up clutching her own rather bedraggled bouquet. "They don't seem to think they owe us portraits any explanation about anything. They just expect us to open and shut at their whims, as if we aren't part of the castle community, too."

Before Ginny could respond to this...and given the glint her eye, it would not have been a response calculated to soothe the portraits' feelings...Luna stepped up and linked her arm through her friend's.

"There's no point in arguing," she said calmly. "They can't help it; it's the flunkrumus. Let's go eat."

Ginny looked as if she might resist, but then she allowed Luna to lead her towards the Great Hall.

"Come back here!" the Fat Lady yelled after them. "You can't leave us hanging like this!"

"Well, except in our frames!" added Violet, with a trilling little laugh.

Ginny ignored them. "All right, Luna, I'll bite," she said as they walked. "What is a flunkrumus?"

Luna happily explained, concluding, "You need to tell Hermione that her secret is out; she should just admit it. Everyone knows about her romance now. She has to talk to Ron directly, tell him she's found someone else. Until she does, the story will just grow stranger and stranger. Due to the flinkrumus, you know. But its power ends once the truth is made public."

Ginny shook her head and sighed. "I don't see how this whole business could get any stranger that it already is. Hermione isn't interested in Ron? I had no idea..."

"Neither did he." Luna patted Ginny's arm comfortingly before heading off to the Ravenclaw table. "It's best that Hermione hears about this from you; she doesn't always accept my version of things. But don't be surprised if she's sceptical. Because you know Hermione doesn't believe in flinkrumuses."

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The weather had turned so pleasant that after dinner, Luna and many of the other students went out into the grounds. Most people seemed to be talking about the snogging Hermione, except that by now, snogging was the least of it.

"Having sex right on the Quidditch field with Madam Hooch watching, that's what I heard," Hannah Abbott was telling a large group of Hufflepuffs. "Hermione Granger and..."

Oh, dear, Luna thought. The story was getting worse; Ginny must not have succeeded in convincing Hermione to tell Ron the truth. But before Luna could explain to Hannah that the part about Madam Hooch probably wasn't true, a sharp voice called, "Miss Abbott!"

Hannah blanched. "Yes, Professor?"

Professor McGonagall was standing near the arch that led into the walled garden next to castle. She eyed Hannah sternly. "I trust you are aware that when you indulge in obviously silly gossip about your friends, you not only humiliate them, but you make yourself look foolish and credulous."

"Er...yes, Professor, I'm aware."

"Good. Then I'm confident you will be wise enough to say no more."

"Yes, Professor. Sorry," said Hannah.

McGonagall shook her head as she watched Hannah hurry away towards the lake; then she turned and went through the arch into the walled enclosure. Luna wasn't sure, but she thought the professor might have been smiling to herself.

Luna went into the garden herself soon afterward. It was damp and mostly deserted this time of year, but there was a certain stone bench she liked to sit on, next to a wicket through which she could see the broad lawns sloping toward Hagrid's hut. Sometimes she saw unusual creatures in the garden, but mostly she simply enjoyed the solitude and the chance to let her mind range.

Tonight she saw no creatures at all, unless she counted Professors McGonagall and Vector, who were meandering slowly along the paths in what seemed like a comfortable silence. They were friends, Luna knew; she had seen them together before.

In many ways, they were quite different: McGonagall tall and angular, sharp-tongued and quick-tempered; Vector placid and quiet, softly curved, slow-moving. But Luna recognised their similarities: they were both passionate about their difficult disciplines, they both cared about students, and like many fundamentally serious people, they could also enjoy a good laugh.

It was a laugh, in fact, that was responsible for

Septima and the Secarus

It was probably because her bench was so secluded that Luna went unseen by the professors when they stopped directly behind her. McGonagall was deep into a description of the student gossip about Hermione, and the usually staid Septima Vector was laughing so hard she could barely stand.

"...'Sex on the Quidditch pitch,' that unspeakable Malfoy kept saying...it sounded like one of those romance novels Lockhart used to read in the staff room when he thought no one was looking. And when I reached the garden gate, I heard the same story from Hannah the Hufflepuff. Only she added the lovely little detail that Hooch was watching it all. By now they're probably claiming that Hooch was the one *having* sex on the Quidditch pitch. With half the Ravenclaw house team. And their brooms. And..."

"Stop," gasped Vector, wiping her eyes. "Or you'll have to use an oxygen charm on me."

"Have a seat instead," Professor McGonagall said, transfiguring a tangle of unpruned rosebushes into a viney-looking wooden bench.

"Ouch!" said Professor Vector as she sat down. "Watch out...I think there are thorns, Minerva."

That would have been when the secarus found her, of course; Luna knew they liked to hide in shrubbery. A secarus was small, but you had to be careful about touching it, since its fast-moving little wings could cut skin.

"There can't be thorns," said McGonagall, looking critically at the bench. "I don't see any. You know I wouldn't make a beginner's transfiguration mistake like that."

Vector was sucking her injured finger. "Well, something got me."

Luna watched, interested. At the right time of year, like now, a secarus secreted a substance that could give clarity of mind to anyone who ingested it, so that people could cut through their confusions and clearly see things that, on some level, they already knew. Her father had compared the process to sculpting or gardening...he said it was similar to the way one cut away unnecessary material to release the inner shape of stone or the living core of a plant.

Luna could even visualize how it worked: the serum of the secarus would be like a straight line that cleanly bisected an arc, something that gave you control over tangents, that gave your thoughts direction and focus.

And something like that must have happened to Professor Vector, for she said, "They're perfect for each other, you know."

"Miss Granger and Mr Potter, do you mean?"

"Of course. Although they probably could have found a better way to announce their relationship than by kissing in front of what seems to have been half the school." Vector chuckled and then continued, "But leaving aside all the absurdity about sex and Quidditch and..." she looked sideways at McGonagall..."brooms, I think they've chosen wisely in each other. I never thought Hermione was well-suited to Ron Weasley, you know, or that Durmstrang young man."

"No," Professor McGonagall agreed. "At one point, though, I did wonder about her and Miss Weasley..."

Vector shook her head decisively. "Ginny is smart, but not cerebral enough for Hermione."

"And you think Harry is?"

"Perhaps not," said Vector thoughtfully. "But he is...serious. Dedicated. Willing to make difficult sacrifices. So is she. And they seem able to listen to one another. I think it might work out very well. He will be good for her, and she for him."

Luna smiled; she thought so, too. She doubted Hermione would believe that Vector understood her so well. But then, Hermione didn't believe in secretaries, either.

A movement caught her eye: Professor Vector had taken Professor McGonagall's hand. "Now that I think about it, Harry and Hermione remind me rather of us," she said, kissing McGonagall's palm softly.

"They do?" McGonagall seemed surprised, but Luna found herself nodding. Smart, serious, dedicated...she could see the similarities.

"Oh, yes. I'm just like Hermione with Harry," said Vector, her lips now brushing McGonagall's throat briefly and moving along her jaw. "I'm always having to save you from your impulsive temper."

Professor McGonagall snorted and stood up. "Indeed. Well, evidently I am the one who must save you from making an embarrassing spectacle of yourself. Because unlike our snogging young friends, we are not about to start misbehaving in public."

"Scaredy-cat," said Vector. "Who would see us?"

Luna sat very still; she didn't want the professors to notice her and be upset. She'd known of their relationship for at least a year, but of course she'd said nothing. She never thought other people's secrets were hers to share. But usually she was glad to know them, even uncomfortable ones. They were, as her father had said, a gift.

McGonagallaccio'd a scraggle of vines from the wall and changed them into a small bouquet of irises and tulips that she presented to Professor Vector with a flourish. "There you are, my love. Let these distract you. We neither of us needs to become grist for the student gossip mill. Or before you know it, people will be saying we were the ones supposedly having sex on the Quidditch pitch with Hooch. And Filch and Mrs. Norris. And Umbridge. And..."

"Enough!" commanded Vector, smiling as she rose. "I'll settle for just the two of us. Although if you *really* want to invite Dolores..."

The professors set off down the path and disappeared, the sound of their laughter floating back to the girl on the stone bench.

The sun had turned the lake into liquid gold, and in the warm, clear air, Luna could feel the unmistakable presence of swarms of *Amoroso Amamusi*. Invisible to the naked eye, these magical creatures were native to every known continent. They were nourished by human attraction: the slightest whiff of two people with romantic interest in one another would lure dozens of the tiny insects. Thousands could hatch in minutes, and then the scent of them fueled the very attraction they fed off. It was a very efficient natural phenomenon, Mr Lovegood always said.

But perhaps the most interesting thing about the Amamusi, thought Luna, was that although no one had ever seen them, most people had enjoyed their effects. They were fantastical creatures that everyone could believe in.

Even Hermione.

The sun was dipping below the lake now, and Luna headed back toward the castle, keeping a sharp eye out for Graddling Grimphs. Everyone knew they enjoyed the twilight...

~~The End