

Wit Beyond Measure

by Rose of the West

True intellect can sometimes be found with its head in the clouds.

For the 2011 Hogwarts_Houses fest on LJ

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"It's pretty rare that anyone turns my brim up like that. You're a bit of an odd duck, aren't you?" The Sorting Hat couldn't decide whether to be annoyed or amused. It settled by getting down to business.

"Let's see what we have here: a veritable bird's nest of thoughts and ideas... You're definitely smart enough, but inclined to wool gather... Now don't distract me with thoughts of the Golden Fleece, young lady... Quite brave, but perhaps not Godric's sort of reckless valor... Not a speck of guile...you might want to develop some, you know... Eager to make friends, but you don't quite fit in socially... It won't be the most comfortable fit, but clearly the best option..."

"RAVENCLAW!"

There was polite clapping from all of the tables in the Great Hall, but perhaps less at the Ravenclaw table. That House was familiar with *The Quibbler*. Every student at that table had parents or friends who rolled their eyes at the assertions of Xenophilus Lovegood. To have a house member from a family of such questionable qualifications was a blight.

Whispers surrounded her as she followed the prefects to the Ravenclaw tower. She didn't seem to notice. When they reached the common room, she finally spoke. "Did anyone notice that there were a great many nargles in the hallway? They seemed to flutter all over the place, making quite a noise. I'll have to look into it tomorrow."

The eye-rolling had only just begun, the older Ravenclaws realized as they pointed out the dorms to the firsties.

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"What's the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?" He repeated it a second time for effect and then glared around the room, looking for a victim. He spied her across the classroom, where she was looking up at the artificial windows. Was she really ignoring *his* class? It was a pleasure to feel the way his robe caught the air as he swept over and slammed both of his hands on her desk. He'd perfected this maneuver to get maximum shock with little pain to himself and used it perfectly upon this occasion.

Every student in the room jumped except the one whose attention he was trying to gain. Instead, the blond head turned slowly as blue eyes blinked. "I'm sorry, Professor. I was thinking about how bubotuber-bats will foul aconite if one isn't careful to keep them away. After that, the aconite can be dangerous, even if you call it monkshood or

wolfsbane. They're all are the same plant, you know."

"I do indeed know." He felt his face softening as he added, "Thank you, Miss Lovegood."

Several hours later, he was sitting at the table in the staff room, looking over some sixth years' essays when Minerva and Poppy came into the room. They appeared to be deep in conversation. "...she's never quite as absent as she seems. She always seems to know what we're discussing in class, even when her mind is clearly somewhere out on the grounds."

"The other students have already been so unkind toward her. She doesn't even seem to notice, but she must feel it. It's hard for the girls whose mothers are gone..."

"How was it that Serena died, Poppy?"

"I don't recall exactly. It was a potion that went horribly wrong."

Severus found himself speaking. "She was researching a derivative of Wolfsbane that would allow the patient to retain his human shape. It went well until the cauldron simply exploded. They discovered a nest of Bubotuber bats near the monkshood patch that she used..."

He looked up to see the two witches staring at him. "What's the matter with you two?" he asked. "I've been interested in that potion, myself, and understanding the failures is very important when studying ways to improve any potion." He got up and swept out of the room. He needed more red ink to grade these essays.

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She forgot how it started. It was innocent enough. One Ravenclaw dared another to grab a book, and a week later someone else took a quill. At the beginning, they always gave everything back in a day or two.

Marietta was a little more malicious. She wanted to see if Luna could still manage good grades without the books for an extended period of time. It wasn't fair that such a dimwit could get better grades than Marietta did. Maybe if she did poorly enough, Luna would be re-sorted into Hufflepuff.

It turned out to be a failure. Luna still got the same excellent grades, and Marietta still had merely good ones. It rankled, and caused a bit of friction between the two girls. That is, it caused friction for Marietta. Luna always seemed oblivious to such things.

Of course Luna would join Dumbledore's Army and excel at that, too. Marietta gritted her teeth at the way Luna would talk to *Harry Potter* as if he was just a normal person. Didn't Luna know that *Harry Potter* was extra special? Didn't she realize that only cool people should be allowed to talk to him?

One afternoon, Marietta was part of a group that got to the meeting early. They discussed various people in the club who hadn't arrived yet. Finally, a 'Puff asked, "What's up with that Luna Lovegood?"

"Mad as a hatter," said a fellow Ravenclaw.

"But she seems nice," said Ginny Weasley.

"You've got to be kidding, Ginny," said Marietta. "You don't have to live with her in your house."

"She makes the strangest comments sometimes," said the other Ravenclaw. "You feel as if she can see things you know she can't see."

Marietta nodded. "And she's just the person to notice the gravy stain on your blouse."

"Meanwhile, she's got little experiments all over the common room, growing who knows what in empty flower pots. She's completely batty."

Ginny shrugged. "There's nothing really *wrong* with any of those things."

Marietta sighed and was about to start again, but an uneasy silence filled the room and the back of her neck prickled. She turned and saw Luna walking in, looking as absent-minded as she usually did and wearing those ridiculous bottle-cap earrings, but even they looked strange. Marietta peered at Luna. One of the bottle-caps was facing forward and the other was facing backward. Longbottom was right behind Luna, and his eyes burned as he looked at the two Ravenclaws.

Marietta rolled her eyes and turned to the other Ravenclaw, who mouthed, "Do you think she heard us?" She shrugged in response, and then Granger showed up, so there wasn't any more time to think of it. She did think about it, however, when she bumped into Longbottom again. His eyes narrowed, and she could almost hear him thinking at her.

A week later, Marietta was invited to Professor Umbridge's office. Everyone knew what that meant. She walked up the stairs in trepidation, wondering what she'd done to merit this sort of summons. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw it was Mother. She didn't have a chance to relax, however, when Mother said, "Marietta, I understand you've gotten in with a dangerous crowd."

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He followed the girls, who followed Hagrid. Neville found himself feeling protective of them. Ginny, of course, resented it. She felt it was her duty, as the youngest Weasley and sometime-girlfriend of Harry Potter, to be strong and brave all the time. Neville saw her when she didn't think others could see her, though.

Luna worried him. No one could ever really tell what she was thinking, much less what she felt. Since she was in Ravenclaw, he and Ginny couldn't always communicate with her. What effect did all these battles with the Death Eaters at Hogwarts have upon her?

It had been she who said that if the sword really belonged to Harry, then they should obtain it. She had figured it all out, but Snape hadn't been where he was expected to be. There was always a several-hour long meeting among the Death Eaters, and Snape was a Death Eater, wasn't he?

Luna had taken the situation somewhat philosophically. While Ginny had railed at Snape for every evil caused by every Death Eater, Luna had tilted her head and stared at the Headmaster. She looked as if she was working through a complicated problem. As he told them they would go with Hagrid into the forest for their detention that night, she had smiled and nodded.

As they got near to the dittany patch, Ginny sped up to talk to Hagrid, and Neville took the opportunity to talk to Luna. "What were you thinking in Snape's office?"

"He wasn't with the Death Eaters."

"So? He must have figured out that we would try something like this."

"And he didn't send us to the Death Eaters to punish."

"He wants these potion ingredients."

Luna stopped and put her arm on Neville's arm. "You know plants as well as anyone at Hogwarts, maybe even as well as Professor Sprout now, Neville. What are these plants used for?"

He knew the answer, and for once he understood what she meant. Yet even if they were gathering ingredients to make healing ointments and salves, it didn't make any sense. Dumbledore's death, Snape being made Headmaster by Voldemort himself, the way the Carrows minced and simpered to Snape... It didn't make any sense at all.

He had all spring to think about it, though, the whole spring when Luna was You-know-who-knows-where. He'd come to respect Luna's insight. Everyone had. So whenever he wondered where she'd been taken, and whenever he wondered what she was thinking, he would look at the Headmaster's chair in the Great Hall and wonder...

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He tried to be relieved that Miss Lovegood was removed from the school. She was one of the instigators, encouraging sedition among the students. The way she stared at him at all hours as if he was a Muggle picture show was uncanny, as if she had discovered the things that no one alive knew.

Yet as the school year wound down toward final exams, he found himself instinctively looking at the Ravenclaw table and being disappointed when she wasn't there. There was no reason to think of her so much. He hadn't spoken to her many times in her six years of formal education at all. Most of those occasions had been to hmph at her potion skills or suggest that she use colors that were easier on the eye when writing essays. The most personal conversation ever had been their first. The last time, in fact had been as he issued their detentions.

"I trust you'll leave my office alone in the future, Miss Lovegood?"

She had blinked up at him. "Of course, Headmaster, now that we know you don't go to Death Eater meetings."

He was left to blink at her.

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Harry was grateful to Luna for getting him out of the Great Hall, but first he whispered yet another request into her ear. She nodded, and as he slipped up the stairs, he watched her do the same out the door. He pictured her working her way to the Whomping Willow, which she would probably charm by talking to it, somehow... Merlin, he needed sleep if he was getting as fanciful as she was.

Somehow, she succeeded in the task he had asked of her. For some reason, she always carried a potion made of a particular set of herbs. She told Harry later that they were the very herbs Snape had sent her, Neville, and Ginny to gather. Snape had been secretly making various types of healing potions for the students. Jars of ointments and such things were often found in the common rooms and other useful spots. Luna had decided that if Snape valued those herbs, she would combine them all.

As Snape had lay very close to death, Luna used her potion. He would spend several months in the hospital, but ultimately he would make a near-perfect recovery. Harry heard that Luna often went to visit Snape in the hospital, something he himself was reluctant to do.

The press was demanding, however, requesting a meeting between The Boy Who Lived and Dumbledore's Spy. Harry finally relented when he realized the demands would never end. He thought to himself that he felt almost Snape-like when he imagined telling off the reporters as he fastened his good robes. He comforted himself by thinking that Luna might be there, asking questions for the Quibbler. He wondered what sort of questions she would ask. They would certainly be more interesting than anything Rita Skeeter asked.

It turned out that it was Snape's first interview after the battle. Harry had been asked to be present primarily to get a chance at Snape. As a result, Harry hardly listened to the questions other than to note with disappointment that Luna was either not there or was buried so far behind the others that she couldn't be seen nor heard.

"Professor Snape, to what do you attribute your survival?"

Harry perked up at that question and looked at the questioner. The pack of reporters had shifted slightly as some had dashed off to get their copy in before evening printings. It was a newcomer to the *Prophet*, but it was a question no one had yet asked.

Luna had asked that she be left out of the stories that were told, stating that it might have been any student or even an adult. Harry had heard Poppy disagree with that assessment. Most students wouldn't have known to have a potion like that on hand. They would never have guessed that by requesting they obtain those herbs, Snape had been giving them a recipe. Luna had figured it out.

Harry looked back at his professor when the silence drew out. Snape seemed to be looking at the reporters, searching the faces. Then he stopped looking, although he didn't smile or otherwise indicate that he was looking at something important. Harry realized that Luna's face had finally become visible in the press of people and that she was smiling at Snape as intently as he looked at her.

"Professor? We all know you were bitten by You-know-who's snake and nearly bled to death. Yet now the healers are saying that you'll make a near-perfect recovery. How did you survive your injuries?"

Snape turned to the reporter with a twisted smile. "You might say it was 'man's greatest treasure.'"

A/N: Thank you to Blue Artemis for beta reading.