

For the Birds

by Fairfield

A candid account of a naturalists' expedition

Chapter 1 of 1

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He was having a quiet lunch when three witches joined him at the table.

"You're free this weekend aren't you?"

"What's special about this weekend?" asked Draco.

"We've read the portents, and it's a good chance to photograph an augurey," said Luna.

"Why invite me?" he asked.

"We need someone to carry the heavy stuff," said Parvati.

"You don't want us to hurt our backs or sprain an ankle, do you?" asked Lavender.

Parvati and Lavender reminded him that the Malfoys were still under a cloud, and random acts of chivalry would help his family. They couldn't spell the equipment because they might be spotted by non-wizards. Luna was puzzled that he wasn't leaping at the chance to get the first photograph of an augurey.

Thus it was that on a cloudy and blustery Saturday morning, Draco was lugging all the paraphernalia of a professional cameraman plus a silver flask of dandelion wine, which Luna claimed was sure bait for augureys when placed under a willow tree.

"Careful of the rough ground," said Parvati.

"Yes, don't fall and break any of the equipment," said Lavender.

As they were walking along a seaside chalk cliff, Luna stopped to listen. "I heard something. It might have been the cry of an augurey."

"It might have been," said Draco as the raindrops began dripping down his back. The three girls had umbrellas, but his hands were thoroughly occupied with the equipment. He couldn't see three feet in front of him, and now, there were bushes and brambles.

After passing a strange clump of bushes, the girls stopped and decided to return to investigate.

"It's a cenote," announced Luna. "I wonder how deep it is?"

"Draco has the lights with the photographic equipment," said Parvati. "Where did he go, anyway?"

"It's just like the prat to not be here when we need him," said Lavender.

They heard strange sounds from the bottom of the cenote. Their hopes soared, but Luna announced it sounded like their lost equipment porter.

"Bugger, Draco, we thought we had found an augurey," said Lavender.

"Sorry about that," came the voice from the hole.

"Is everything okay? Did you break the flask?" asked Parvati.

After being reassured the equipment was still sound, the girls relaxed, whereupon they noticed a pile of driftwood on the shore. Suddenly inspired, Lavender hauled one of the bigger pieces to the edge of the hole, yelled, "Heads up, Draco," and tossed it in. There was a yelp of surprise and the sound of clattering equipment

"What did you drop on me?" said the voice from the hole.

"You were supposed to catch it," said Lavender. "It was a piece of driftwood for a broom."

There was an exchange about not being able to make a flying broom from a piece of driftwood with the retort from the girls that they didn't know they were dealing with a defective wizard. Luna had the idea that Draco could hold on the stick while the girls levitated it out of the hole, but halfway up, a clap of thunder startled the girls, and once again, there was a clatter from the bottom of the hole. Luna remarked the cenote must be deep because there was definitely a Doppler effect from Draco's scream on his way down.

"Draco," yelled the three.

"The flask is still okay," said the voice from the hole.

"You should have had us levitate it up first," said Lavender.

"My bad," said the voice from the hole.

Once everything was out of the cenote, the girls carefully checked the equipment, loaded Draco, and resumed their search for a willow tree.

A rain soaked eternity later, Draco heard a squeal, and then, he heard the girls telling him to hurry up with the silver flask. Luna reverently sat a cup of dandelion wine in front of the augurey bird. It took a small sip, a larger sip, and a long drink. The girls squealed again. After several cups, Parvati and Lavender sat on either side of the bird as Draco prepared the tripod with the camera, but the bird kept sliding down, first to rest on its feet, and then to stretch its length out on the ground.

"It's drunk," said Luna.

Parvati and Lavender glared at Draco. "Why didn't you do something?"

Finally, by holding the bird by pretending to pet it, Parvati and Lavender had the bird upright between them with Luna standing behind them. Draco captured several images of the ensemble before the bird became too limp for even the efforts of Parvati and Lavender.

They were on there way back, but the rain was turning into a thunderstorm.

"Watch out for the camera," said Lavender.

"All that metal is going to attract lightning," said Parvati.

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Draco woke in a hospital bed with three girls holding vigil.

"No one's blaming you for the loss of equipment," said Parvati.

"Not really," said Lavender.

"But look at the beautiful photographs," said Luna.

It was true. The front page of the newspaper was covered with the photos of the three girls and the augurey bird along with an account of their triumph. They had thoughtfully brought him a copy. Parvati and Lavender carefully explained that the newspaper editor had decided that mention of the Malfoy family might detract from the appeal.

"But we did put in a good word for you whenever we could," said Luna.

Ah, the joys of advancing the state of wizardry.

Combining two prompts from MuseAmusant:

cenote, driftwood, silver flask

augurey's cry, dandelion wine, willow tree