

The Time of the Snorkack

by Fairfield

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Ron woke feeling strange. Snippets of last night's dream came to him: blond hair, expeditions, and a sense of purpose. He assumed it was compensation for his current existence. When he could no longer take working in his brother's joke shop, he had become a bureaucrat in the Ministry, and he didn't know which was worse. He was grateful that it wasn't his usual nightmare about his girlfriend, whom he once thought he liked, fussing at him for not buckling down and making something of himself.

As Ron walked to work, he noticed people either snickering or turning away while trying not to laugh. He approached a bloke at a sidewalk café who was almost keeping a straight face.

Taking a deep breath, the stranger said, "It's your shadow, mate. It's Priapus himself."

Considering his present level of frustration, Ron was not all that surprised.

The stranger sobered. "There's something else in the shadow, a shimmering, something's trying to get out."

Meanwhile, Hermione was walking out the door to begin another day of research when she turned and picked up the small, beaded bag she had bought yesterday. She had been experiencing an increasing emptiness in her life, and she had thought a little shopping would help. It had been an unremarkable bag among many, but she had discovered she couldn't leave the store without it. It focused her hollowness, and for some strange reason, she found that comforting.

It was almost noon as she walked over to Harry's office. She hadn't seen him for weeks, and she suddenly missed him. Clutching her beaded bag, the awful thought struck her that after he got married, and she got married, too, she might not see him for months. She knocked and entered. He looked up and smiled. A warm feeling from the beaded bag spread through her.

"Oh, Harry, I'm going crazy around here," she blurted out before she could stop herself.

He nodded. "I think I need a change. I'm almost ready to join Luna Lovegood on one of her expeditions."

The Ministry was willing to fund Luna to catalog the plants of northern Scotland, but they insisted it was too big a job for one person and approval depended on her finding a team.

Luna Lovegood was contemplating another lonely lunch hour when Ron Weasley walked into the greenhouse.

"Are you happy to see me, or do you have something hidden in your shadow?" she asked.

"I came to ask you that," he said.

She agreed it was mysterious and confined, and it needed freedom to express its true nature. She knew the very thing, a liberating trip to northern Scotland. If cataloging plant life didn't free its soul, nothing would.

"The real purpose is to look for Snorkacks, isn't it?" asked Ron.

"How did you ever guess?" asked Luna.

Their smiles matched the gentle curve of Ron's shadow.

The wind swept over the island, blowing Luna's hair as wild and free as Ron had come to see her – and as beautiful as Ron had come to see her. Earlier, Harry and Hermione had headed seaward to collect plants. It had been Luna and Ron's turn to fix breakfast and wash up afterwards. Ron didn't mind. Luna was practical and cheerful and impish all at once. Once finished, they shouldered their equipment and began their trek.

As they left camp, Ron reached over and took Luna's hand. She smiled at him, and then her expression changed.

I've blown it, thought Ron.

"Ron, your shadow's changing," said Luna.

He looked back and saw something shimmering, but when he turned completely, releasing Luna's hand, the shadow returned to normal, or rather abnormal.

"Let's try again," she said, taking his hand.

The shimmering returned. He felt closer to Luna than he had to any other person. He began stroking her hair. As the shimmering became more and more solid, Luna was muttering that she knew Ron was only paying attention to her to bring the entity in the shadow alive. She knew that once the trip was over, he wouldn't want to see her again, and she understood that.

"Don't be silly," he said, wrapping his arms around her.

She sighed and leaned back into him, and the creature became solid.

"Oh, Ron, do you know what that is?"

Meanwhile, at a sunny spot on a beach, Harry and Hermione were holding hands and watching the waves come in. They had talked for days, and now, they were enjoying each others company.

"Maybe we can go on more expeditions," said Hermione.

"Do you want to?" asked Harry. "Do you think it's possible?"

They didn't notice the beaded bag stirring.

"I want a lot of things," said Hermione, "and I don't know what's possible, do you?"

"I know what I want to be possible," he said.

He leaned toward her, their lips met, the beaded bag squeaked.

Hermione unfastened the bag, and they watched a lovely animal walk into its daylight.

"I think I know what that is," said Hermione.

Prompts from MuseAmusant:

1. Luna's latest snorkack-hunting expedition is temporarily derailed by a most intriguing diversion.
2. A timely invitation gives Harry some much needed time to sort out how he feels about marrying Ginny.
3. Hermione discovers a pint-sized stowaway in her little beaded bag.
4. Ron wakes up one morning sensing that something is really very wrong. And why is everyone laughing at him?