

The Tonks Caper

by Rose of the West

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The Kid

Chapter 1 of 1

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Note: Written for TelletrixForever as part of the TLX Love is in the Air Valentine's Exchange on FFN.

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In retrospect, we should have realized it was a bad plan. Unfortunately, time was running short, and we didn't have many ideas. The wife is usually the brains of our operation, but she was feeling sick that week. She told us to stake out her sister's house, which we figured would be similar to the one we needed to find, and see if we could come up with an idea.

It was Stan's idea to grab the kid. I wasn't too sure, but the wife made a face and nodded. It should have occurred to me that there was some sort of ulterior motive, but all I could think was that it was an idea, and as I said, time was running short.

The boss thought it was an excellent idea, which tells you all you need to know about him. He seemed pretty amused by it, in fact. I would wonder how amused he is now, but I can guess.

So we set off, to snatch the kid from her mother while they were at the market. The wife didn't need much disguise to look like her sister, and was pretty quickly able to lure one Nymphadora Tonks away to where Stan Silenced her and I grabbed her and Disappeared.

The hard part was done. We went to our secret safe house, where the wife wrote a letter to be sent by Untraceable Owl.

Andie,

We have your precious half-blood freak. If you want her back, let me know, and I'll contact you with the terms.

Bella

The wife sent the owl away with a smile on her face. "The silly girl went into hysterics every time I took one of her dolls; it won't take long to get what we want in exchange for her child."

It didn't take long at all for the owl to return, and it was carrying something. We might be able to give the boss what he wanted by sunset.

The wife unrolled the parchment, shrieked, and then sat down. I picked it up and read the response in dismay.

Bella,

Thank you so much for watching our little girl for us tonight! She goes to bed at 8pm sharp, and I wouldn't advise giving her any sort of candy or pudding after 6:30.

Andie

Stan looked and sounded out a couple of words. "What's it mean, Rod?"

"It means we're stuck with the kid overnight." So went our plans for a quick solution to the problem we had, of finding where the Potters were hidden.

The Silencing Charm wore off about this time, and the little girl, who had so far done nothing but watch us, now told us what she thought of the situation.

"*You're* not my mummy! I want her! I want my daddy! Who*are* you people?" The child's hair went from sandy brown to bubblegum pink to turquoise blue to a color similar to vomit-flavored every flavor beans in less time than it takes to tell it.

The wife's face took on a determined look, and she used a sugary voice I hadn't heard since our wedding day. "I'm your Auntie Bella."

"My aunties are snakes," said the girl. "Mummy says so."

A look of rage flashed across the wife's face at that, but her voice didn't waver the slightest. "Perhaps," she agreed, "but there are snakes that are perfectly good, you know. Your mother used to be a snake, herself."

She was gripping her wand a little too tightly. "We need her alive," I reminded her.

"I recall that," she hissed under her breath, "and *I'm* not the idiot of this operation."

That hurt. After all, we might not be as educated or cultured as the Blacks, but after marrying into every pureblood family on the British Isles, the Lestranges were one of their last options for reinvigorating the family line... not that there was much possibility of that at the rate things were going, I reminded myself ruefully.

"What is there to eat?" asked Stan.

It was at least a way to occupy the time. The child insisted on something called fish fingers, which someone had thankfully stocked in our kitchen, and made Stan put his whiskey bottle down in favor of a glass of milk.

After dinner, the girl looked up at the wife. "Mummy always reads me a story."

We went into the parlor and found a shelf filled with books, some of them for children. "What sort of stories does she read?"

"Hopping Pot!" was the answer. "That one is my favorite." She demonstrated by kicking at a side table.

The wife found a book that included Beedle the Bard and read the story about the Hopping Pot. By the time she was done, the kid was fast asleep, half in her lap. Bella put the book down and watched for a minute with a look I'd never seen on her face before. I'd seen her enraged, enthralled, and enraptured, all in the presence of the Dark Lord. I'd seen her leer, jeer, and sneer at me. This was completely different. There was something almost soft about it. It was unsettling, like something was wrong with the universe.

Little snores started to come out of the kid, and Bella rolled her eyes. "How disgusting! Find a bed for the little monster, far away from mine."

Order was restored to the universe. The wife was normal again. I let out the breath I didn't realize I'd been holding, and took the kid to the smallest of the three bedrooms.

It was decided that the next morning I would go home to send out the next owl. That way the owl wouldn't be traced back to our safe house. The wife carefully wrote out the note, and I just as carefully tucked the scroll into my pocket before Apparating away.

Dear Andi,

Ha, ha, you've played your game on us. Seriously, we have your kid. All we want is information, and your precious freak will be returned to you.

Bella.

I looked around the house and grabbed a few things the wife might want. I saw a stuffed koala bear in a closet and grabbed it, too. Maybe the kid would want to play with it in the few hours before we returned her to her parents.

When our owl came back with the return message, I tucked it into my pocket without reading it and went back to the safe house. Stan looked a little worried when we got back, but the wife snatched the scroll and unrolled it.

Then she shrieked. "Did you read this?" she asked me. When I shook my head, she threw it at me. "The bitch is trying to get me in trouble, just like when we were kids."

I opened it up and saw that my sister-in-law had penciled her response under the wife's best script.

Bella,

I wouldn't dream of cutting short your time with Nymphadora, since you were so eager to have her as your guest. Please enjoy your visit with her.

Andie

I had to admit that I didn't see the problem.

"You don't see the problem? Look at her message! She's so reasonable, so kind, so ladylike! Anything I say or do after this will make me look like an unreasonable bitch!"

I could honestly tell her that nothing Andromeda Tonks did would ever turn my Bella into an unreasonable bitch.

There was more reading during the morning, but we ran out of material at lunch time. "Maybe she'll know a game we can play with her," said Stan.

The wife didn't have a plan at all. I should note that, since she usually came up with our plans, this was odd, but there was nothing normal about our current state of affairs, so I didn't notice it as quickly as I might have otherwise.

We went to the lounge and asked the girl whether there was a game she'd like to play. She immediately jumped on the coffee table and announced, "I am Death! I will let you cross my bridge and have a gift as well!"

The wife was pretty clever at that point, choosing to be the first brother, who received the wand of death. Her part of the game was quickly past, and she quietly told me

she was going for a nap.

"This business with children is very wearing on a witch," she said.

That left Rod and me to deal with her. It was Rod's turn to deal with Death, as the brother who got that rock thing, and he seemed to rush through his part, if you ask me. I've never seen him so willing to sit in a corner and read a magazine, or read anything for that matter. "Unearthly," he muttered as he settled into his seat.

Then it was my turn. I looked at her, and was startled and scared for my life. Instead of a seven-year old girl, I was looking into a pasty white face full of decay. I jumped back, and the girl's voice laughed. Then, as I watched, her face went more like what we were used to, a paler, daintier version of the wife.

"You're dead now, Uncle Rod," she said, matter-of-factly. "Can we read some more of the storybook?"

She wanted to read the story about the fountain, herself, so I helped her with some of the bigger words. She read it all the way to the end. Then she looked up at me, and her face was shining. "I bet Sir Luckless had a furry little problem!" she said.

"What's a furry little problem?" I asked.

"I don't know, but Cousin Sirius's friend Remus has one. Maybe I'll be like Amata and help Remus find the fountain." Her little girl voice got all gooey when she said it.

"That's silly," I said. "Besides, you're still a little girl. How could you know who you're going to marry?"

"I'm going to marry Remus," she said. "I could tell when I saw him that we ~~were~~*made for each other*."

I had to do a double-take at that. She looked surprisingly like the wife, even without using her morphing abilities.

The wife and Stan decided to hide, so I fixed the kid dinner and entertained her as best I could. Fortunately, she was tired after dinner and ready for bed pretty quickly. She wanted to have the book with her that night, so I left it with her. Then I fixed something for the wife and took it into our bedroom.

"Do you think all children are like her?" she asked. "At times she's more charming than a halfblood has a right to be, but the rest of the time... if the Dark Lord had an army of her, he'd win the war in no time."

"The Dark Lord's army would be pure-blood, though," I said, "and they'd be better in every way, of course."

That must have been the right answer, because the wife got downright affectionate after I said it. We had a wonderful night together, and slept quite peacefully afterwards.

Well, we slept peacefully until a hoarse scream woke us up.

"It's just wrong!" Stan shouted. "Make her stop! I--I can't--I just can't do this any more!"

We hastily adjusted our pajamas and ran into the lounge to see what the problem was. It was truly a macabre sight. The kid had placed the stuffed koala on the coffee table and opened the seam on its chest with a kitchen knife. Stuffing was everywhere as she poked around with her fingers.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I can't find his hairy heart," was the response. "I wanted to act out the story."

"I deliberately didn't read that one to her," hissed the wife under her breath. "What were you thinking?"

"She asked for the book. I gave it to her."

"Rod, sometimes you don't have the brains of a--*Where did you get that bear?*"

"It was in the hall closet," I answered, sensing a trap.

"Darth Teddy!" she screamed. "That's the Dark Lord's special teddy bear!"

Oh, shit.

"*Rep-Reparo!*" I said. The bear's stuffing mostly went back in, and the seam sewed itself back up. "There, it's not so bad. Maybe he won't notice."

"As long as we find out where the Potters are, he might not mind," she said. "It has to happen today *now*. This child is unnatural, Rod. I can't do this another hour."

I turned to see what Stan had to say, but he had already escaped. Hiding under his bedclothes, no doubt.

This time the wife went home to send the note, while I gave the kid breakfast and cleaned things up. For some reason, we got on well enough. Except when she morphed. She had an uncanny way of staring at a person and morphing such that she had their worst feature. To this day I can't look in the mirror without seeing my eyebrows on her face. Fortunately, an hour after leaving, the wife came back.

"It's done. We're to go to the gates of Hogwarts within the hour."

It's an odd anomaly that in the infinitesimal space between the most magical town in Britain and the most magical school there is a spot where magic simply doesn't work. The gates are constructed such that no one can cast a spell into them nor out of them.

The wife's sister was there, inside the gates, along with her pet Mudblood and Dumbledore. If I thought I had the most vicious of the Black girls, I was wrong, and if the letters indicated she didn't care about her kid, they were misleading. The instant she saw us, Andromeda's wand was out, pointing at us, and her face was twisted with rage. I would have feared for my life, despite the magic of the gates, were it not for the way Dumbledore lifted his hand.

"Where is the child?"

The wife stepped out in front. "We have her just beyond the bend in the road. You will have her as soon as we have what we need."

"I can't give you what you demand," Dumbledore said, calmly.

"Then we'll give her halfblood freak to the Dark Lord!" said the wife. She stood tall and looked commanding. She was magnificent when she said things like that.

"No!" Andromeda's wand pointed from me to the wife and then wavered toward the Headmaster, but he lifted his hand again and her Mudblood soothed her down.

Dumbledore smiled at the wife and spoke calmly. "Is that really what you want for the wizarding world and its children, Bellatrix? What of your child?"

What... of what?

"Bella..." I said, turning to see that her face was gray.

Dumbledore was still talking. "Is this the world you want to raise your own child in? Come within the gates. We will protect you as we have the Potters. Let your child know its cousin."

"Oh, Salazar," she whispered. "Rod, I was going to tell you as soon as... as soon as this was over. Get your brother. We can't win this."

"But what will the Dark Lord say?"

"He'll kill us if we can't tell him where the Potters are. We'll have to take Dumbledore's offer. We'll have to... switch sides."

"But they say Mudbloods are as good as we are!"

"We don't have to agree with that part, Rod. I don't want to fight anymore. If we could have helped him get the Potters, it would have ended. I just want this war over. I don't want it for our children."

I looked at the Tonks kid walking down the road with Stan, who lead her with a petrified look on his face. I looked at my Bella, who seemed so fragile and feminine at that moment, and I realized I needed to make this decision for all of us: Stan, Bella, me, and the small person Bella was going to tell me about as soon as this was over.

It was my one moment to be head of the family. It was over in a flash; the wife's usual demeanor would reassert itself almost immediately. This was the moment for me to make the decision, to change our lives forever, or to do the unthinkable.

"All right, then," I said.

Well, everyone knows what happened after that. We helped Dumbledore find certain artifacts he had reason to believe existed, and the Dark Lord was properly captured and put in Azkaban. Little Rod came, and was followed a few years later by Little Bella. Eventually the kid grew up and married her Sir Luckless, only his name wasn't Remus. She'd got a taste for ginger by then.

Inspired by O Henry's "The Ransom of Red Chief."