

Ulysses

by Savva

Every year Theodore Nott embarks on an expedition in hope to bring home a rare tropical beauty. He finds it this time.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

Every year Theodore Nott embarks on an expedition in hope to bring home a rare tropical beauty. He finds it this time.

Title: Ulysses

Author/Artist:

Prompt: #155. An unexpected shared talent or hobby brings them together. Make it be something interesting :) Music or horses or some out there random hobby or skill that you wouldn't expect from at least one of them.

Prompt submitted by:

Pairing(s): Hermione Granger/Theodore Nott

Word Count/Art Medium: 4000ish

Rating: R

Warning(s): AU, mild sexual situations, a lot of profanity and a touch of angst.

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Notes: Enormous thanks to my wonderful beta, to mods for organising this and to for an excellent prompt. I hope my choice of their shared hobby is interesting enough.

Summary: *Every year Theodore Nott embarks on an expedition in hope to bring home a rare tropical beauty. He finds it this time.*

*Ulysses**

Or

The Notes of a Lepidopterist

If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies

Theodore Nott steps out of his fireplace well after midnight. Moonlight bathes his flat in silver, making objects seem opulent and magical. Theo mutters *Lumos*, and, with a

slight flick of his wrist, the iridescent magic of moonlight is gone. His face is haggard: it's Friday, and he feels utterly exhausted. It's been a long week. He sets his leather briefcase on a chair and, eyeing the clock on the wall, grunts, "About bloody time," under his breath.

It has taken entirely too much time to brief Blaise on their Asian trades, and annoyance is still simmering in Theo's chest. The fact that Blaise went to The Leaky without him has left Theo quietly seething. He doesn't envy his friend too much, though. Blaise will have to hold the fort for all three of them for the next ten days. He shrugs. It's not his fault that Draco decided to leave for his honeymoon on that particular week. Theo planned his trip long before Draco announced his engagement, and subsequently, his wedding and honeymoon dates. Naturally, neither he nor Draco had any intention of rescheduling, leaving Blaise to juggle their three major markets alone.

Poor Blaise, indeed, thinks Theo, as he opens his briefcase and picks up a black leather planner with the heading *MNZ Bankers We Know How to Triple Your Money* etched in silver on the cover. Frowning, he reads over his to-do list and reluctantly ticks off the last line marked *Blaise*. There's no doubt that Blaise will be fine, even if he didn't pay enough attention to the information he gave him during briefing. It's just hard for Theo to let go. At twenty-eight, he is a workaholic and a control freak, maybe even more so than Draco. Perhaps that is why he's the only one out of the three of them who doesn't have any kind of life beyond their business, which may be why he needs a break once in a while.

Theo closes his eyes, inhales slowly, and wills himself to relax. *Pansy won't let Blaise screw anything up*, he reminds himself. *She's got his back*. Theo's lips curl into a wry grin. Actually, Pansy has got much more than just Blaise's über-sexy backside. He's pretty sure that she keeps the rest of his anatomy in a firm grasp as well. Blaise's heart, for instance, is definitely hers, and as far as Theo knows, she has no intention of ever releasing it.

Exhaling, Theo opens his eyes, checks his list one last time, shuts the notebook, and carelessly tosses it back into his briefcase. He's done. Finally. As of this second, he is officially on holiday. Fuck, yeah! He utters a satisfied hum and summons a bottle of Firewhisky. Filling a glass up to the brim, he takes a swig. The liquid burns his throat and warms his insides. A wave of his wand opens a window, and warm, fragrant air rushes into the flat, filling it with a scent of summer and the singing of cicadas. He notices the full moon shimmering in the black sky in all its understated glory. He winks at it, and the level of his own goofiness pulls a ripple of soft laughter from him.

Shaking his head and still chuckling, Theo unties his dark-green tie, undoes the two uppermost buttons of his white shirt, and draws a sigh of relief. "Here," he mutters, "much better." His grey jacket is the next to come off as he tugs on its sleeves, impatient to escape its confinement. Freed at last, he unbuttons his shirtsleeves, he rolls them up to his elbows, takes the glass of Firewhisky with him, and whistling, heads to his study.

He pushes the door, saunters inside, and settles in his beloved leather armchair. A few more mouthfuls of Firewhisky make him pleasantly tipsy. Humming, he swivels around and gazes at the wall farthest from the window. Here they are, the fruits of his strange passion for Lepidoptera (in other words, butterflies and moths). A specially-charmed illumination highlights dozens of wooden boxes, which cover the wall from the ceiling to the floor and contain hundreds of insects meticulously organised by species. Some of them are almost twenty years old and were caught and preserved by him when he was only eight.

Theo still doesn't know why his father, who was impatient and often excessively harsh with him, didn't forbid such a hobby, which he must have thought unbecoming for a young pureblood. Perhaps he was placated by his belief that Theo had to kill insects in order to collect them. Luckily, he didn't know that, even at the age of barely eight, Theo had managed to invent his own method of preserving butterflies. He kept and still keeps them under a Stasis Charm, which he found in one of the books in the Nott family library. On such small creatures, it works perfectly.

The collection on the wall and the books were among a handful of things he took from his family home, Nott Mansion, before it became an orphanage after his father's death. As dark memories of Nott Senior creep into his mind, a sudden sense of gloom cocoons him. He shrugs off the unsolicited feeling by taking a big swig of his drink and focusing his blue eyes on his precious Lepidoptera. A small empty space in the middle of the wall draws his attention, and he smiles. He'll catch it this time, he's sure. He can imagine just how perfect it will look framed on his wall, its sapphire-blue wings spread proudly and glowing mysteriously. Soon, he'll bring home his tropical beauty, his Papilio Ulysses, and it'll become the crown jewel of his collection.

He draws a happy sigh of anticipation, and setting his glass on a desk, the mahogany surface of which is covered with the tools he prepared for the trip, checks everything one more time. A set of three magnifying glasses, silk nets with oak handles, different-sized collecting jars and tweezers everything has been lying here for the last three weeks. Summoning his travel valise, he carefully transfers the tools into it one by one, until the only thing left is the notebook he bought a few days ago in Flourish & Blotts. He twiddles it in his hands, admiring the velvety smoothness of its suede-covered overlay. It smells nice, and he opens it. Inhaling the scent of leather and paper, he takes a quill and pens a title,

The Notes of a Lepidopterist.

Humming, he contemplates for a moment, then, after glancing at the clock, turns the page and writes,

Day One.

Day One

7:00 am BST (British Summer Time)

Ugh, the anticipation is killing me. It's seven in the morning, and I've been up for almost two hours already. Damn this bloody insomnia.

Just Floo-called Blaise to remind him about the Japanese delegation. Pansy didn't like it at all and called me a bloody nutcase. I honestly agree with her. To be fair, Blaise and Draco are pretty crazy as well, though perhaps to a lesser degree (they don't collect butterflies!). Bankers are supposed to be a little mad. It sort of comes with the territory, I guess.

7:45 am

The clock on the wall is excruciatingly slow. I checked all my things three times, and it's still only fifteen minutes to eight. I wonder if I can Floo to the Lovegoods forty-five minutes earlier. I think I did it last year.

7:49 am

All right, I'm going in.

8:47 am

Xeno's pancakes are as hideous as ever, and so is his tea. However, time does fly faster with company. We are almost ready to leave. Finally! I wonder, though, where Luna is, and why on Earth is Hermione bloody Granger here? I hope she is not going with us. I don't like surprises, and I definitely don't like surprises that include Granger.

8:55 am

Five minutes until Portkey activation. It looks like she is going with us. No. Just no.

8:59 am

Fuck!

8:12 pm PGT (Papua New Guinea Time)

She talks constantly. How is that possible? I wonder if there's something wrong with her jaws, and she simply cannot keep them shut. How unfortunate.

I asked Xeno why he didn't let me know about the change of plans. He just shrugged and mumbled something nonsensical about Luna having made other arrangements and Hermione being a wonderful girl in need of a break from the Ministry. He also said that she would be very helpful. What a heap of rubbish! I seriously doubt that. How exactly can Hermione Granger be helpful in the middle of New Guinea? We don't have elves that need to be freed here, and as far as I can see, the butterflies, birds, and plants won't give a flying fuck about her righteous attitude. I don't believe she can cook, and her constant chatter is a problem, to say nothing of her atrocious hair. I only hope that she won't scare away all the butterflies in a ten-mile radius.

10:30 pm

The tents are up, the camp area is warded, and we are ready to sleep. Her tent is near mine, and apparently she talks even when she is alone. Well, not talks but mutters. I can still hear her, and it's infuriating. Does she talk in her sleep as well? If so, I may be forced to find a friendly spider and coax it into visiting her.

11:40 pm

Why didn't I think of taking earplugs with me?

11:45 pm

It's actually not a bad idea about the spider. I need to think about it over a glass of rum.

12:51 am

Rum works much better than Firewhisky and earplugs combined. No spiders tonight. Perhaps tomorrow. Granger is sleeping anyway.

Day Two

9:35 am

Shite! I overslept and missed my first sunrise. It probably happened due to excessive rum consumption a time-zone change. I'm livid with myself. And Granger. It's her fault.

She made breakfast, and it was surprisingly passable. Apparently, she's courteous enough to refrain from talking while eating, which is also an enormous plus. Alas, the bliss is short-lived as she starts her blabbering as soon as she finishes her food. Damn.

No matter, I'm off to the valley. She can annoy Xeno, though he seems to enjoy her company a lot. Hmm. I wonder why.

1:13 pm

'Disaster' doesn't even cover the way my first trip to the valley went. All thanks to Granger.

She asked if she could join me, claiming that she wanted to learn more about butterflies. I said no as expressively as I could while still being polite. She trailed after me anyway, pestering me with her never-ending questions, which I was forced to answer for three hours straight. I swear, I've never talked that much in my entire life. The people around me know that I'm not very talkative. Even Blaise eventually learned that and let me be. But, naturally, not Granger, as the concept that someone can prefer silence is unfathomable to her.

I never thought I would regret that our Portkey would be activated only on Saturday morning. This witch is managing singlehandedly to ruin my trip.

1:23 pm

Perhaps not all is lost. Perhaps I'll be able to sneak away after lunch.

6:38 pm

Nope. No such luck. She went along again, explaining to me that she had loved to collect butterflies when she was a kid. What a wonderfully useless piece of trivia.

Needless to say, I wasn't able to catch anything noteworthy. With her inability to simply observe and wait, it was impossible. Bloody impatient Gryffindor!

9:07 pm

It pains me to admit it, but Granger can cook! Her food tastes better than Luna's and that sandwich place I frequent. Feeling somewhat obliged, I made her tea so she wouldn't have to suffer from Xeno's infamous personal blend (the stuff is utterly undrinkable) and offered her a bar of chocolate. She seemed very appreciative, especially of the fact that the chocolate contained dried cherries.

11:12 pm

While we sat by the fire, Granger said that I don't look like someone who collected insects. I asked her how the hell a lepidopterist was supposed to look, in her opinion. She shrugged and gazed at Xeno, who was humming a weird tune.

Hell, no! Thank Merlin, she didn't mention Longbottom. I told her that she talked entirely too much, and that her hair was atrocious. She sniffed and marched into her tent.

Perhaps I was a little too frank. She is a girl, after all.

PS. I did secretly add a bit of rum to her tea. It worked, and she's asleep already. Or she is being unusually quiet.

Day Three

9:11 am

Woke before sunrise and met the dawn in the valley. Magnificent. Moreover, I managed to catch two Zodiac Moths on my way back. Very fine specimens! That's what I call a successful morning.

Since I was the first up, I cooked breakfast. Granger looked impressed. It seems that yesterday's feud is forgotten. Good.

Her curls aren't that atrocious, actually. They shimmer in the sun and have red highlights. Their bounciness (is this even a word?) makes me wonder how it would feel to rake my fingers through them.

I think my intelligence has evaporated from too much fresh air.

11:00 am

Xeno departs to the mountains for two days. Granger stays with me. I don't even know why I offered. (I fear that my apparent stupidity is equivalent to our current elevation

above sea level, which is roughly six thousand feet.)

We are going to the gorge, and I lent her one of my nets. With luck, she'll talk less and catch some grasshoppers.

4:35 pm

I almost caught Ulysses today. Almost! Bloody Granger slipped on a rock and fell into the brook. Of course, it flew away while I was helping that bloody witch. According to her, she saw a Scarlet Tiger and tried to catch it. Nonsense! I informed her that Callimorpha Dominula is predominantly confined to south and west England and Wales, but I don't think she believed me.

Why, why did I agree to take her with me? I should have sent her with Xenon to look for that Moomiyo, or whatever it is he is trying to harvest.

6:17 pm

What on Earth? I thought Granger was supposed to be somewhat academically inclined and understand that *Muggle bikinis* are not appropriate to scientific any kind of expedition. Period! I was cooking dinner, and she decided that it was a nice moment for sunbathing. I burned my bloody finger!

PS. She has a nice bum. I tried to exercise restraint though unsuccessfully and not to stare at her cleavage. It's nice as well.

11:05 pm

During supper she asked me how I preserved the butterflies once I caught them. I explained my method to her. She was surprised. Apparently Muggles suffocate their catch and then mount them into frames using a variety of pins and glue. Barbarians! Though, to be fair, they don't have any other method available.

I told her that I had never killed a butterfly in my life. She gave an odd snuffle, and her eyes became glittery. How odd. I walked her to the tent; it seemed fitting. She blushed. Prettily. Gryffindors are a peculiar lot. Admittedly, this particular Gryffindor has piqued my interest. I don't suppose it's going to end well.

Our talk about killing butterflies brought memories of my father. Growing up, I saw too much violence. My father didn't have any regard for living creatures. At all.

No matter. Some things are best forgotten. A glass of rum is in order.

11:33 pm

I thought that I heard coughing and went to check on her. She said her throat was tickling, and assured me that it was nothing. Possibly. I made her tea just in case.

PS. I told her not to drink water from that brook. She drank it anyway. Stubborn witch! The last thing I need is to have a sick Granger on my hands. I'm not a Healer.

12:07 am

Checked on her again. She is sleeping.

Day Four

8:30 am

Granger was coughing in her sleep around five in the morning. I decided to skip today's sunrise and keep an eye on her, which I'm currently doing by sitting outside her tent and listening to her breathing.

9:45 am

Still not awakened. I reckon it's a good sign.

10:17 am

She is up and feeling all right. According to her, her throat is just a little bit sore. Nothing more. It doesn't sound too serious, though she looks a bit flushed to me.

11:03 am

She didn't eat much and was suspiciously quiet during breakfast. When I questioned her, she said that her throat bothers her when she talks. I don't like it. Perhaps a Pepperup Potion will help. I must admit, I miss her blabbering.

PS. She wanted to go to the valley. I refused. Butterflies are the least of my concerns at the moment.

4:00 pm

Granger doesn't feel well, and she definitely has a slight fever. Damn it! Pepperup proved to be absolutely useless. I'm giving her tea.

6:33 pm

Shite! Shite! Shite! She is burning with fever. I'm keeping a cold cloth on her forehead and forcing her to drink water every thirty minutes. Beyond that, I'm absolutely clueless. I'm not a bloody Healer! For fuck's sake, where's Xenon with his homemade remedies and dried dandelions when he's needed?

7:47 pm

She came about, and asked me to send a Patronus to Xenon. I was forced to confess that I couldn't. I've tried before, and it has never worked. Being Granger, she just smiled and nodded her understanding. I never felt so fucking useless in my life. She shivered, and her teeth kept chattering. I made her tea and brought her more blankets. Also, I forced her to drink a little rum. I suspect it helped, since she fell asleep.

5:33 am

This has been one of the worst nights of my life. Around midnight, Granger began burning again. Cold compresses weren't enough to bring the fever down, and she ended up having a seizure. While she was convulsing in my arms, I, desperate for a solution, tore open her shirt, poured rum on the cloth, and began to rub her chest with it. I honestly don't know where the idea came from, but it worked. She quieted down and her breathing returned to normal. I think my hands were trembling for an hour afterwards.

I did it two more times during the night, and somewhere around four in the morning the fever finally broke. I put one of my shirts on her because hers was completely drenched with sweat. She's sleeping now. It's dawn, and I'm sitting near her bed, listening to her breathing for the second morning in a row. How bizarre.

Day Five

7:45 am

About bloody time! Xeno's finally here.

He checked Granger and decided that the worst was over. Well, if he says so, I trust him. He sent me to my tent and promised to take care of her. I feel knackered, to be honest. A few hours of sleep won't go amiss.

I wonder if it's going to be weird between us now. I don't suppose she'll remember anything from last night.

3:23 pm

It *is* weird.

She came to my tent to say thank you. She's wearing my shirt. I'm not sure how I feel about that.

Xeno is giving her some of his herbal elixirs. She looks all right, if a bit pale. She is definitely more talkative than yesterday. I never thought I would be glad to hear Granger's chattering. But I *am* glad.

9:00 pm

We spent the day just talking. It was pleasant. Granger has a nice sense of humour. Who would have known? We laughed a lot.

She looks extremely enticing in my shirt, and her eyes are the colour of milk chocolate. Why did I never notice that before? I've always prided myself on being observant. Evidently, I'm not.

PS. She asked if I could take her to the valley to see the sunrise tomorrow. I agreed.

Day Six

9:36 am

Shite.

This was not supposed to happen! It's not something I need. I didn't plan for it. I don't like this. I don't feel right. My emotions and desires are all over the place, and I am not sure I can handle that. Feelings of this kind are not something I am accustomed to or comfortable with, and that is why I've done everything in my power to avoid them. Right until this moment, that is.

I want her. I want Hermione Granger, and unfortunately it's not just a one-night stand type of want. Nope. It's worse, much worse. It dawned on me just a short time ago, while Granger was watching the sunrise, and I was watching her.

Bollocks!

10:05 pm

Sneaked away while she was talking to Xeno and spent the rest of the day in the gorge. Alone. Tried to organise my thoughts and desires. It didn't work. The moment I saw her, sitting by the fire, still in my shirt, all my determination to keep a distance evaporated.

So I'm hiding in my tent. Coward.

PS. By the way, I caught the Ulysses. It's ironic because I didn't even look for it. It landed on my hand. Here it is, fast asleep in a jar, and I feel nothing, no happiness or excitement. I just keep thinking of Granger. Ironic, indeed.

Day Seven

7:35 am

She came to me last night in nothing but my shirt. Call me weak, but I hadn't the strength to send her back to her tent. I had to take her, and I did, shamelessly so. I led her believe that I'm not opposed to the relationship. Yes, I lied, and yes, it wasn't fair or nice of me. I still did it. Perhaps because I'm my father's son – a selfish opportunist and a bastard who takes what he wants regardless of consequences.

She didn't disappoint. My Granger, she was perfect. No, she was beyond perfect; she was brilliant. I've lost count of how many times during the night I took her. Shite, I'm getting hard just from recounting.

I think I've left quite a few love bites evidence on her skin. I had to mark her. Repeatedly. Apparently, I'm that primitive. Who knew?

She's gone to pack her things. The Portkey will be activated in less than an hour. I have just enough time to tell her that what happened in New Guinea will stay in New Guinea.

It doesn't matter how right it felt to have her in my arms. It doesn't have any chance of existence in the real world. Period.

8:16 am

It's done. Moving on.

1:30 am BST (*British Summer Time*)

It was relatively easy to say my good-byes as coolly as possible and Floo home. The hard part is to survive until Monday. At present, I have no desire to do anything but sleep.

Around noon

Apparently, one does not simply dismiss Hermione Granger. It was naïve to presume that she would let that drivel slide. Naturally, she went after me and beat me almost into a pulp. Quite rightfully, I must admit. Our subsequent tumble into my bed was pure self-defence on my part. That was about ten hours ago, and we have yet to emerge from my bedroom. I'm not complaining. At all.

Have no idea evening?

I'm happy to report that, since this afternoon, I have been able to conjure a Patronus. It's a Blue Mountain Swallowtail, also known as *Papilio Ulysses*. The problem was in my inability to conjure happy memories, as Hermione explained to me.

PS. We set the real Ulysses free. Soon, perhaps, I'll let all the others go as well. I have Granger to study.

Fin

* Papilio Ulysses, also called Blue Mountain Swallowtail is a butterfly from the Australasia/Indomalaya Eco zone. The first description was in 1758 by Linnaeus. The wingspan is about 12-14 cm. This butterfly is a member of the family PAPILIONIDAE. The basic colour of Papilio Ulysses is black. A large blue area dominates the wings.