

Windfall Saga

by Fairfield

A mild tale for a quiet evening.

Chapter 1 of 1

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Part 1

There was a man named Severus who was the son of Tobias Snape a mundane and Eileen Prince a witch. He was a legendary professor at a school of magic, but the war unsettled him, and he became a freelance wizard. People said of Severus that he suffered from an old, unrequited love. He could fly.

There was a woman named Molly whose maiden name was Prewett who married a man called Arthur Weasley. They had seven children. All the Weasleys had fought bravely during the war. People said of Molly that she was settling into being a grandmother and was eagerly awaiting more grandchildren.

Molly had finished a shopping trip when, laden with packages, she seemed to barely make it to a table in the middle of the shopping center where she collapsed even though the table already had an occupant.

"Let me get the weary grandmother a tea," said Severus.

When he returned, Molly announced to all and sundry that being a grandmother was hard on old ladies and her feet hurt whereupon, the proprieties observed, the crowd returned to their own concerns, allowing Molly to whisper confidentially that her husband, who worked in the Ministry, had heard rumors of an stash of valuables hidden by the rebels during the recent war. Constant surveillance of the suspects after the war, however, had made it impossible for them to retrieve their trove and flee. Severus inquired about the amount and Molly's plans if she could recover the treasure.

"Plans?" asked Molly.

"You need to make plans beforehand. It's in our nature to fritter away a windfall."

Molly put her teacup down. "It's a chance to hurt them. They killed my brothers; they killed one of my sons; they almost killed my daughter; but they're still lording it over us. Who won the war, anyway?"

"The rich of course," said Severus, "but if revenge is all you're after, there's no reason to shilly-shally around. Organize a flight of dragons and incinerate them in their mansions."

Molly leaned forward. "My son in Romania could do that."

"Well is it said," replied Severus, "that hasty words are often regretted."

Molly was grinning and wringing her hands with glee.

"Think of your grandchildren," said Severus. "Think of building a bright future for them, not of the harm you can do to others."

As Molly hesitated, Severus took her hand in his and said, "Show them your true nature: It takes more moral fortitude to take advantage of good fortune than to revenge

wrongs."

"A small dragon?" asked Molly. "Scorch their rose garden?"

Part 2

There was a woman named Ginevra who was the daughter of Molly Weasley. She remained close to her family after the war, and they spent quiet times together. People said they were slowly healing before moving on. Ginevra worked in the Finance Section of the Ministry of Magic.

A cloaked and hooded Ginevra journeyed late one evening to a cottage by the sea and knocked on the door. It swung open and closed behind her as she entered a dark foyer. She observed that no telltale light had spilled into the night.

"Let me put you more at ease," said a voice as the foyer was gradually illuminated. She stepped from the foyer into the parlor where she was greeted by Severus Snape who announced that she had not been followed.

"We were less cautious than this during the days of the resistance," she said

Severus merely nodded and offered her the choice of tea or sherry.

"How diplomatic you've become," she said. "No word from your lips about the recklessness of our more flamboyant comrades. No mention of our high casualty rate."

"I see the past is still painful for you, and I regret the reminder," said Severus, "but the need for secrecy is greater now than before. That was a war with the defeat of our enemies a possible outcome. In this endeavor, we take from people who are free to act even if we are successful."

"We are thieves in the night," said Ginevra.

"If our information is correct, we will be thieves in the wilderness," said Severus, "and that might require more craft, but you are here because your father recommended you as the most competent of the Weasleys."

"Do competent women put you off, Severus?" asked Ginevra, crossing her legs. "I had not heard that of you."

"Ah, you tease and flirt," said Severus, "but I will accept that as your testing me to see if I can become easily distracted."

"Yes, that's all it was," said Ginevra. "We're all business here."

"The business is a secret raid," said Severus. "Open combat looks heroic, and it is, but a covert operation requires more fortitude. You will not be in the public eye. If your courage falters only you will know it. You have nothing except your inner resolution."

Ginevra leaned forward.

"If your skills fail, bravery will not save you," said Severus, "and you will know the failure is yours."

Ginevra's nostrils flared.

"And the first steps?" she asked.

"Slow and painful," said Severus. "We must gather what intelligence we can without drawing any attention to ourselves."

Ginevra leaned back in the chair and sipped her sherry.

"Any comments?" asked Severus.

Ginevra brightened. "Mum says you're fond of dragons."

The story now moves forward six months and to a lonely tower where there dwelt a man named Xenophilus whose surname was Lovegood. His wife had died in a tragic accident. He had a daughter named Luna who supported him in his publication business and who accompanied him in his treks into the wilderness in search of wildlife.

"Luna is an experienced camper," Ginevra had said, "and her participation would be invaluable although I do not know if she will agree to accompany us or if her father will allow her to have an adventure after their horrendous experiences during the war. Nevertheless, merely their advice will be a help."

Ginevra and Severus knocked on the door of the Lovegood Tower and were admitted by Luna who gave them a cool greeting.

"If you're here to interrogate my father about the time he spent captured, he doesn't remember anything more than what he's already told you about the rebels. If you're here to complain about his articles on the Ministry, he's not going to keep quiet despite your harassment."

"We are here on our own behalf," said Severus, "and although it may sound strange, your fighting spirit emboldens us to speak plainly to you. Our mission is not one the Ministry would approve, nor would we wish the Ministry or anyone else to learn of our purpose."

"But you appear willing to tell it to me, or is it that you wish to speak to my father?"

"To both of you," said Ginevra, "but only if you agree to keep our secrets. We came seeking your help and advice."

"Seeking our help and advice is a novel thing," said Luna. "I'm certain my father will want to hear this. Wait here while I find him and prepare some tea."

Luna returned with tea, biscuits, and her father. A small, furry animal she called Meercat entered the room and sniffed the guests. Severus's eyes began to water.

Severus was telling Xenophilus they planned a possible dangerous journey that had to be secret.

"I can't help but notice," said Luna, addressing Ginevra, "that your attire is somber. It is fitting for business, but you should consider something more cheerful for personal wear."

Xenophilus was maintaining that he and his daughter had learned how to keep confidences

"I did notice your dress is bright," said Ginevra.

Severus was apologizing that the quest was for treasure, not the advancement of animal science.

"Do you like it?" asked Luna, standing and twirling. "It's my sunshine dress for

Tuesday."

Xenophilus was graciously agreeing that he and his daughter could accept numerous goals as worthwhile.

"Tuesday? Are there more?"

Severus was saying that the division might not be fair to the Lovegoods because they planned a three-way split between families whereas the Lovegoods would form half the people on the quest.

"I'm designing a sunshine dress for every day of the week," said Luna. "Let me bring you my sketchbook."

Xenophilus was replying that the division was more than fair since he and Luna were latecomers.

"The one for Wednesday is striking," said Ginevra as she surveyed the dress designs.

Severus was describing the landscape where the stash might be. He only had bits and pieces of information.

Luna retrieved the Wednesday Sunshine Dress with a flick of her wand, and after making minor adjustments, another flick of the wand replaced Ginevra's somber outfit with it. Severus blinked several times, thinking he had missed something. Ginevra twirled across the room. Severus thought the room glowed with her.

Xenophilus was lamenting he couldn't recall such topography.

"Turnabout is fair play," announced Ginevra, levitating her suited skirt, and adjusting the navy blue to a charcoal suitable for Luna. A flick of the wand and Luna was the very model of a business lady. Severus blinked again.

Xenophilus was remarking the girls were absorbed in clothes.

"Don't you remember, father," said Luna. "Severus is describing the landscape of that large, northern island where we searched for that lost herd of triple-horned tramlers."

Luna waved her wand. A map of the island appeared with the trails and campsites marked.

"Ah, I remember it well," said Xenophilus.

"We have a list of the supplies we took with notes on what we should have taken but didn't," said Luna. Another wave of the wand and a scroll dropped in Severus's lap.

Miss Executive Luna performed a stately dance routine while Miss Sunshine Ginevra pirouetted around like a butterfly on the loose.

"You'll have to excuse my daughter," said Xenophilus. "She doesn't often have an audience."

"They're reminding me that gold and jewels are only gold and jewels and there are more important things in life," said Severus.

"Sunshine," offered Xenophilus. "Daughters."

"Yes, that too," said Severus.

"Are we going?" asked Luna.

The two wizards nodded yes.

"We can take Meercat."

The animal perked up its ears.

"Meercat can guard us," announced Luna.

Upon hearing this, Meercat bounded joyfully from lap to lap. Severus sneezed.

Part 3

Xenophilus surveyed the equipment and supplies. "We can fly to the island if we skim the waves, but after that, it's better to walk if we want to remain undetected since the island is covered by flocks of pifflebirds who sound an alarm if they see something they think is an aerial predator."

"We'll have our brooms for emergencies," said Luna. "Does everyone have two wands? We don't want to be easily disarmed."

"Treasures are often hidden in devil-cursed places behind numerous hazardous barriers," said Xenophilus. "I've marked the Cave of Doom. The only way to get there is to cross the River of No Hope and scale the Cliffs of Despair."

Ginevra surveyed the map. "Bat-shit crazy. Promising, but bat-shit crazy."

The first day, they crossed the short stretch of water and hiked inland where they pitched a tent against the cold winds.

Severus woke to the chattering of Meercat. He checked his impulse to rearrange the little varmint's innards. Instead, he flicked his wand, and the tent flew into the air, giving him a clear view of three large creatures and causing the others to awake. Severus shot a bolt which took out the first creature's eye, and it stumbled into the darkness never to reappear.

In the midst of screaming and identifying, "*A rarehomiblus carnivus*." "Their tusks are valuable," the two witches cast a joint curse:

Heebie.

Jeebies.

The second creature began twisting with an uncontrollable itch and danced away into the night.

"Not with my daughter, you lecher," shouted Xenophilus as he blew the third creature's head off.

"Meercat warned us before the wards did," said Severus.

Luna nodded.

As Ginevra and Luna levitated the tent back to the ground, the four agreed on a spot further up the slope and further away from the game trail as a camp site. After they pitched their tent, Ginevra spread her bedroll, followed by Severus. Luna convinced her father she should be between him and Severus, not on the fringe of the group where she could be easily gobbled up.

As he was following asleep a wispy sylph appeared at Severus's feet

It has been too long.

The world and others await you.

Let go. Let go, Severus. Let go.

Severus became aware that Ginevra had arranged herself with her head on his shoulders and her arm across him. So had Luna. Keeping a wary eye on Xenophilus, Severus let Luna snuggle into a sound sleep. Meercat curled into a comfortable ball on his feet with one eye open.

The next morning saw them at the river. Ginevra levitated a rope across to a tree upstream where deft waving of her wand wrapped the rope around the tree and tied a bowline knot to secure it. When the others looked at her, she held up a copy of *The Girl Scout Guide* she had been studying.

"Vector forces," she announced as she grabbed her share of the supplies and the end of the rope and let the current swing her in an arc to the opposite bank. She levitated the rope back across the river for the others. She waved, turned to pick up the supplies, tripped, and hit her knee on a rock. The others quickly crossed, helped her to her feet, and applied healing spells.

The party limped to the foot of the cliffs. Ginevra looked up and said they could probably use their brooms and remain unnoticed if they moved slowly and used a spell that clouded the mind of men, beasts, and demons.

"That's in the *Guidebook*?" asked Luna.

"Special Edition."

Severus faced the mouth of the cave, told everyone to prepare themselves, and flung in his 'starburst' spell. A swarm of imps stampeded out.

"They're ankle biters," warned Luna.

Ginevra yelped and jumped back.

Purple bolts from her wand singed imp hair. "That's for biting my ankle."

White bolts from her wand nipped at imp heels. "That's for making me face those cliffs."

Yellow bolts from her wand took off pieces of imp ears. "That's for making me cross the river."

Blue bolts from her wand trimmed imp beards. "I hate getting wet."

Red bolts from her wand scorched imp bums. "That's for making me hurt my knee."

She was about to chase them across the wilds and apply a few more lessons, but Severus had a grip on her cloak. After a couple more shots at the fleeing figures, things became calm. She faced the others and took a deep breath. "Well, what's in the cave?"

Nothing.

They explored it. They applied every revelation spell they could think of. Nothing.

"There's the opposite," suggested Xenophilus. "There's a place called Treasure Hill with an easy trail leading to its top."

"Bipolar works for me," said Ginevra.

Part 4

They retraced their steps and at noon, Severus and Xenophilus climbed to the top of a boulder to keep lookout while the women fixed lunch. Ginevra delivered their tea and sandwiches and returned.

"They don't look like they're catching their breath," said Luna. "What are they doing?"

"What men always do out in the wilderness. They're arguing about the difference between divine law, wizard law, mundane law, and natural law."

"Are they making any progress?" asked Luna.

"They thought they were until Severus asked about the Devil's law. Xenophilus thought that was part of divine law but Severus wasn't so sure. They're in quiet contemplation now. It was a deep question."

"Do you think there's enough Devil in Severus?" asked Luna.

"Or Angel?" replied Ginevra.

"Does it make any difference, really?" asked Luna.

They camped late that evening at the foot of the trail leading to the top of Treasure Hill, and when night fell, Ginevra, Severus, and Luna spread their sleeping bags in the tent. Xenophilus entered later to find Ginevra and Luna asleep sprawled across Severus. He shook his head, crawled into his sleeping bag, and fell asleep.

Ginevra was not as asleep as she looked. Ginevra, full of desire, placed her lips on Severus's. Nothing bad happened. She tried again. His hand was in her hair. It went on and on. She returned to snuggling.

Luna was not as asleep as she looked. Luna, full of longing, placed her lips on Severus's. Nothing bad happened. She tried again. His hand was in her hair. It went on and on. She returned to snuggling.

Angels and Devils danced through Ginevra's dreams. When the dreams became too intense, she partially woke, reassured herself that Severus was still there, and went back to sleep.

Hordes of animals danced through Luna's dreams. All manner of animals: creeping, crawling, trotting. Pairing off. The great mount. Luna came in her sleep. Severus's eyes popped open at her small cry and her fingers clutching his chest. Meercat was watching him.

On top of the hill the next morning, Xenophilus and Luna were in their element. They divided the area into sectors and began searching with revelation spells. They found a promising spot and unearthed a box. Xenophilus insisted they dig deeper, and they uncovered a second box. Meercat was trying to push everyone away from the first box.

"It may be cursed because it contains the real treasure," said Ginevra.

"I know. I know," said Luna. "We'll open it from behind the boulder. I'll set up a mirror."

She took her compact from her purse and enlarged it. After finally getting the mirror image of the latch to work, the box lid flipped open. An explosion tore the box into bits and the mirror into a mist of shards that danced in the sunshine like an innocent girl's dream.

"It was an heirloom from my aunt," said Luna.

Severus place his hands on her shoulders and spoke. "Many years and ages ago your honored ancestors brought forth in this brave world a splendid compact dedicated to the proposition that a worthy witch should be glamorous. Now we are engaged in a great quest, testing whether that worthy witch can acquire treasure, and on that quest, the compact was destroyed. We grieve for its loss. It is altogether fitting and proper that we do this. In a larger sense, we can neither add to nor subtract from the sacrifice that has been made. The world will little note nor long remember the words I speak here, but we will forever remember what has been done here. It is for us that remain to rededicate ourselves to our undertaking so that the hope of riches will not perish from our future."

Ginevra retrieved the compact handed down from her mother's side of the family from her personal kit and offered it to the group.

Being among those with no mirror to offer, Xenophilus spoke to Severus.

There's no reason that any wizard,
Lacking a compact, should long lament
That he cannot offer the thing required.
But buoyed by hope and giving credit,
He could praise teammates who offer much.
Offering support to comrades dear,
Remaining true in the face of fate,
Will put his heroic heart at rest.

"Let us hope the rebels believed one booby trap was enough," said Severus. "The loss of two heirlooms in a single day would be more than the group could bear."

They were undoing the latches using the mirror image.

"Left. Left," said Luna. "No, right."

The box was open, but none of them cared to approach it.

"I know," said Xenophilus, running back to their luggage.

Ginevra's eyes gleamed. A wave of her wand levitated her bra over to the box and returned it full of gold coins. She placed it in front of Severus. Luna huffed. A wave of her wand had her knickers floating over to the box and returning with jewels.

"You are offering me great treasure," said Severus. "Would that I were deserving of such riches."

"Aren't you constantly telling us that we must bravely face what fortune offers?" asked Luna.

"Aren't you continually counseling us that patience is required for any major change?" asked Ginevra.

"Fate is ready to land in your lap," began Luna, but they heard Xenophilus returning and the two women waved their wands to turn lingerie into mundane-looking pieces of cloth.

Xenophilus appeared with trousers, their legs tied off at the end to form improvised bags. They filled four trousers and draped them over their brooms. They would fly as far as they could with the weight, rest, and fly again.

Skimming over the treetops, Luna raised her voice.

The piffle birds announce our flight,
But we escape without a fight.

Xenophilus answered.

Our heavy brooms are on the wing;
Our lighter hearts begin to sing.

Ginevra joined in.

Long was the trip, full of much pain.
Hard was the road; great was our gain.

Severus replied.

With comrades that were true and fair,
We did all that anyone could dare.

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