

The Water Demons

by beawasley2

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So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Curious As A Cat

Chapter 1 of 11

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Dylan sat in a chair by the window of the library, rather than at the tables with everyone else, and stared out at the lush landscape. To everyone who passed her, it appeared as if she was just enjoying the view or deep in thought. To the twin boys in the same section, she was apparently simply daydreaming, not paying them any heed at all. They pulled one huge volume after another from the shelves, discarding one book after another; and although she was paying them slight heed, she didn't give any indication when either one of them glanced in her direction.

Actually, she was distracted from reading the book in her lap by the anger she felt about having received another week of detentions with Professor Umbridge. *Professor Ha! That toad is in no way a qualified professor.*

She wiped a tear from her cheek, hoping that no one saw her. *I'm tired of people telling me that I'm just daft. So what if I believe what Professor Dumbledore said at the Leaving Feast? The Great Hall had been draped in black in remembrance of Cedric Diggory. Dumbledore said Cedric was murdered by Lord Voldemort, Him, and that the Ministry of Magic didn't want him to tell us that. They're afraid of the truth. And Voldemort... He is scary. That's why the Ministry doesn't want to believe Harry Potter. No one wants Voldemort to come back; but to blatantly deny it is utterly crazy.*

Another tear fell and quickly she swiped it away. Slyly, she glanced at the twins, thankful that they didn't seem to notice. She was used to them teasing her and didn't want them to today. Even though Madam Pomfrey had given her Murtlap compresses for the cuts each night after her detentions, her hand hurt a lot, and it still bled when she

closed her hand or gripped anything. Underneath the bandage, the back of her hand read, "I will not spread lies," in bright red. *A blood oath quill! She makes us write lines with a blood oath quill! She's evil, that toad.*

Dylan had just changed her dressing and applied another Murtlap compress, but it didn't help the pain when she had to write, or lift something, or even grip her wand. Dylan had begun to practice using her left hand for most things even wand work. But she didn't have the same control she did left-handed as she did right-handed.

Just because the Ministry's blind to the truth, too afraid of him that they don't want to admit that he could possibly be back doesn't mean that everyone else is so dense so naïve, she fumed. My parents believed Headmaster Dumbledore. My parents think if anyone would know, it would be Dumbledore. My father's best friend, Mr. Avens, believed it, and his daughter, Virginia, in Slytherin believes it. So why doesn't the Ministry?

Dylan rose from her seat, grabbing her book bag with her right hand. She gasped in shock and winced at the shooting pain, immediately dropping her bag on the floor and pressing her left hand to the cuts. *Please don't start bleeding, please...*

"You dropped this," said a soft voice next to her. She looked up and met the taunting gaze of one of the Weasley twins. His eyes dropped to her hands and his expression turned to one of concern. "Hey, are you okay? Did you hurt your hand?"

"Ah, yeah..." She searched his face, wishing they were required to wear nametags or something. *Well, the school does require us to wear badges, but they keep switching theirs. She was certain they did. This is so embarrassing. Every time I talk to one of them I call him by the wrong name... and I always guess wrong. Oh, how I wish I could tell them apart.* "No, I'm fine Fred?"

He shook his head and smiled. "George. Are you sure?"

Zero for a thousand... she chided herself. "George, I'm sorry. No, it's nothing really... I'm fine. Thanks." *You would think I'd get it right at least once, if not just by mistake!*

He lifted her bag up, and Dylan took it with her left hand, her arm sliding through the strap as she swung it up onto her shoulder. "Hey, it's no problem. See you in class," he replied, smiling as he walked off.

She watched him as he went over to his brother, Fred, and their best friend *what is his name Jordan? Yeah, that's it, Lee Jordan* George showed Fred the book he'd retrieved from the shelf, near where she had been sitting. They were comparing whatever spell he had looked up in the book with whatever Fred and Lee had in the books they held. *The way those three are acting, they are up to something* she surmised. *I'd love to know what*

George tucked his book into his book bag and then crammed in the one Lee held out to him as Fred put three in his bag. Dylan turned to see if Madam Pince noticed that they were borrowing books without properly checking them out. *Nope, she's not at her desk* She turned back just in time to see them leave the library together.

She knew, just knew, that they were behind many of the pranks and strange occurrences that happened around school. She also knew that no one had really been able to prove *half* the stuff the Weasley twins pulled. Dylan envied them. *No, I admire them. They joke and mess around a lot, but they get good grades and have no trouble with the spells we do in class. If they'd just apply themselves... But of course they did do... just not academically. Some of the stuff I know that they've pulled over the years has been amazing, truly amazing... I wonder what they are planning up now.*

~oOo~

Dylan followed Fred and George as they walked from the Great Hall after lunch and headed down to the greenhouses. She had Care of Magical Creatures now, so for a while they headed in the same direction. She wished that she had the class with the twins as she watched them laugh and joke with the other students heading for the greenhouses. For the umpteenth time she wished she had the nerve to talk to them. *They will just tease me again and... I never know what to say to them anyway. If I could just be like Virginia. She can talk to anyone, and Fred and George always seem to throw me off balance.*

Coming back up the hill from class, Dylan saw Fred and George lagging behind their classmates. One of them dropped to re-tie his shoelaces while the other waited. Dylan waited too, ducking behind a large boulder, not wanting to pass them alone.

Dylan adjusted the bandage on her hand Professor Hagrid had been so kind to do for her, but the back of her hand still stung a lot. Her Care of Magical Creatures class today had been held in the Forbidden Forest, and a Thestral had nearly bitten her hand off at the end of class because her cuts had begun to bleed again. *At least that's what Professor Hagrid said it was. I never saw the animal,* she thought, a shiver running down her spine. Professor Hagrid had been so kind, absolutely insisting on bandaging her hand for her, but that made her the last one to leave, so now she was walking back to the castle alone. *Those two are the biggest jokers in the school. If they tease me about my hand, I'll cry. I can't let them see me cry... I'll never hear the end of it.*

She peeked around the boulder to see if they had moved on. Suddenly the twin retying his shoe had finished, and they were now running *this way!* *If I duck back between those trees I might not get caught...* She quickly tried to stow the large glass jar of stagnate pond water Professor Hagrid allowed her to collect in her bag, to get ready to run.

"So what do we have here?" one of them asked, stepping around her hiding place. He wore a green jumper with a large *G* on it, but she knew very well that did not mean he was George.

"It's a Ravenclaw, Fred," the other answered as he appeared too. *Okay, maybe he is George.* She couldn't see the letter on his jumper yet. "So pretty little raven, what are you doing here?"

"I was coming from class, George..." she started to explain, except that he shook his head indicating that she got his name wrong. "Sorry, Fred, I mean, in class... but I," she stammered when he pointed at the other when she called him Fred. "... was just now..." Not sure *what* to say, her brain went blank, and her mouth just wouldn't cooperate.

"Yes?" they said together. They now stood on either side of her behind her rock. One of them moved to stand in front of her.

"What do you have there?" *Fred George?* She lost track. Whichever one he was, he pointed to the canvas bag she held.

She looked at his chest and saw the large *F* there. "Well, Fred, right? I, um, have a pet that needs..." How was she going to explain having ten baby grindylows and over a dozen grindylow eggs in her dorm room? *What had Professor Lupin call them? Oh, yes, tadlows... tadlowogs, that's right. There are still a few more eggs about to hatch too... any day now which is why I needed the mucky water.*

"Uh-uh, I'm George, not Fred." His smirk gave her jitters, and he smiled knowingly at his brother. "What I really want to know is why were you hiding from us just now?" He moved to stand next to his brother. He pulled a twig from her hair as the other one moved to peek around the rock. "What's in there? *And* where did you get it?" he asked, trading places with the other to give him room. She turned her head in the direction of the forest, and when she looked back they were standing in front of her again.

They are too much alike! If only they could just stand still. All she could do was point, her cheeks felt like they were burning. "Raven got your tongue?" the other one asked *Fred.* She had to look at his chest. *Yes, he had on the 'G' jumper.* "What's the matter? We could give you some chocolate for giving us an answer with an actual word in it," he teased.

They're definitely in the mood to tease... Why today? Dylan swallowed hard. "In the forest, Fred... I was in there..."

"Fred," the one with the 'F' interrupted her, indicating himself. "We figured that part out for ourselves, thank you. What I want to know is what were you *doing* in there and what you were after, and why?"

Dylan felt like she was their target again. *It's like being paired up in class with one of them. They like causing mayhem, always switching on me, or calling each other names like Gred and Forge, so she never knew which one she was talking to. I'll be okay. Who am I kidding... they're identical there is no way I can tell them apart.*

"Let her answer," the other said teasingly.

Quick check... yep, George, he has the 'G' on his jumper "George, I am well... I asked Professor Hagrid if I could..."

"Fred. It's okay... go on," he coaxed. "You asked Hagrid if you could what?"

"The jar you shoved into your bag, what's in it?" the other asked.

So he had seen it. Is that why they came over here? Dylan reached into her bag and pulled out a large litre container of mucky water. "Do you mean this?"

"Yes," they said simultaneously.

"It's pond scum; hopefully full of algae n' stuff." *I can't tell why I have it... I am not telling them I am raising tadlowogs... though, maybe... think Dylan, some reason to have... yes!* Dylan quickly explained that she had a microscope and wanted to see if it had microorganisms. Her dad told her all about microorganisms *actually managed to talk to them and not get all flustered!* She was surprised.

The twin with the 'F' leaned forward placing his hand on the rock by her head to peer into the container. "Cool, but where did you get it?"

Was he really interested in microorganisms too? Do wizards study them like Muggles do? He seems interested. The other one guessing it was Fred, he wore the 'G,' *doesn't.* He was standing with his arms crossed. Dylan tried to explain where Professor Hagrid had taken them for their class, but part way through her voice cracked, she stuttered every time she looked at *Fred?* Both guys listened intently, one nodded, the other grinned.

"Thanks," they said.

She watched them leave, running into the forest presumably to find the pond where she had collected her tadlowog water. She'd managed a whole conversation with the twins, and still never managed to call them by their right name. *Do they do that on purpose? Or am I just so flustered around them I can't keep it straight? There has to be a way to tell them apart. Our professors can.*

~oOo~

A few days later, Fred and George were huddled over a pile of books; every now and again checking over their shoulders to make sure the section was without prying ears. Dylan squeezed tighter into her corner, not wanting to be seen or sensed by the trickster duo today. She was crying, and if they saw her... well, she just didn't want to be teased right now.

"Cypress I think... brackish would be great..." "Maybe, a sink-hole spell..." "We don't want it to go through the floor!" "Nah, just need to turn the rock into a natural aquifer..." "What's an aquifer?" "Dunno." "All we need is really mucky water, and mire if we flood it really good that's all that's necessary, right?"

Dylan wiped her face again, and tilted her head, listening to the mischief-makers talk. *Now what on earth could they be up to? Why would they want they are going to flood a corridor?*

"Limestone, peat, moss, steam, fog, fungi, plants we could use seeds maybe? Or do you think sticks, leaves and stuff like that would work?"

"Fred, what are herbaceous plant species?" *Okay that had to be George then*

"Dunno. Says grasses, rushes and sedges in this one... Hey we could add orchids; at least McGonagall would like that. This one lists four types of orchids."

Dylan listened as, *Fred? It could be Fred* seemed to read off an ingredient list to a potion, until he said, "Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, bicarbonate, phosphorous, and sulphur, I think I still have sulphur. Nitrate and phosphorus, I'm not sure about those." *What on earth would they need chemical elements and gasses for?*

"Bacteria, yeast... and fungi and protozoa... that's in the mud and water... hmm..." *Well, that explained the interest in her jar of pond scum*

"Fungi, do you mean mushrooms? Well, we have been collecting stuff like that from the forest for years."

"Good thing, huh, I think it's more than just mushrooms, though." She heard the distinct thud of heavy volumes being closed *They were closing up the books!* "I think it's all that stuff on the trees and rocks... We should get more of that stuff anyway." She heard one of them reply, and Dylan pulled her legs up tighter and propped her book higher up on her knees to hide her face. A single quill, charmed to take dictation hovered over her parchment tablet, anticipating. Dylan noticed that the quill had written down every word she heard them say. She quickly changed the page.

"So now we just need to... Oh! Hi," one of them said. Dylan had no idea which one, but at least he was smiling.

"Hi," she managed, though her voice cracked. She buried her head back into her book, her face hot enough to fry eggs. They laughed softly and moved on. Dylan turned around to the pile of books they had left and swished her wand to summon them to her. Glancing at the titles she noticed that they were ecology books. *They must have an essay for Herbology.* The larger of the books opened easily to a page with a corner folded down. She absently read the text as she straightened the corner.

'...Are tropical moist forests where waterlogged soils prevent dead leaves and wood from decomposing, which over time creates a thick layer of acidic peat. Peat swamp forests are typically surrounded by lowland rain forests on better-drained soils, and by brackish or salt-water mangrove forests near the coast.' Dylan noticed that peat, moss, brackish and salt-water were on the list next to her.

'Soils data indicate that swamps are historically composed of 1. Low hammocks of live oak, laurel oak, water oak, runner oak, cabbage palm and varieties of pines in the better drained areas; 2. Seasonally wet flat woods supporting slash pine, longleaf pine, cabbage palm, fetterbush, wax myrtle, saw palmetto and a variety of grasses and sedges in more poorly drained areas; and 3. Wood swamps composed of cypress...' they mentioned using cypress? The recording of their conversation, *yes... they said that they could use cypress.*

'Blackgum, bay, red maple, water oak, ironwood, pond pine, and maidencare as well as pickerelweed marshes in sloughs, river floodplains and other areas of seasonally pond collection or natural aquifer regions...' And they had wanted to know what an 'aquifer' was... Dylan set the book down. *What are they up too?*

~oOo~

That night Dylan couldn't sleep. It was well after one in the morning, and she was wide-awake and restless. She kept going over the conversation in the library *Really mucky water... flooding is all that's necessary... don't want it to go through the floor... Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, bicarbonate, nitrate, phosphorous, and sulphur chemical elements they are all chemical elements. What did they need chemical elements for?* Dylan's dad worked with elements as a chemist for the petroleum company... *bacteria and protozoa could that be why they were interested in her pond scum? It's not an essay. Not likely with those two. Fungi, yeast, moss, peat and brackish... water?*

She stretched and considered. Professor McGonagall didn't want her practicing her changing without supervision, but did want her to practice imaging her form *My private lessons showed that I am capable of changing on my own now and... It's late but I want to know... She will be furious! I can't sleep anyway... I'll just change, sneak into their room, and see what they are up to... It can't be that hard. Can it?*

Dylan stood up, taking a deep breath, she concentrated on her centre, and as she exhaled, she held onto the strongest part of force she felt within her. She inhaled again, never letting go of the building sensation in her body her core. Slowly she allowed herself to meld with it, feeling it fill her body, and she whispered the incantation softly as she let herself flow into it, trying to frame the image in her mind.

When she opened her eyes her perspective was lower. She quickly checked herself in her mirror and realized she had forgotten to extend her legs again *Oh well, the rest looks right. Maybe no one will notice if they see me.* She closed her eyes and mentally berated herself. *If anyone does see me this way they'll freak! Oh, well, it's not like I choose this form.* Quietly she slipped from the room. She followed the corridors running toward the seventh floor Gryffindor towers.

Once there, she slunk around the corner and noticed that a girl was entering the hole in the wall. Quickly Dylan ran up behind her, thankful that her padded feet made almost no noise on the stone floor, entered behind the girl into the room. She sat patiently as the girl disappeared up a staircase and Dylan ran up the other. On the second landing of the stairs her sensitive ears picked up movement, startled exclamations and one of the twins' voices. "Sorry mate... just made a small mistake."

"Galloping gargoyles, Weasley, let a guy sleep, why don't you!" the boy said and Dylan smiled. *I have the right room all right* Gently she pushed against the door and peered inside. *Yes, he's awake! Just past that tree in... They have a tree in their room?* She silently walked in keeping herself close to the other beds and made her way toward his bed just past the tree. *All right, so how to change back unnoticed, and not scare the daylight out of him...*

~oOo~

Fred, George and Lee were still up. All attempts at the swamp were not working out well. The dense fog in the boy's bathroom had finally dissipated around midnight, and the house-elves had finally cleaned up all the peat and mud, so Robinson had gone down to take his weekly bath. *That will take about an hour,* Fred thought, amused, *and Fendler's sound asleep in his bed. George is reading up on swampland fauna,* thought Fred as he sat on the side of his bed, intently looking at a small branch in his hand. *The perfect time to work on our crowning achievement..*

Fred tried to make the branch he held in his hand grow into a tree. *If I use the spell I found in that dusty volume from the top shelf of the Transfiguration section in the library, it works. Just not exactly how I need it to work and not every time. Well, it's easy enough one twig at a time but that won't cut it!* The down side was that the spell didn't work at all if he set the twig in the pile of woody vegetation, debris and pond scum they had collected.

The other spells worked, but seemed to counter this one. The last time the spell made a large, soggy, rotten log that fell over and had completely filled the bathroom, though, that had been loads of fun. The spell only works with a dry branch or twig, with leaves, and only one bloody twig at a time. He didn't have time to stand there growing one branch at a time into the plants he wanted! *If this is to work it can't be a twelve-spell-each process..* They wanted it to be a large lump of something you could either, throw and run away from, or a box of stuff that exploded into the swamp. *A box which exploded into a swamp would be far more cool and sell better* Fred thought to himself.

He levitated the branch to the centre of the room, rolled his wand as he made an arch, saying the spell he'd been trying and the leafy branch quickly expanded shooting roots, trunk and branches full a leaves as it grew, only to crash into the ceiling with a loud splintering and cracking noise. Fendler shot up in bed looking around wildly. "W what, who, huh? What?" he gasped.

"Sorry mate, just made a small mistake," Fred said calmly.

Fendler fell back against his pillows. "Galloping gargoyles, Weasley...! Let a guy sleep, why don't you!"

Fred tried to shrink the tree now growing in their dorm room, but the attempt made a very loud crack, a big flash of fire and a thick poof of smoke as the big tree dissipated into pile of ash on the floor.

Suddenly a cat *well, it looked like a cat, but huge* that had waked casually into the room, froze as Fred destroyed the tree. The cat-like animal screamed and suddenly darted across the room, ran past George's bed, leaped across Robinson's and turned a sharp U around Lee's legs and buried its self under Fendler's bed. Fendler, having been jarred fully awake again by the destruction of the tree, looked around frightened as the cat-like creature raced around the room. The four boys in the room moved cautiously to peer under the bed at the frightened animal.

"What in the bloody hell was that?" Fendler asked.

"A cat, I think," Fred said casually. His curiosity was fully peaked and adrenaline now raced in his veins as he tried to see the intruder.

"That can't be a cat it's too big!" Lee exclaimed, down on all fours. "Did you see its paws?"

"It looked like a mini mountain lion, a kneazle or something," George stated. "That isn't just any 'ole cat, Fred. Can you see it?"

The door opened and Robinson and Chan walked in. Instantly the cat shot out from under Fendler's bed, leaping over Chan's bed and lunged for the door. Robinson flung himself out of the way as the 'cat' ran out the room with Fred, Lee and George in hot pursuit.

The common room was empty and completely silent by the time the boys reached the bottom of the stairs, except for the soft crackle from the fireplace as the last of the firewood broke down into embers.

~oOo~

Dylan walked into her common room, changing back to her normal form and flung herself into the nearest chair. She was so pumped up now there was no way she could just go to bed! *There was a tree in the middle of his room! A tree! He made a tree erupt in spontaneous combustion* Dylan had been terrified the moment that tree burst into flame... *In their dorm room no less! Who in the name of Merlin would... destroy a tree in their dorm room? Did all Gryffindors have a tree in their dorm rooms?* She forced herself to take deep even breaths, carefully counting to ten before she exhaled. Her hands were shaking... *Had he made a tree... then destroyed it? Bugger, he must be a capable wizard if he can do that!* She stared into the fire, watching the flames flicker. *That, sure as Hades, didn't go well. Now what?*

~***~

Author's note:

We all know that Fred and George had D.A.D.A. and Herbology that seems to be canon. I am assuming that Fred and George received O.W.L.s in Potions, Charms, Transfiguration based on the stuff in their shop. For the purpose of the story rather than have them only taking three class subjects in the school year. That's just too much free time for them to have on their hands. I doubt Professor McGonagall would allow them that!

Dylan's Animagus form when she gets it right, is an Eurasian Lynx: one of the big cats, classified as a medium-size cat of European and Siberian forests. It has grey to reddish fur with a variable pattern of black spots or may have plain fur. Dylan's is the plain variety. The lynx is mainly nocturnal and rather quiet animal. The sounds the lynx makes are seldom heard because they are not loud. A female weighs approximately 18kg. The Eurasian lynx has relatively long legs, large feet that provide a 'snowshoe' effect, allowing the animal to run well through snow. In winter the coat is greyish, with a tint varying from rusty to yellowish. The Wikipedia web site has a very nice article and picture if curious.

I want to thank Lumiere, Musci5 and Notsosaintly for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable.

The Detention

Chapter 2 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Dylan left her private lesson beside Hagrid's hut with Professor McGonagall feeling stiff and sore. She was to stroll around the school grounds for at least an hour, trying her legwork. It was odd getting used to walking on all fours, especially when they felt as if they were too long and even stranger was getting used to having a stubby tail. However, once she stopped fighting against the movement of her limbs and let them move naturally, it was much easier.

Suddenly her sensitive ears picked up the familiar voices of the Weasley twins. "Basically, they explode and that's it."

Dylan tried to ease around a thick growth of ferns and a large rock to listen better.

"One particular mixture consisting of sulphur, saltpeter or potassium nitrate, honey, and arsenic disulfide..." the one leaning on a tree trunk was reading from a very old book. "Color change that could add a nice effect, don't you think? To create reds, greens, blues, and yellows by adding both a metallic salt such as strontium for red, barium for green, copper for blue, and sodium for yellow. Those are easy enough to get." He turned the page. "Until we can get the other stuff, we might as well work on the Whiz-Bangs. We need to make sure that they can't be dispersed of easily though."

"Not much fun, Filbuster's last a lot longer than that," the other stated, fiddling with a leaf. "But all we've managed is the basic explosion. I want them to go all night!"

"The fun will be finding out how he does it!" the one against the tree exclaimed. Dylan sniffed the air, detecting a faint scent of smoke, a woody musk and sweat emanating from them. She didn't think she smelled gunpowder. "We need to come up with Anti-Stunning and Anti-Vanishing Spells."

"Repeating spells maybe?" the other one asked.

The one leaning on the tree turned his head in her direction and Dylan remained very still so he wouldn't see her. "Repeating spells... that would be good one to try if we could infuse the base chemicals with charms..."

"The Engorging charm!" the one standing said excitedly. "Oh yeah, we could use replicating spells and the Engorgement charm. I remember having to copy those down last week."

The one leaning on the tree turned his attention on his brother nodding. "What does the book say about Greek fire and fireballs? Those apparently went for hours and couldn't be extinguished."

The one standing opened another book, balancing it on his one hand. "All we need to make it like Greek fire is to mix naphtha, niter, sulphur petroleum quicklime and saltpeter. Naphtha would be harder to get."

"Can we mix that with the gunpowder?" The other leaned forward to peer at the open book.

"Won't know until we try it!" the one holding the book said with a mischievous grin. He looked down to read from the book in his hand. "When fine aluminium powder was mixed proportionally with an oxidizer, the resulting mixture flash powder burns much hotter and faster than black powder, allowing for the manufacture of louder firecrackers and salutes in aerial fireworks. Nothing we didn't already try."

The one twin leaned back against the tree and placed the old book that he held closed back into his book bag. "So all we need is to order the chemicals we don't have in our trunks. The way I figure we should be able to make about two dozen."

"Shapes, we should make them into shapes!" the other one said, putting away his book. "I think we should make dragons."

"Ginny has always been partial to Catherine Wheels. We should consider them too."

Dylan pressed herself against the rock and lowered herself into the ferns for coverage as the twins moved away from her hiding spot. "Let's get the compound mix right then we'll see if we can infuse the spells. After that we'll concentrate on shapes unless you want to focus on shapes..."

They are going to make fireworks! she thought to herself as she watched them walk back toward the castle. *I hope they do... Oh, I hope they do* She followed the twins as they walked back to the castle. Suddenly it dawned on her; *Professor McGonagall is waiting for me at Professor Hagrid's hut. They will be seen leaving the Forbidden Forest.*

Dylan turned quickly and dashed clumsily through the undergrowth to direct the attention of the two professors away from where the twins were likely to emerge. She heard the twins exclaim at the noise she made. She cried out as she tripped, running back out of the forest, and Professor Hagrid laughed loudly as he helped her up. "Ya still fightin' your legs, are ya?" he said. Dylan tried to respond, the feline growl belied the gratitude for his gentle assistance. His huge boarhound sniffed her and playfully nudged her to try running again.

"You must allow the natural movement of your legs," Professor McGonagall coached her. "Reach forward with both front paws, and then push with both hind paws. You cannot move your right leg, then your left as you would normally. Think of it as jumping. It'll come naturally in time and you'll appreciate surefooted balance and strength that you have."

Dylan nodded, turning to see the Weasley twins slip unnoticed between the greenhouses. "Try again, dear," Professor McGonagall encouraged. Her form shivered and reformed into a tabby cat. The subtle motions and sounds she made clearly said, "Now follow me. I'll show you."

~oOo~

"May I have your attention please," Professor McGonagall called out before everyone settled down at his or her desks. "Today you are going to work in pairs. You will be practicing both conjuring spells as well as color changing spells nonverbally. You will conjure a hat for your partner and then change its color." There were several snickers in the room. "The hat may be any style as long as it fits your partner and you are to achieve at least three colors." Dylan pulled out her book, turning to the page on conjuring articles of clothes, as Professor McGonagall appointed partners. "Miss Avondale, you will work with Mr. Fred Weasley," she said.

Dylan nodded turning to the twin closest to her. "So that means we are working together."

"Um, no I'm George," he said, getting up from the desk.

Dylan picked up her book to move to the other end of the row and found both Fred and George standing together. "Are you Fred?" she asked touching the arm of the twin standing closer to her.

"No, I'm George," he said with a smirk.

Dylan turned to see where the other one had gotten to. When she turned back he was bending up from retrieving something off the floor. "Fred?" she asked. "I think I'm partnered with you."

He laughed and shook his head. "No, you just asked me. I'm George."

She was completely confused, she turned to see the other twin beside her, apparently Fred, talking with Alice Tumas, deciding who would go first.

"Mr. Weasley, stop fooling around and get started on the assignment," Professor McGonagall admonished them from the other side of the classroom.

Dylan turned back to him as he smiled down at her. "He is already working with someone. Is it all right if I just work with you, George?"

"Yes, you can work with me," he replied. "You want to go first?"

"Sure," she answered. She concentrated on a sensible hat and thought, *Inanimus-conjurus*."

"You mumbled," he said laughing, making the nice brown derby vanish from his head. She tried again three times before she managed the spell nonverbally. However, with each try her frustration grew, and by the fourth hat it no longer resembled a bowler, but a squat version of a sombrero.

"Oh, very nice," he chided her. "I like this one." Shooting him a glare, she deftly changed the hat pink. "No, you didn't," he said, as she changed the hat to turquoise with a smile. "Oh, you are going to get yours," he warned her.

"Very nice, Miss Avondale," Professor McGonagall said, pleased. "Full marks. Now Mr. Fred Weasley, your turn." She turned to face the pair working beside them. "Mr. George Weasley, don't wave your wand like that. Nice smooth swish and a sharp flick."

Dylan looked up at him shocked. "You said you were George!"

"Never argue with the teacher," he said smirking, "Now hold still." He produced a wide brimmed stovetop hat that resembled a flowerpot, with the slightest movement of his lips. "Now since you like pink so much how about glaring hot pink?"

She rolled her eyes as the hat changed a shocking shade of pink.

When Professor McGonagall passed by them again her hat changed again from a neon yellow to chartreuse. "Very um, nice, Mr. Weasley, full marks. Now try a different style."

"Yes, very nice, bro," the other twin said watching them as Alice puffed her cheeks trying to change the crooked stovepipe on his head nonverbally.

"Thank you, yours, too," George said. "Careful, it looks like your partner is going to blow."

Dylan smiled as she produced a boater, with Gryffindor colors on the wide ribbon and he produced a multi-pointed jester's hat. She pulled it from her head as the other twin conjured a gabled hennins that slid off the back of her head. "Fred!" she admonished.

"No, I'm George," he corrected.

Dylan pointed her wand at him, then at her partner, her confused gaze switching from one to the other. "But you said you were George, and he says he's which one are you?" she asked, aiming her wand at her partners chest.

He carefully pushed her wand away from the center of his chest. "George. Now you don't want to lose house points hexing a classmate, do you?"

"Mr. Fred Weasley, Miss Avondale, what is going on?" Professor McGonagall admonished from the center of the room. "George Wesley, return to your own partner and leave Mr. Weasley and Miss Avondale alone."

"Your pulling my leg, aren't you?" Dylan asked, having realized that he'd been playing with her.

Fred still held the tip of her wand, pointing it away from him. "No, I'm pulling your wand," he replied with a lazy drawl and a mischievous grin.

~oOo~

"But if we don't practice the spell, how on earth are we ever going to know if we can do it?" Dylan said harshly under her breath.

Unfortunately, Professor *Toad* heard her. "All you need is the theory on how to do it practical application is simply a matter of will. On page two in the author's notes..." Professor Umbridge fallaciously explained in her sweet girlish twitter. "Practical application experimentation of any and all spell work..."

"Implies the use of one's ability to focus the determination of intent, the concentration of one's desire to achieve the desired result and the focus of one's will toward or in

the direction of the wanted action," Dylan said, reciting the text perfectly from memory, chorused by the mumbblings of several others in class. "However," she continued, "to simply put your *will* to your *desire* is that enough? I mean if it's as simple as the *will* and the right word well then even Muggles could do it."

Umbridge turned on her with a look of pure contempt. "Muggles cannot do magic! The Ministry of Magic is very well aware that if you understand the theory and the principles involved, then you will be able apply the principles should you ever need to. In regards to practical application..."

"The practical demonstration and exploration or execution and application of magic spells are to be handled in such a way that dovetails experimentation with concentration on delivery, execution and proficiency with acute awareness as to the spells form and exacting procedure and techniques..." Dylan rambled off remembering the letter she'd received from the Ministry over the summer. "I believe that was what the letter stated from Mr. Hopkin's, in the Improper Use of Magic office."

Professor Umbridge's face fell as she remembered very well Hopkin's form letter that had been owed to students who experimented with unauthorized spells, emphasizing that students were not to practice spells that were not listed on the approved homework assignment lists this last summer. "Ridiculous," she snapped.

"I believe *that* one is for Boggarts, Professor," someone piped up from behind her, making several in the class laugh.

"Professor Lupin taught us that, two years ago," someone else added promptly from the other side of the room. Suddenly there erupted a lot of snickering in the classroom.

Obviously no one in class is taking Professor Toad seriously Dylan thought, fuming quietly to herself. *Pity. If it hadn't been for my brother's books, lecture notes and study journals from his N.E.W.T. year with Professor Lupin not one Ravenclaw seventh year would be passing Defense Against the Dark Arts this year.*

Umbridge's attention was focused on Dylan so she obviously didn't catch who made the comments. "Miss Glass, if I want your input I'll ask for it," she snapped at Dylan's best friend, Mary Ellen, sitting next to her. Mary Ellen went pale and crossed her fingers under the desk. "Besides that... that *werewolf* had no business being a teacher," she said, trying to regain her sticky sweet tone once more.

Dylan was outraged. "He was the best Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher Hogwarts has ever had!" *Oops, now I've done it..* the smile on the professor's face disappeared and was replaced with a wide toothy grin that reminded her of a grindylow.

"Detention for the rest of the week, Miss Avondale!" Professor Umbridge's face fell into a sagging sneer. "You will learn that the Ministry of Magic's approved way of teaching is more than sufficient..."

Thank the gods, Flitwick didn't consider the Toad a real professor either. So far all seventh year Ravenclaws had regular detentions for 'discourtesy and disrespecting a Ministry approved professor' and 'disdainful and impudent disregard toward the carefully structured, theory-centered, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic.' In other words we were all rude. "At least, when Professor Lupin taught this class, we were all prepared well enough to pass our exams! All of us here received our *O.W.L.s* thanks to HIM! I don't believe that can be said for your way of teaching."

"Dylan!" Mary Ellen nearly screamed at her, jabbing her hard in the side.

Uh... oh... She's so mad now; she's actually bouncing.. Dylan thought ruefully. "But this is our N.E.W.T. year, we are supposed to be learning the advanced defenses to Dark Magic. Surely the Ministry..."

"I am a Ministry approved instructor, I'm appointed by the Ministry, with the *full* confidence of the Ministry, and I'm placed here by the Ministry, with the *authority* of the Ministry... I this is a theological to to" the Toad stammered, obviously frustrated and angry. "To teach up the correct principles of proper defensive magical techniques..."

"Ah, yes the techniques!" Dylan said, forcibly calm. "The manner and ability with which a spell is performed... the systematic *procedure* by which a specific task or spell is accomplished... A way in which the fundamentals are handled by the performing practitioner...the *application* of skill or the command of *handling* such fundamentals..." Dylan quoted the book by memory.

"Dylan, don't..." Mary Ellen pleaded.

Professor Umbridge's face contorted with anger. Her voice completely lost that little girl manner. "One week of detentions, Miss Avondale!" Dylan refused to look at her. "Now," she continued, trying to resume that irritable girlish twitter, "finish your reading assignment."

Ooh, that insufferable know nothing irritating... Toad! She fumed, glaring at the front of the room rather than directly at Umbridge. *I've read this book twice!* She couldn't wait until the end of class. She simply stared ahead, trying to figure out how she could slip a tadlowog into Umbridge's water glass on her desk without getting caught.

Dylan and Mary Ellen walked out of class both fuming and for different reasons. *It was just another Defense Against the Dark Arts class where all they did was read that insipid... stupid book!*

"How in the Hades are we going to pass our N.E.W.T.s if we don't do any practical lessons?" Roseanne fumed.

"Can you believe that she said all we have to do to avoid a Dementor is *taduck*?" Dylan hitched her book bag up on her shoulder. "Or that we don't need to worry about Boggarts, because they cannot actually *hurt* us... All we have to do is face our *fear* and it will *go away*!"

"At least you have a brother that received Outstanding on his N.E.W.T.s in Defense Against the Dark Arts!" Mary Ellen whispered so that only Dylan could hear her. "If it weren't for his letters we would all be *sunk*!"

"Let's just hope she never finds out that the detentions in Flitwick's office," Dylan answered, then lowered her voice to a whisper as the corridor became crowded, "are really for us to practice! He'd be fired."

"So what did you little Ravenclaws do to get a detention?" It was the Weasley twins again. *At least they didn't see my performance today. I just bet they would have loved hearing my outburst. How could I be so stupid? You've got to hold your tongue, girl.*

"Something naughty," one of them said over her shoulder.

"Or something fun?" the other asked, leaning a bit over her other shoulder.

Mary Ellen stopped and turned to confront them. "She spoke up in class and pissed off the *Toad*," she hissed. "Professor Flitwick said 'any more outbursts and it is detention' with him *again!* Right?"

Hey, they were not in class today? What happened, did they skive her off? No. Dylan first looked at one, then the other. *Did they?* "I don't suppose you have anything or anyway to get someone out of detention with her?"

"Might," they chorused.

"Ooh... go it's her she's coming this way," Mary Ellen said, grabbing Dylan's arm. They scattered in different directions.

Turned out, that as Dylan entered the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, both Fred and George were already sitting at a long table draped with a lace edged runner. There were three extremely erect high-backed chairs, the one on the end obviously hers. She smiled timidly at the twins noticing that one looked pasty and sweaty, possibly with a high-grade fever and the other was vomiting into a bucket. "Take your seat, Miss Avondale," the Toad said, indicating a desk where a quill laid, waiting. "You know what I want you to write."

Her seat was next to... *Oh, give it up Dylan. You'll never figure out which is which "I will not speak out the truth?"* Dylan mumbled as she sat down. Umbridge's face fell again, as she glared at her. Both Fred and George stifled back laughter. *This is going to be fun...* she thought sarcastically. *Just you wait, Toad. I will get even somehow "I know, I will not tell lies, right?"*

"That will do nicely, *although*, I have serious doubts as to whether or not you will ever be anything more than *díar*," she said, her mouth stretched in a smile that so obviously resembled a grindy low just before it took a bite out of you.

Dylan had been bitten by one while wading in the lake, *and had it not been for the two sitting in the chairs next to me... well, best not think about that right now* Dylan sat down in the uncomfortable chair without comment. *Even explaining to Professor Flitwick about the rescue, I managed to completely biff which one did what, and I was constantly corrected each time by one or the other Weasley during my reiteration. Whenever I said, 'George did...' or 'Fred did...' they corrected me... and in the end Professor Flitwick had been laughing so hard that he gave them twenty points each! Twice! Still, it's nice to know that saving me was at least worth eighty points, even if it did go to Gryffindor.*

Dylan sneaked a sly peek over at Fred and George as they did their lines. One of them, the one on the end, looked up and grinned at her, but she couldn't tell which one. He winked and flashed a friendly smile before the footsteps of the Toad made them both turn back to their papers. *Out of the two of them, George seems the nicer, unless that one's Fred no... I'm sure it was George.* The one sitting next to her tapped her foot in a friendly gesture and gave her a discreet thumbs-up *Well at least I have their approval.*

Minutes passed and the twin on the end heaved again in his bucket. Professor Umbridge snapped at him to clean it up, but he just replied that she had warned him not to bring his wand to detention. The Toad stomped her foot and said he was throwing up on purpose! *Who in their right mind throws up on purpose? Well, except for Denitia, but she's obsessed with her weight. It's not something a normal guy would do! Besides why doesn't she just 'Scourgify' and be done with it? Can't the Toad even do a simple spell?*

"Professor, maybe you would like me to, um you know, clean it up for him?" she asked after a half hour or so.

Professor Umbridge looked at George, or Fred and chuckled. "Sure honey, why don't you clean up after the boy?"

Dylan got up, walked around the Toad to reach his bucket and deftly flick away the contents. "Thanks," he whispered before he heaved again.

"No problem," she said. A few minutes later she was rising and walking over to his side of the table, looking at him concerned. She flicked her wand wiping the bucket clean again. "Are you all right? You should be in the hospital wing, both of you." *They really are sick. Neither one looks well at all. How can she be so cruel?*

He looked up at her with a wry grin. "It's something we ate to skive off her class. It worked so well then, but I suppose she isn't buying it now." He winked at her and she looked up at the other twin, startled as he winked too.

Umbridge glared at her. "Miss Avondale, return to your seat and finish your lines, please."

"One of these days I'm going to... oh, when I get the... you just wait..." Dylan mumbled as she took her seat.

"Mind if I help?" the twin sitting next to her asked as she resumed writing.

She froze. *What did he say... would he really? They're supposed to be the best pranksters Hogwarts has ever had... some of their pranks were the best she'd ever seen... he would help?*

"Mr. Weasley!" Umbridge shrieked, "Your lines now!"

Finally the cut lines on Dylan's hand began to bleed. She blotted her hand off with the lace doily and noticed that her action brought a scowl on the Toad's face. "Miss Avondale, you may leave. Clean up Weasley's bucket before you go." Dylan didn't need to be asked twice.

Just as Dylan was walking out the door, Fred *or it could be George*, heaved once more, but this time he completely missed the bucket and threw up all over the floor. Exacerbated, the Toad let both boys go, but demanded Madam Pomfrey sign a note to be brought to her office by morning or they would have detention again. Dylan waited in the corridor for them to appear, but when they did, they quickly ran off down the corridor in the opposite direction away from her. She sighed heavily, *the way they're running I'd never catch up... well, there is tomorrow...*

~oOo~

Dylan waited in the Great Hall the next morning trying to get one of the twins, hopefully the one that offered to help her, alone. No such luck. Immediately after breakfast they ran off with two other Gryffindors.

She saw Fred and George in the library later that day, but as usual there was their friend, Lee, and housemate, Kenneth, with them. Once when she looked up to check over a list of possible uses for Giant Tenecula sap, one of the twins waved at her. He made a simple-thumb up motion and mouthed, 'Thank you.' Dylan looked behind her to see if he meant her, but saw no one there. She turned back and mouthed, 'You're welcome,' confused as to what she'd done for him. He laughed silently, shaking his head.

She lingered near the bookshelves waiting to see if they ever separated and was about to give up when she noticed the twin that had laughed at her, accidentally dropped a sheet of parchment as they left. Flicking her wand she quickly retrieved the parchment. *It is a list: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, bicarbonate, calcium, carbon, phosphorous, and sulphur, are not crossed off. Neither are brackish and salt water, mire, fog or steam? Judging by the amounts written down they are planning something big!* Dylan got an idea. She hastily drafted a note to her dad, and ran to the owlery.

At dinner her owl returned. Dylan scanned down her dad's letter and smiled. He didn't even ask why she wanted the elements she'd requested, but as usual he was just so happy that she asked him and that he could help her out. *He always felt so awkward about Mum's and my magic. But whenever I needed to ask him for anything he is always so pleased that I do turn to him, he goes out of his way to help me.* She quickly wrote down the date for the next Hogsmeade weekend and told her parents to meet her at the station. *Dad loves Hogsmeade. Mum will dress him up in robes and escort him around, holding onto his arm... it is really sweet to watch them together. Mary Ellen will of course want to see my parents again, but I can trust her to keep quiet. I'll just tell her it's to get back at the Toad.*

~***~

Author's note:

I hope by now you can tell that Fred and George like messing around with Dylan, and no matter which name she uses, they always correct her saying 'no, not Fred

George,' or visa-versa, implying that she called them by the wrong name, simply to tease her. I love writing about the twins, and really think that they would do this just because they can... smart-alecks that they are.

The hennin or sometimes called a hennins is a headdress in the shape of a cone or "steeple", or a truncated cone worn by European women of the nobility in the 15th century. Very often princesses in illustrations for fairytales commonly wear this style of headdress.

I want to thank Lumiere, Musci5 and Notsosaintly for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable.

The Second Try

Chapter 3 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Chizupfle! How am I going to get to talk to him alone? Dylan wasn't sure exactly which of the twins had offered to help her get even with the Toad... *But he had offered, didn't he?* She decided that the best thing to do was to simply get one or the other of the twins alone to talk to him. She had a fifty-fifty chance of choosing the right one after all. She supposed that if she were to pick one of them to talk to, it would be George. In class he always seemed the nicer of the two, but she still couldn't really tell them apart. She tried all that week to catch one of the Weasley twins off by himself, without any success. *They never separate; he's NEVER alone! And I just don't have the nerve to face them both. Shite! Dylan decided it was time to act. But how?*

~o0o~

Dylan sat at the end of the aisle, working on her Potions essay. She was comparing the various reactions of sulphur with various plant saps in potions. It was a tedious essay, and she had a pile of books all lying open on the shelf where she was copying down information that she would use for her essay.

Dylan found that solitude, deep in the library was calming and more conducive to studying than the tables where everyone liked to congregate and talk. She was making footnotes to the books she'd copied to reference her quotes when Fred and George walked into the aisle just on the other side of the bookshelf where she was working. She watched them, hoping that they would separate and possibly look for different books.

She could see the Weasley twins quite clearly through the various gaps and spaces, which had been created by the differences of heights and widths of the books in front of her. She held her breath as one of them reached for several tomes on the shelf between them, exhaling slowly when he turned back to his brother. He leaned against the shelf as he flipped through the pages of the thick book.

"I know I saw it in here, Fred... 'Chinese and Italian explosives and fireworks.' Of course it's all fundamental stuff," George said. "I ran across it when Snape set the essay for us to write when I made my potion explode in class. I had to look up which elements shouldn't be mixed together with crystallized iodine. Anyway, I know it's here."

Dylan snuck a peek between the gaps of in the books on the shelf. It was just long enough to see Fred look around while George pulled a few more books down off the shelf from his side.

Dylan was curious by nature and usually impressed by the Weasley twins. *Sure they have a nonchalant attitude towards classes, show little or no respect for the teachers, and break every rule in school. But they manage to pull some pretty amazing stuff around the castle and grounds. It's hard to not be impressed. Especially when they do so well in class! They are able to do almost all of the spells the professors give us to learn, when they hardly ever seem to study.* However, Dylan saw them in the library frequently... It just wasn't usually doing their homework. They always seemed to be scheming something up instead.

Madam Pince passed by the end of her aisle, and when Dylan turned her head, she nodded briefly then continued on. Her footsteps stopped at the end of the aisle where Fred and George were. Dylan knew that Madam Pince always took extra care to see exactly which books they seemed interested in. Peeking at him through the books, she smiled. Fred appeared to look bored, as if he'd rather be out flying on his broom. "Now what are you two doing in this section again?" asked Madam Pince, in her prudish manner, suspiciously.

"Finishing my essay for Potions, Madam Pince," one of the twins said with a sigh. "It wasn't long enough for Professor Snape."

Dylan could practically hear Madam Pince sneer at them. "And you! What are you doing?" she snapped.

"Helping my brother, Madam Pince," the other replied, as if equally put out.

"Otherwise, I won't be able to fly this week in Quidditch practice," the first one said, then sighed dramatically, as if the world would end if that happened. Madam Pince shook her head and walked on.

An hour later, Dylan had noticed that they had amassed quite a pile of books. She assumed they were on Chinese and Italian fireworks and maybe a few on Greek fire. Fred and George had always fascinated her, and whenever they were in the library she would eavesdrop on them. So as usual she listened intently as they read the pages of the books quietly to each other. The twin she could see standing in profile to her looked up as Madam Pince passed by again, keeping a sharp eye on the twins. "Oh, bugger!" he said, annoyed. "It's like she doesn't trust us!"

"Well, she does fancy Filch, doesn't she? And we know *he's* always in our business!" the other replied with a grin. "Course, if we do manage to make spectacular fireworks..."

Fireworks! Dylan looked up startled. *They are really going to make fireworks!* She remembered them talking about explosives in the forest. *Oh, my goodness... I bet they do! Oooh, I bet that they will be fantastic!*

"Well blimey, it's not like we're going to burn down the school!" he whispered loudly as Madam Pince passed yet again.

"Of course, that is just what it might seem like to Filch!" the first one answered back, grinning. Dylan noticed that they magically copied the text passages that interested them, carefully concealing them in their Potions notes and on sheets of parchment tucked carefully hidden between pages of their Defense Against the Dark Arts book.

Well, I know what they will be reading in class she thought amusedly. She looked down at the books she was researching. *That's not a bad idea! I can copy all this down and put it in my book too. Then read it at leisure in Defense Against the Dark Arts and with permission too. Besides, it would be far more interesting than reading Defensive Magical Theory, by Wilbert Slinkhard... yet again.* She copied the pages she wanted from Brammenen's Magical Herbs and Botanicals to tuck into her book later.

"You two! Why don't you take your books to the tables?" Madam Pince called down the aisle between the tall bookshelves. Both Fred and George nodded to her and gathered the last few books they had collected. As they tried to pass her, Madam Pince held up her hand and casually looked over the covers of the books. "What are these?" she asked suspiciously.

"Alchemists, who were experimenting with sulphurous mixtures in an attempt to create an elixir of life," the twin closest to the librarian said as she looked at the titles of the books in his arms. "Certain poisonous and dangerous compounds that should never be mixed are in these three. It's for my essay," he said, trying to be charming.

No doubt, hoping that she will miss the books on the chemistry of fireworks, describing what chemistry is involved in actually making fireworks. Dylan thought, amused as she finished her copies of Schramel's *The History and Magical Uses of Herbs* Tildon Toots' *The Medicinal Herb Garden* and Hallet's *Magical Aquatic Plants and Their Uses*, using the copying spell.

"And you, what do you have there?" Madam Pince snapped at the other one, literally turning on him.

"I thought that I'd read a bit on Greek warfare, you know, some bedtime reading," he said with a casual air. Dylan watched as for a brief minute, the stern librarian looked him directly in the eye with a scowl across her thin face. "My friend, Lee Jordan, said that this was really good. I thought I'd give it a go." Madam Pince stared at him hard a while, then nodded and walked back to her desk.

"I can't believe she bought that!" the other twin exclaimed, shocked.

His brother shrugged. "I heard Lee say the same thing last month when he checked out two of these books," he said, "and she didn't give him half the scrutiny she gave us!"

"Funny how Lee likes reading up on Muggle warfare as bedtime stories. Explains a lot, doesn't it?" his brother asked, laughing as they walked away.

Dylan could have kicked herself for being so timid and shy. She could have just asked them; they were right there! But, as usual, she lost her nerve at the thought of talking to both of them. *Well, after next weekend I'll have an excuse to talk to them.*

~o0o~

Valentine's Day in Hogsmeade had been so much fun. Her parents were waiting at the station when Dylan showed up with her friends, Mary Ellen and Jeanine, in tow. Her dad was delighted to see Mary Ellen again and to meet Jeanine. As usual, her dad had brought her spell books, ones he found while browsing with her mum in Flourish and Blotts before coming on the train. He also had a rose for her and one for Mary Ellen too. He flushed, momentarily embarrassed, realizing he hadn't one for Jeanine, until Mum slyly transfigured one for him, which he gave to Jeanine with a smile.

He strutted like a peacock as he followed all four 'girls' around. In Gladrags, her dad bought new robes for his 'girls' and one for Mary Ellen, since her family wouldn't have been able to afford it; and in Scrivenshaff's, he insisted on buying Dylan and her two friends new quills and parchment tablets. *Dad was so cute. He bought Mum handfuls of her favorite sweets at Honeydukes, and he insisted that Mary Ellen and Jeanine join the family for lunch at Madam Puddifoot's, just so he could listen to us talk about school. Dad even asked for 'their' table the one where he had finally plucked up the courage to kiss Mum's cheek on their seventh date.*

When Dad gave me the large bag of containers with the elements I asked for, he didn't even ask what they were for he just said to be careful. Mum, of course, was curious, but completely accepted that it was something N.E.W.T. level and laid off... although, I don't think she believed me. Dylan hated that she felt compelled to lie about why she needed the elements, but she really didn't know what the stuff was for either... in the end, it was more a lie of omission than an outright falsehood. Still, it irked her.

However, it's not like Mum hasn't been angry about the use of the blood-oath quill for writing lines she's been quite outraged about it Dylan rubbed the back of her hand, remembering the look her mum gave her after seeing the proof. *But the Ministry is backing Umbridge completely! When she looked at the back of my hand, Mum was seething; I could see it in her eyes.*

So now that she had the stuff, she had to figure out how to get the stuff to Fred, or preferably, George. The big question was how. She also wanted to find out how they had managed to slip a handful of glumbumble's into the fancy chrome quill cup on Umbridge's desk without leaving their seats! *I know they did it even if I didn't actually see them do it. I know that it was them.* The disgusting furry parasites had infected every one of Umbridge's quills. *It was bloody brilliant! If only he could show me that I'd give him all this stuff... for free!* Dylan practiced her aim with a wad of tied string, about the size of the tadlowgs, shooting it into a glass across her dorm room. No matter what the distance, her aim was dead on, but still distinguishable. *Augh... How did they do it?*

~o0o~

By now, the tadlowgs in her tank were sprouting their tentacle fingers, and in a week they would look like miniature grindylows, complete with a full set of long spindly fingers and tiny, razor sharp teeth! The eggs had begun hatching, and her two other jars held about fifteen new ones already. She wanted to have them one at a time show up in the Toad's food. *Well, in her drink. But, 'how' is the problem* To get the object into a glass, she needed to arch the object, which meant that it would be seen. *Bugger... bugger.*

She glanced at the containers of camouflaged ingredients she had in her trunk. She laughed quietly. *Getting them past Filch had been too easy. The oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen canisters Dad gave me had been magically concealed to look like hairspray, styling spray and sculpting spray in economy size containers. Sulphur and nitrate were in jars labeled as bath salts, while bicarbonate and calcium were disguised as body wash and bath gel. Phosphorous was disguised as talc powder and the brackish and salt-water were made to look like large economy size bottles of shampoo and conditioner. It had taken Mary Ellen and me hours, but it worked!* The fog and steam her mum brought her swirled in their large plastic bottles marked 'finishing rinse' and 'leave in deep end treatment' but were as light as air! *Filch just picked up one bottle of shampoo and mauled through the rest and let me and Mary Ellen go. It was priceless!* Dylan rolled the two tubs of quagmire marked as 'facial mask' in her hands. *Now, how to get George alone to get these to him?*

Dylan paced the room and flopped back onto her bed. She leaned against her headboard, tossing one of the jars of quagmire 'facial mask' in her hands and looked over at the canisters of nitrogen her mum magically sealed so it would not leak, but still allowed the release of the built up pressure. *Mum's so good it's scary. If I could just..*

"Dylan! Either go for a run or turn out the lights, will you. It's late!" Mary Ellen grumbled, and then rolled over.

That's it! Oh, Mary Ellen, you're brilliant! "Sorry," she whispered and turned out the light. Dylan stuffed a nitrogen and calcium container in one pocket of her dressing gown and one bottle of brackish and fog in the other. *I can't roam the corridors this late; they are being patrolled, unless it's late enough? No, it would be best if I did this on all*

fours...

She slipped from the room, quiet as a cat, and stood on the landing outside her dorm room door. She closed her eyes, and concentrated on finding, and then holding her center, letting the rush fill her whole being, and then mumbled the incantation as she melded into the form of a lynx. She had no way to tell if she got it right, *but it feels fine*. She let the lynx form guide her movements as she ran down the stairs and out through the portrait that concealed the open doorway of her house *Right then, Gryffindor tower... is... this way...*

Her eyes quickly adjusted to the dim light, and the fur around the pads of her feet silenced her footsteps. Her keen sense of hearing alerted her twice: once when Snape prowled by in the corridor, and way before Filch passed by her as he strolled down a connecting corridor. Finally she sat in front of the portrait she'd heard so much about in of her fifth year when Sirius Black tried to kill Harry Potter. *Getting in the first time had been easy the prefect was returning to the tower just as I got here. No such luck tonight.*

The woman in the portrait was asleep. Dylan jumped up, placing both paws on the canvas, careful to keep her claws retracted. The Fat Lady woke with a start. "W-who's d-dare," she yawned. She looked down and saw the lynx. "Oh, oh no... shoo! Get down now... shoo!"

In the dark she must mistake my form as a very large cat or a kneazle. Most people do Dylan thought amused. *Now if I can just convince her she should open and let me in...*

"Shoo, shoo, go away," the Fat Lady protested. Dylan stretched her legs, her claws extended just enough to show them but not scratch the very old and delicate canvas. "No, please! No no, shoo go away!" Dylan landed on all fours gracefully and rubbed against the frame. She tried to purr, stopping only to stretch before her, fully extending her claws. "Oh, my goodness!" the lady exclaimed. Dylan made several more passes, rubbing herself along the frame, and then set her front paw on the elegant old frame, her nails barely clicking on the hard wood. "Don't do that! Oh, please. Fine then, go on," the portrait said, opening for her.

No wonder that murderer, Sirius Black, could get in. That was downright easy! Dylan strolled cautiously into the room, easing around the furniture, listening. *Silence... that's good.* The common room was empty. She walked to the middle of the room, looking around. *Yes, I remember that tapestry, the boys are up here.* She knew which room, the one on the second landing, and easily loped up the stairs.

The room was dark and silent. *So they must all be asleep. I'll have to wake him and not get hexed doing so. I can't let him scream or shout out... think, Dylan wake him up but don't let him yell out. You're going to have to be brazen and hope he's too shocked to yell or cast a spell on you.*

She stopped at the foot of the bed where she remembered seeing one of the twins during her first time in this room just before he made the tree explode into fire and smoke. Cautiously she slipped between the bed hangings and sniffed the blankets. *Yes, this is one of them the same one that was near me in the forest but which? Fred or George? I still don't know how to tell them apart...* Dylan carefully placed her paws on his bed and lifted up to peek at him *He's on his back... good... I don't see a wand... Oh, there, on the bedside table within reach... not good.* She stood frozen, considering. *Pin his hips and hands... You can do this. I hope he's the one that offered to help.*

He bolted awake, as a seventeen plus kilo cat pounced on his bed, effectively straddling his legs and pinning his hips with its front paws. Within seconds the cat blurred as it stretched into a girl, who leaned in and kissed him, claiming his mouth with hers, firmly pushing him back onto his elbows with firm, soft lips. Releasing his lips slowly, she whispered, "Shhh," barely stroking his lips with hers to silence him. Then she stopped, pulling back just enough to look at him briefly before leaning in to whisper in his ear. "Are you going to be quiet?" she asked, the edge of the cat still in her voice.

He nodded, stunned. She pulled back again, watching him, keeping him pinned, her hands now pressing down on his wrists, and her legs straddling his as she regarded him on all fours. His look was quickly changing from fear, to question, to acceptance, to... *Oh, no, we are not going there..* She laughed as she shifted her weight back to sit down. He barely had time to open his legs before her bottom landed in the space below his knees, rather than on his shins, and her feet slid up to rest on either side of his hips. *Now he looks confused again... poor baby* "So, did you mean what you said in detention?" she asked, her voice still thick with the timbre of her cat form *Dragons did I forget to change my throat? McGonagall will never pass me if I can't get ALL the parts right!*

He was staring at her, dumbstruck. "In detention? All right, sure. Yeah." He was examining her, from her red lace-edged tank top, to her brother's paisley pajama bottoms, and her silky baby blue dressing gown, as his hands found her warm bare feet.

His expression was not what she *okay it is what I expected, but he doesn't know what I meant* "You made me an offer so here I am to take you up on it."

His eyes became wide, and his mouth dropped open, and then closed again in a huge grin. "Um sure, if you like, ah now?" His hand slid up her leg under her pajama pants.

She laughed silently, brought her hand to her mouth, biting tenderly on her fingernail, shaking her head. "Ah... No... don't you remember? You made me a promise?"

He looked stunned and shook his head. "No... I am sure I'd remember..."

Oh, good Goddess! Did she have the wrong twin? He smelled right, but I'm not sure if they smell different. "Slow down. Aren't you George?"

"No, I'm Fred. Course, we can take care of what ever promise my brother made, or we can wake him." He was watching her intently in eager anticipation. "If you decide to wake him, I'm going to watch."

His new look threw her for a loop. *How can a guy smirk, challenge, dare, and be mischievous and lustful at the same time... ah, wait he's a guy duh!* It was her turn to stare at him with her mouth open, then she bit her lip, her hands clenched then relaxed, rolling open and closed as she did when agitated or confused in her lynx form. *Not sure how to get out of this one... or what to do next. He expects of course he expects...*

"Relax, will you? I'm not going to pounce on you. Of course, you *did* just pounce on *me*," Fred said, smirking.

He has a point "I didn't want you to yell out and wake everyone up... or hit me with a curse or hex or anything... So, you're not the one who was sitting next to me in detention?"

He laughed. "No. I was the one throwing up in the bucket."

Dylan nibbled on her fingertip, trying to remember. "I thought Umbridge ah... She called you George or did she mean the other one?" She could feel her face fall in disappointment. "Oh, then you didn't..." *I got the wrong twin..*

"Hey! Whatever it is my brother promised, I'll be more than happy to oblige."

Got to give him credit, he is earnest "Do you promise?" she asked, hopeful he would agree. *Well, one twin was as good as the other I suppose. I well, they both are still the best at pranks, trouble making and mayhem...*

"Sure," he said, leaning closer to her, "Whatever my brother promised you, I can handle just fine." His hands slid up her legs suggestively.

Boys! One track minds all of them. At least he said he'd do it. "I got you... well, both of you, these..." She reached into her left pocket and pulled out the two canisters, tossing them between them, and then fished the two from the other pocket. "Since you promised to help me, you can consider them payment."

He moved quickly, grabbing the bottles before they hit something sensitive. "This says shampoo?" he asked, reading the label. "What? You think I need to wash my hair? I bathe at least once a week twice if I get dirty."

"No, I like your hair," she replied, blushing. *Must be careful where I drop these. I almost... well... I'm glad he has quick hands!*

"You are giving me body wash?" he asked, picking up and reading the next container. "Maybe you'd like to do this in the bath? What do you say? Here or in the bath?" he asked with a suggestive grin, then picked up another and looked at the label that read hairspray. "Are you suggesting that you want to change my hair style?"

Dylan had to control her laugh, but she could feel her cheeks get hot. *There is no way you are this thick!* "Nitrogen," she replied. "Don't open it, it'll freeze off your skin!" she exclaimed before he twisted the canister top.

He examined the container, considering her remarks. He set it down carefully and picked up the third container. He rolled it, watching the opaque whitish-grey mist swirl inside. "And the leave in conditioner deep end treatment?"

"I think that one is the fog." She handed him the list she had picked up that day *heor it could have been George*, had dropped it in the library. *Gees! I'm dim as a gnome when it comes to these two. How can anyone tell them apart?* "I believe this is yours. I highlighted what I was able to get what I have is in yellow, and I made notations as to what I labeled them."

He read the list and then looked up at her, gobsmacked. "You're telling me you have all this?" he asked, stunned.

"Keep your voice down. I don't really want to wake everyone," she purred, not meaning to, "and yes. I have all of the ones in yellow, in the amounts listed on that sheet."

Suddenly he looked suspicious. "How much?"

Fair question. "You just said that whatever it was your brother promised to do, you'd be more than happy to oblige. Do you mean that?" She bit her lip, worried he would say no. *Please say yes, please don't back out... I need you..*

"I suppose that what my brother promised you wasn't a shag?" Her eyes widened in shock, and he smiled. "Damn. Okay then, *what'id* my brother, whom I'm going to strangle *then* straighten out his priorities in a few minutes promise you?"

All right then. He will help he will actually help me! She looked at his hands, then back to his face. "He said he would help me... get even with the *Toad*." Fred shook his head; obviously he didn't understand her. " *Umbridge*. He said he'd help me get even with Umbridge." *Please say yes, please don't renege, please..*

"What did you have in mind?"

That's not a no... "How good are you at sneaking things into people's drinks?" His look was suddenly totally incredulous. "What I mean is, I have these tadlowogs, you know, baby grindylows, that are just maturing, and fifteen or so that are just hatching... and I was thinking that she should have them in her drinking glass a few times. I just can't figure out how to get them *in* her glass without her seeing..." *He is laughing... Why is he laughing? It sounded good to Mary Ellen. She thought it was brilliant if I could pull it off...*

"Interesting..." He moved suddenly, jerking his feet out from under hers, and she fell back, splayed out on his bed. For a moment she thought that ~~he~~ was going to pounce on her, but instead he jumped out of bed and stepped over to the four-poster bed next to his, yanking open the drapes. "Oi, George, wake up."

Author's Note:

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The Conspirators

Chapter 4 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

George woke up startled, jumped up quickly from his bed, grabbed his wand, and pointed it at the first person he saw other than his brother. The problem was that the only other person he saw was Dylan, still sprawled out on his brother's bed. "Whoa, what's up? Why is she... on ... are you? What'd ya wake *me* up for?"

"Oh, just thought that you'd like to be in on this one," Fred replied with a mischievous edge to his voice.

George had been staring at Dylan, gaping at her lying sprawled out on Fred's bed, checking out her pajama bottoms, little tank top, and her dressing gown, which was flung wide-open. His eyes grew large as he looked back at Fred. "Really? She's up for it?" he asked, stunned.

"Sure," Fred said calmly. Dylan was stunned; certain that somehow her visit had been grossly misconstrued, as she stared up at Fred then looked back at George. "Considering it was your idea after all."

George stared at Fred, completely confused. His attention was riveted on his brother, so he missed Dylan's stunned expression all together. "My idea? What are you

talking about?"

Dylan suppressed a giggle. *So they like playing their tricks on each other, too. Well, Fred did say he was going to strangle him... This is ultimately far funnier to witness*

"You made *her* a promise so now she is here to collect up on it. You could have warned *me*!"

"So, who is going to be on top?" George asked hopefully.

Boys! Do their minds always run on a single track? If he thinks that I'm going to shag both of them. Dylan struggled to sit up and sit cross-legged on Fred's bed.

"Neither," Fred said firmly.

George's mouth dropped and then quickly snapped closed. "So why did you wake me?" He turned to look at Dylan. "This isn't about a nice little shag, is it?"

"You tell me," Fred insisted. George simply shook his head confused. "Okay, it's like this, dung-brain. You said you would help her get back at..." He turned to look at Dylan quickly. "What did you call her oh, yeah," then turned back to George, "the *Toad* Umbridge. Personally, I like your plan. So how exactly did you want to carry it out and why *didn't* you include *me* in on it?"

Dylan could actually see George's train of thought come to a complete halt as he mulled over what Fred said. "I'm lost on this one." He looked at Dylan, completely perplexed. "I'm sorry if I made a promise to you... but I don't remember what it was or when?"

"I'll tell you *when* you made the promise, if you can guess *what* she wants to do," Fred said, as he crossed his arms and regarded his brother with a grin.

Dylan had to cover her mouth to keep from her laugh silent enough so as not to wake up their dorm mates. She moved over, swinging her legs over the edge of the bed. "Do you remember that day you saw me walking back from class with the jar of pond water?" she asked. George nodded, and Fred sat down next to her and grinned. "I have been raising grindylows in my room, on the windowsill. I have about ten tadlowogs in a tank and about a fifteen that recently hatched. They will develop their tentacle fingers and teeth in a few weeks."

George slid his trunk closer to Fred's bed with his wand and sat down. "All right still don't know what exactly I promised you," he said, still baffled. Fred on the other hand managed to hide his amusement rather well.

"Give him a moment... He just woke up brains not working yet," Fred said. "Come on it's really rather a good one *We* should have thought it up ages ago."

"Tadlowogs, huh?" George said, as he reasoned out the possibilities. "Let's see... water glass or pitcher, tea cup, tea pot, sink, bath... loo... can't put them in her bed that won't do much, they need to be in water... am I close?"

Dylan nodded surprised at the options he ran through. *Those are brilliant, and if it could be pulled off so much better than just chucking one in her water glass every class for several days in a row.*

"You pretty much got it," Fred stated.

"The glumbles; you remember? You got them into her quill cup and no one saw you do it, but *know* you did. I just cannot figure out *how* you managed that," she explained. "So, I have a proposition. One prank you help me with one prank, and for each one we do, I will pay you with a container of an element that you have on your list." Fred passed the list she'd returned to him over to George.

"She said that she has the ones crossed out in yellow," Fred stated.

"Two and it's a deal!" George said as he read down the list.

"One element off the list for each tadlowog we pull off," she countered.

"Deal, but we'll use them in pairs at least. So you really have all this?" George asked, after he carefully scrutinized her notes on his list. "How did you get all this past Filch?"

"Really?" Dylan stared at George stunned, her mouth open. "You'll really help me?"

Fred handed his brother the container labeled shampoo and hairspray. "I don't think Filch's into hygiene products that much." He turned to Dylan. "Sure, we'll help. The first three times or so will be easy but the next three or four will be trickier the last ones will be tough, she'll be suspicious," Fred said. "You said you have ten and in a few weeks you will have fifteen more?"

Dylan nodded. "Fifteen of the eggs have hatched so far there might be a few more, but not many. They are starting to eat the eggs that haven't hatched."

"Who knows that you have them?" George asked before she could answer.

"Hagrid knows I have a few, but I don't think he knows exactly how many," she replied. "My dorm mates know... and my best friends, Mary Ellen and Jolliet, they know what I intend to do... But no one else does except you two. Mary Ellen and Jeanine would help if I ask them to."

"All right, just grab some sandwiches and meet us at lunch tomorrow, by the statue of Lachlan the Lanky, just to the right at the top of the stairs that lead down to the sixth floor," George suggested. "You will pass him on the way back to your dormitory."

Dylan nodded as she stood up to go, and she beamed happily. "Okay, tomorrow at lunch."

"So, now that you have us both wide awake," Fred interjected. "Don't suppose you'd be up for that shag?" She turned around to face him, completely shocked by what he suggested.

It took a moment before she could answer him. "When pigs fly, Dumbledore is Minister of Magic, and I finally can sort out which of you is which. I couldn't even dream of it, unless I knew who I was kissing!"

"I'm Fred, he's George," Fred said, grinning at her answer. "Hey, bro, you don't suppose Hagrid has any pigs, do you?"

"We could always conjure one up for her complete with wings too!" George suggested as he looked at Dylan with an expression that combined both mischief and eagerness with a big grin.

"That just leaves convincing Cornelius Fudge to hand over the reins to Dumbledore..." Fred said, unconvincingly. "Would you settle for two out of three?"

Dylan nearly choked as she stared back at them. "You're joking?"

"No way! We'd be happy to oblige. However, you didn't give us much notice on the requirements," George stated.

~o0o~

Fred and George were not in the Great Hall when Dylan went in to nick some food. She had told Mary Ellen all about the encounter in their dorm room, and both girls laughed at how crazy it all sounded. "Cover for me," she whispered to her. "I have to meet them. I'll see you in the library later, okay?" She rolled cheese and grapes into her napkin, stuffing it into her pocket with a couple of apples.

Mary Ellen nodded and helped tuck eight chicken legs, rolled in a napkin, into her other robe pocket. "Just be sure that they're not setting you up. Remember that prank they pulled on us after the Quidditch game last year? It took Flitwick twenty minutes to remove all the charms and jinxes from the three suits of armor they placed in front of the entrance to our common room."

"Yes, but you have to admit it was brilliant," Dylan replied. "The charmed armor didn't actually stab anyone, just swung the axe and lances around a bit to keep everyone out." She shook her head to put an end to any further warnings. "They don't like the Toad any more than we do. I'm going to trust them."

As Dylan ran up the stairs to the seventh floor, only one twin stood beside the statue. "Hi... Fred?" she said, biting her lip.

"No, George," he replied. She exhaled sharply, and shook her head annoyed with herself. "No, really... George," he said again.

"You would think I'd get it right at least once if just by accident!" she exclaimed.

He laughed heartedly. "You'd think that, wouldn't you?" He led her down the corridor to where Fred was pacing. She turned to stare at a tapestry depicting a scene of Barnabas the Barmy trying to teach trolls to dance the ballet. She turned around and noticed the door for the first time when George touched her shoulder. "Come on then, we are going to use this room," he said with a jerk of his thumb, and she followed the twins inside.

It was an old classroom, that was arranged exactly like the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom. The teacher's desk that stood at the end of the room was exactly like the Toad's desk, with a pitcher and glass of water on the surface. Fred produced a bucket of small balls that looked like hackey-sacks. "So let's see your aim," he said, giving her a soft, squishy ball. Her aim was dead on with each try.

"Impressive, but yes, too obvious," he finally stated. "*Incedo vado*," he said clearly, and the ball zoomed away from him in a straight shot, so fast that it almost appeared to just materialize in the glass with a splash. "*Incedo* as you know means enter into; *vado* is go, hasten, rush. Combine them. That's what we used. Unlike the ball here, the tadlowogs should slide into the water without a splash it's the slimy skin they have. Give it a go."

The new spell and wand movement was harder to aim, but with Fred's patient help, she quickly managed the spell, although her accuracy was off. "I'll have this down by the next class," she said determinedly as the ball glazed off the pitcher. George caught it and tossed it back to them.

"And we will handle the cover," George stated. "When her back is turned..."

"Get them into her water glass before everyone has taken their seats," Fred finished the sentence. "That would be the best time to do it."

~oOo~

Dylan and Mary Ellen practically ran to the classroom and were the first ones inside. Umbridge looked up and glared at the girls suspiciously. They took their seats without comment and pulled out their essays as the class filed in. Just as Fred and George entered the room, Mary Ellen nudged Dylan, but she had already reached into her bag for the small jar, which held the first few tadlowogs. Suddenly one of the twins tripped on a desk and knocked it over. "Mr. Weasley!" Umbridge admonished him. "Set that desk upright at once."

"*Incedo vado*," Dylan hissed and flicked her wand in a sharp, quick movement from the tadlowog in the jar to the water glass on Umbridge's desk. The tiny creature shot from her lap, almost imperceptibly, into the water glass without making any splash. *That worked beautifully*, she thought with a sly satisfied smile. She casually laid her wand on the desk and put the lid back on the jar in her lap. The tadlowog had slipped into the water in a silent swoosh, with barely a ripple in the water. *And if anyone saw me, hopefully it appeared as if I was simply setting my wand down*. The tiny grindylow maneuvered in the new glass then settled on the bottom.

Dylan purposefully avoided Fred's gaze and flipped through her textbook as she tried to appear bored. She had, in fact, placed several pages in her book copied from a charms book in the library that had intrigued her.

About halfway through class, the Toad picked up her glass of water to take a drink. The tadlowog, unhappy at being disturbed and tipped, rushed at her face; its tentacle fingers grasped her upper lip and its sharp teeth clamped down on her nose. Umbridge let out a loud shriek and threw the glass across the room. The glass shattered, which caused several students on that side of the room to duck. "Messrs Weasley, which one of you did this?" she finally yelled, after she finally managed to dislodge the small creature.

"I didn't do it," they both responded as Lee piped in, "They didn't do it honestly!" simultaneously.

"Professor, they never went anywhere near your desk," Dylan stated, trying to force herself from laughing with her most innocent expression. "Mary Ellen and I were sitting here the whole class, and neither Fred nor George went anywhere near your desk."

Umbridge dabbed at the blood on her nose. "Uh, Professor, your nose maybe you should see Madam Pomfrey," Jolliet suggested from the third row.

"Yes, yes, I... all of you go. You're all dismissed," she said as her nose began to swell up and turn a rather ugly shade of purplish blue.

As the class began to collect their books, Fred nudged her. "You did bring more than one right?" Dylan nodded and took the small jar from her bag. He flicked his wand and flung the tadlowog into the pitcher that sat on the corner of the desk.

"Dylan, you'll get caught!" Mary Ellen admonished her, as they left their desks.

George casually bumped Dylan's shoulder playfully. "That was brilliant! Did my eyes deceive me, or did you use two?" he whispered.

"Yes, I figured that way she would have another surprise next class, and she can't pin it on us," Fred admitted as they left the classroom.

"It was his suggestion. We threw it in her water pitcher while she was holding her nose with the hanky," Dylan admitted quietly. "You said I should carry at least two or three in my book bag..."

"There is hope for you yet," George said, smiling. "So, I don't suppose you have any hair care products you'd like to give us do you?"

"You already have four, and I have eight more tadlowogs to go. Not to mention the fifteen that hatched... remember?" she asked. "So until we get another in her drink..."

"We'll be in touch," Fred stated.

~oOo~

The following week, as the class filed in to take their seats, one of the twins gave Dylan a slight nod. She fumbled with her book bag, pulled out the glass jar and loosened the lid. Dylan sent the first tadlowog flying into the water pitcher on the Toad's desk as everyone was settling down at their desks. She had been so nervous that she hadn't realized that the distraction the twins created was to accidentally drop some stink pellets on the floor. She barely had time to do her Bubble-head charm when George pointed out that Umbridge was having difficulty opening up the windows.

As soon as Dylan opened up the jar again, he flicked the tadlowog deftly into the water pitcher. Halfway through class, Umbridge shrieked, making half the class jump in their seats as the tadlowog latched onto her face and bit her lip when she took a sip of her water. She managed to fling the tiny creature off her face; however, it landed on Mary Ellen's book as she sat reading.

Mary Ellen jumped up and crashed into the desk behind her as the tadlowog landed on her book. "Augh, get it off... get it off..." she screamed, and the class erupted in laughter. Thompson, who sat behind her, flicked his wand and flung the tiny creature onto the glass window, and it slid off the windowpane and fell outside.

"Who did this?" Umbridge yelled. "Settle down... in your seats now! I want order in my classroom... Who is responsible for this this... thing...?"

"It looked like a grindylow, Professor," Roseanne said, still standing away from her desk on Mary Ellen's right. "Only it was much smaller than the one Professor Lupin showed us."

"Do not mention *that* man's name in my class," Umbridge snapped. "Who put that creature in my water glass?" The entire room full of students looked at her unabashed and laughed, although nobody admitted anything.

At lunch, as Dylan entered the Great Hall, she was nearly run over by Fred, George and Lee as they skirted around her and her friends. When Dylan regained her balance, she watched them walk to the Gryffindor table to eat. Only when she turned to the Ravenclaw table did she realize that she held a note in her hand. She quickly made her way to an empty space at the table to unfold the small parchment.

Dylan,

We heard that the Toad got the other one in her second class. Bit her nose and set the class in an uproar.

Just thought you'd like to know.

That will be two you owe us.

George

Two days later Fred slipped her another note in class, which simply said, 'When the ink falls, be ready...' She looked at him, but he refused to meet her eye. Dylan pulled the jar from her bag along with her Transfiguration book, disguised as her Defense Against the Dark Arts book, and hid the jar between her knees. A second note, rolled up in a ball landed in her lap. 'Is that really where you want me to reach and get it?'

Quickly she wrote, 'Where would you like me to put it?' and tossed it back at him. He snickered softly. Within seconds the rolled up parchment landed in her lap again. 'Higher would be nice.' Dylan couldn't suppress the look of shock as her head snapped in his direction. Her cheeks instantly felt hot.

"Mr. Weasley, do you have something to say before the entire class?" Umbridge asked.

"No, Professor," he answered.

Dylan straightened up in her chair. "He was asking me what pages the theory for defending against the Impediment Curse and Imperius Curse are on, Professor," she lied.

Umbridge regarded Dylan shrewdly. "And why would you both need to know that? The Imperius Curse is an Unforgivable Curse no one is likely to use it on you."

"If you say so, Professor," Dylan replied. "However, it is in our book," she turned to Fred, "on page two hundred and seventy-nine. The assertive communication skills and proper defensive tactic for avoiding the Unforgivable spells. Proper communication skills for avoiding such spells as the Impediment curse are on page two hundred and seventy-four." Dylan pretended to return to her own book as nearly everyone in class turned to those pages in their books. "Although, I have doubts that these tactics will work against a Death Eater..." she mumbled. Apparently several students sitting around Dylan heard her, for they snickered.

Umbridge came around her desk, and stood directly in front of Dylan and Fred. "Why are you all worried about an Unforgivable that no one will ever use on you?"

"Because someone might!" said someone at the back of the class. Umbridge walked toward the offender. At that moment Fred elbowed Dylan, and she reached down to open the jar in her lap. Umbridge paced around the room between the desks. She reiterated the Ministry's position regarding the use of Unforgivables and how unnecessary the use of aggressive defense magic was as a way of defending against them.

"The water glass," Fred whispered, "on one... two..." Jacques, sitting at the desk two rows behind George, suddenly accidentally dropped his inkwell on the floor, and it splashed all over the Toad's shoes. "Three." Deftly, Fred flicked his wand and sent the tiny creature into Umbridge's water pitcher. Dylan hesitated. "Now," he hissed, and she sent the tiny creature flying, landing just on the edge of the water glass nearly toppling it over. Thankfully the tadlowog's movement as it slipped into the glass prevented the mishap. "Lucky shot," he said softly, barely discernable under Umbridge's angry retort to Anthony's inquiry in the fourth row.

The rest of the class passed without incident. However, at dinner as Dylan and her friends laughed about the latest articles in the Quibbler, she overheard some of the second years joking about the Toad finding a creature in her water glass and then getting bit by one that had been hiding in the water pitcher when she tried to pour herself a fresh glass of water. Dylan scribbled a quick note to Fred and George, to tell them what she had overheard and asked to meet them at the statue of Gregory the Smarmy in the east wing corridor, then used the Quick-zoom spell to pass the note to them across the Great Hall.

Dylan met up with Fred and George at the statue and gave them containers labeled sculpting spray, styling spray, shampoo and finishing rinse, which actually contained oxygen, hydrogen, the second bottles of brackish and fog.

Just as Fred was tucking the bottle of finishing rinse into his book bag, Professor Snape appeared. "What are you three doing here?" he snarled. He flicked his wand, and the bottles of hydrogen, and magically condensed fog, flew into the professor's hands. "Styling spray and finishing rinse..." he read off the labels.

"Yes, sir," Fred answered unperturbed, "for our hair."

George picked up his book bag, shouldered it, and faced Snape squarely. "A guy has to look good for the ladies, you know."

Snape glared at the twins. "If you say so," he said contemptuously. "Miss Avondale, explain yourself. Why are you here with these two?"

"They asked me what I use on my hair, sir, so I got them those," she answered *I cannot believe I am lying to a teacher!* Snape stared at her while he obviously debated the validity of her statement. *Oh, Circe, he can't read minds can he?*

"Hair care products?" he sneered. Dylan matched her breathing to the rise and fall of Snape's chest, unable trust her own breathing pattern, as she fought to stay calm. She was just about to panic when he handed Fred back the chemicals. "I am sure that there is *somewhere* you are supposed to be at this time. I suggest that you go there now."

"Oh, yes, sir right away, Professor!" Dylan stammered.

George placed his hand on her elbow. "Maybe you could tell us how to use this stuff in... the library," he suggested.

"Or we could go to the courtyard," Fred offered, and the three of them walked away. "Well done, pet. You're getting the hang of this quite nicely," he said as they descended a flight of stairs.

George laughed as he watched Dylan blush. "Of course, you have a long way to go to be a fully accomplished master of mischief and practical jokes but given time you could become a consummate proficient..."

"Yeah, it takes years of training to be a professional virtuoso like ourselves," Fred added.

~***~

Author's Note:

I want to thank, Lumiere, Musci5 and Notsosaintly for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable.

The Water Demons

Chapter 5 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Things do get a tiny bit steamy from here on out...

Dylan, Jolliet, Mary Ellen and Jeannie entered the castle from the courtyard through a side door. They walked down the corridor and began their ascent up the staircase to the first floor. At the top of the stairs, Dylan looked up and saw the Toad passing the twins as they walked up the stairs ahead of her. They quickly stepped aside to let the Toad pass as she made her way down the stairs carrying a clipboard and quill. "I bet you anything she's going to evaluate one of the professors' academic styles," Jeannie said sarcastically.

"Too bad she won't learn anything from it," Jolliet stated.

When she reached the top of the staircase, Fred and George were waving Dylan to come over to them from across the corridor. She shrugged her shoulders, confused until they indicated Umbridge disappearing down the marble staircase. "Guys, tell Professor McGonagall I forgot my essay and will be a bit late."

"Dylan, no!" But too late, Mary Ellen's warning was drowned out as Dylan hurried over to the twins.

"Fred, George, hi," she said, stopping at the last step of the staircase next to them. "What's up?"

"George," Fred teased, indicating himself in his usual habit of switching names on her. "She won't be in her classroom if she is attending another class, will she?"

"Perfect opportunity, wouldn't you say?" George asked.

Dylan caught on and then grimaced. "We have Transfiguration now. We'll be late!"

"Not if you have the tadlowgs on you, like you're supposed to," Fred remarked.

"I don't have them on me but I can go get them," she said. "Are you sure..."

"Go!" they interrupted her.

"Wait for me a moment near the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom," she said as she ran the whole way up to her room, magicked two baby grindylows into small jars and ran back to the classroom. The twins were standing in a doorway in the corridor, and she nearly passed right by them in her haste.

"Right, good, follow me," Fred said enthusiastically. The first years were all sitting at their desks reading their books when Dylan burst in and suddenly froze. George halted abruptly in the doorway behind her to keep himself from barreling into her.

Filch was sitting at the Toad's desk. "What is the meaning of this!" he snarled.

George stayed in the doorway, Fred behind him, as Dylan entered a few steps. *Egads, Filch! Think... an excuse to come in here..* "It's that... ghost... on the... second floor... girls' loo," Dylan said, bending over as if to catch her breath, but loud enough for George and Fred to hear easily enough. *I hope he buys this... that ghost, Myrtle, is notorious for flooding the bathroom.*

She heard Fred say to George, "Right, okay... I'll take care of it," from where he was still standing outside the classroom door. *Boy, does he catch on quick*

"What about her?" Filch asked, not bothering to rise. Dylan held up her hand and pretended to be too winded to speak. "Out with it, girl. You are disturbing the class." She counted to twenty slowly, then rose up, and she and George approached the desk. Her fingers curled around the small jar in her pocket.

Finally when they reached the desk, she took a deep breath. "She has... someone has... upset her again. I think she's... going to flood the loo. We were... sent to inform the... Professor Umbridge. It's lucky that we found you instead, sir," she stammered out slowly.

Filch didn't even bother asking who sent her. He stood and walked to the front of the desk and barked out, "You will all stay in your seats and read the chapter assigned for today. If I come back and you hooligans have run amuck you will all have detention with me for a week." Dylan, standing behind Filch, opened up the jar of tadlowgs. George, standing next to Filch, seemed to be effectively blocking anyone in the class from witnessing what they were doing. George flicked his wand behind his back and cast the angry creatures into the water pitcher.

Filch turned around just as she put the jar back into her pocket. "You can go now." One student snickered as Dylan passed his desk. Frightened at being caught, she turned to look at him and noticed that George winked at the boy as he passed by him. Several students tried to stifle laughs behind their hands. "Get on with it, I haven't all day," Filch demanded and then limped along behind Dylan and George as they left the room.

Dylan breathed a sigh of relief as they reached the stairs heading to the Transfiguration classroom. "That was fairly well blundered," she said finally.

"No, that was well done," he replied laughing.

She looked at him, bewildered. "There was a first year in the first row that saw us! He snickered as I walked by and you winked at him. He's bound to know!"

"He's a Gryffindor. Rayne, I think." George shot her a wicked, crooked grin. "I'll have a word with him after class. Besides, we were standing right next to Filch, and he was watching us the whole time well, me at least. Believe me, we pulled that one off."

"But won't she begin to suspect me?" Dylan asked.

"I think it's time to up the ante," he replied with a nod. "What do you say? Feel like you can go to the next step?"

Dylan felt a sudden flicker of fear. *This is working out so well. Besides... How... What else could he have in mind?* "Like what?"

"Trust me?" he said with a wicked grin. "This is when it gets fun." Dylan tried to wipe off the incredulous look from her face as she entered the Transfiguration classroom. Fred was just sitting down in his seat as they entered.

"Explain yourselves," Professor McGonagall demanded. "Why are you both so late?"

"I forgot my essay in my room, Professor," he stated calmly.

Dylan froze. *That was my line... Think!* "I stopped to use the girls' loo on the second floor, and I think I may have upset the ghost in there. I went to inform Professor Umbridge and ran into Mr. Filch instead. I'm sorry, Professor I just thought that I should tell someone with the proper *authority*," she lied. "You know because of that decree she posted, regarding teacher limitations."

Professor McGonagall glared at her as soon as Dylan mentioned 'someone with the proper authority' and then softened upon mentioning Umbridge's decrees. She regarded Dylan and Fred for a moment, and a brief glimpse of a smile appeared before she once again assumed her stern countenance. "Fine, take your seats quietly. Messrs Weasley, you can get the notes from Mr. Jordan after class. Miss Avondale, I'm sure Miss Greenfield will let you copy hers. Five points from each of you for being late."

~o0o~

Dylan was surprised to see a house-elf standing in front of her as she stepped out of the girls' loo. "Miss is to have this," the little elf said, bowing while holding up a note for her. Stunned, she accepted the note and thanked the elf, who vanished as suddenly as he appeared. She suspiciously opened the note, and wasn't surprised to see Fred's ... or George's handwriting.

Meet us at our favorite statue after dinner. We'd love some more hair products.

F. G.

Dylan tried to look casual as she ran up the stairs to the seventh-floor corridor. Like before, George stood waiting for her. "Hi... ah Fred? Have you been waiting long?"

"George," he corrected her, "and no I haven't. C'mon." He took her arm and walked briskly down to where Fred paced.

As Dylan approached the tapestry of Barnaby and his ballerina trolls, the door across the corridor opened. "Hi, Fred," she said.

"No, George," he teased her.

Dylan stopped in her tracks. "No. Wait he's George," she said, confused as George nudged her to go inside.

"Oops, I guess you got it right," Fred said mockingly, his eyes flashing with mischievous delight. "I suppose that means that you can tell us apart now." Dylan shook her head, laughing, and then looking at the room with awe. She quickly turned around as George pulled the door shut, caught a glimpse of the tapestry, and turned back utterly confused.

The old classroom was gone. The room was smaller than she remembered, and instead of desks, there were plush chairs with matching ottomans and a large fireplace, replete with roaring fire with a very large fur between them.

Somehow they've changed the room, or they transfigured all this! They really are amazing wizards "Oh, I just love rugs like that! I could just stretch out on it and lie there all night!" Dylan exclaimed and wistfully looked down at the rug.

Both guys looked at her with surprised, expectant faces. "I wouldn't mind if you do," Fred said, smirking.

"We could join you if you'd like?" George replied with a mischievous edge to his voice

"Make things cozy if you're up for a bit of fun?" Fred asked hopefully.

She looked at them, confused. "Huh?" she uttered as she removed her shoes and plopped into one of the big chairs.

"Okay, no roll on the rug," Fred stated. "So, we are here to discuss the next payment for our hair care products."

"Oh, yes... before I forget!" Dylan reached into her pockets and drew out two more bottles. "I think I'd like to do it in the loo, if that's all right?"

"Would you now?" they answered her simultaneously.

"Yes. Do you think you can get in?" she asked innocently. Both guys stared at her, stunned. "I mean, do you know how?"

Fred recovered first, his expression quickly turning lustful. "We could figure it out..."

"It would be *soo* much fun trying," George said, rising to the challenge.

"Okay, good that's settled... How should we go about this then?" she asked.

Fred looked at her, the smirk on his face both a challenge and a dare. "You could leave that to us..."

"I'm sure we can handle everything just fine!" added George, his smile saying it all. "We'll just guide you right through it."

Dylan suddenly caught on to what they were implying, and she covered her mouth, blushing. "I mean when? The tadlowogs can we leave them in her loo?" she asked, laughing silently with embarrassment, biting tenderly on her fingernail. "That would be so funny. It was your idea, Fred," she said, pointing at George.

"George," he corrected her. "And I believe that the loo was my suggestion; the tadlowogs were yours."

"I still can't tell you apart," she said with a big sigh.

"Fred," he said, pointing to himself. "George," he said, aiming his thumb at his brother. "Of course, if we are both with you does it really matter? You're going to lose track anyway once we get you into it."

Dylan sat bolt upright, her face flaming pink and her mouth dropping open. "I meant the tadlowogs! Putting the tadlowogs in the Toad's loo!"

"Of course you did," George said laughing. "Get your mind out of the gutter you're acting like a Nymph." Her eyes grew large as she looked at Fred and then back at George, and she blushed a deeper pink.

"So, to answer your question and clarify it for you," Fred stated, amused by her reaction. "Yes, we know where her rooms are."

"And how to get in," George finished. "We leave one tadlowog in the water decanter on her bedside table, one in the sink..."

"Course she'll see that one, so we'll use the larger ones there," Fred continued. "We can leave several in her tub, and a few in her loo too and really give her a fright." He counted them off on his fingers. "Which would be eight of them. Do you have that many?" She stared at him with her mouth slightly open and simply nodded.

"By my count, we have only two left of the first batch you had in your room, but those two should be almost fully mature in a few weeks," George said grinning. "So how big are the ones that hatched just before we started all this?"

"The ones from the second hatching just got their arms and tentacle-like fingers... They still have a bit of their tails still. In a week maybe we should wait two or three... But we'll get in serious trouble if we're caught!" she said and bit her lip as her hands clenched, then fully opened, then curled again. "I'm surprised that this hasn't gotten all over the school by now. Are you sure we can pull this off?"

"Absolutely," Fred replied. "Trust us you have so far."

"Besides, we want that stuff you got for us as payment for doing all this," George replied. "Next week, when you have Care of Magical Creatures and we have Herbology, we'll skive off. We'll meet in the hospital wing and sneak back into the castle. Pull our prank, and then slip back to the hospital wing. After that, you'll catch up with your friends, and we'll meet up with ours, and we'll all have alibis." Fred kept nodding as George laid out the plan, obviously thinking that this was a great idea.

Dylan sat back in her chair, baffled at how running back and forth from the hospital wing wouldn't get them noticed...or worse caught. "How are we going to skive off class?"

"You'll have a nosebleed," George stated. "It will stop as we arrive at the hospital wing, we'll pull the prank, and then you'll go back to the hospital wing because your nose will start bleeding again."

"You'll have to trust us," Fred said, grinning at George's explanation. "Have we ever led you astray?"

"No," she said, thinking over what he suggested. "But I don't get nosebleeds often..."

"We have something that will give you a nosebleed," Fred said, unable to believe she hadn't caught on yet. "Haven't you heard of our Nosebleed Nougats?" She shook her head. "We'll sell you two of them. Trust us, they work great."

Dylan nodded, and she stared into the fire, mesmerized. The mention of nougat made her mouth water. "I wish I hadn't missed dessert tonight. Something sweet and gooey would really be great right about now," she sighed wistfully.

Fred looked at her curiously. "What would you like?"

Dylan closed her eyes imagining her favorite luxury dessert. "I want a big ice-cream sundae with melted hot chocolate, caramel, lots of nuts and covered in whipped cream..." When she opened her eyes three sundaes were sitting on a small table between them exactly as described. "How did you do that?"

"Magic," Fred said, looking at her amused.

"Wizards," George said, indicating the two of them.

"Magic castle," Fred added, holding up both hands. "You have to ask?"

Dylan grabbed one of the sundaes, scooped up a finger full of whipped cream and stuck it in her mouth. Both guys gave her excited looks that expressed their desire and lust, which made her laugh. "What? It's delicious!" she said, after drawing her finger from her mouth. She promptly took another finger full, catching a bit of caramel with the whipped cream. She licked a bit off that was about to fall, before she put the rest of it in her mouth.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that again," George said with a groan.

"Unless you have something in mind that includes us," Fred said, his eyes riveted on the finger still in her mouth.

George shifted in his chair, sliding forward in her direction. "You are giving us ideas you may not be ready for..." Her eyes became wide as they locked on his. She shifted her gaze to Fred's, stunned to see his lusty expression. She quickly pulled her finger from her mouth.

"Relax, will you? We're not going to pounce on you. 'Course I really liked it when you pounced *omme*," Fred said smirking. "But, oh, yes... Do that again and I make no promises."

Dylan decided to eat her sundae with her spoon, making both guys laugh at her. "Okay then... We are all set for next Wednesday."

~o0o~

Dylan was reading the *Daily Prophet* in the Great Hall over breakfast, when an owl landed in front of her with the latest edition of *The Quibbler*. She quickly ducked *The Quibbler* under the table as soon as the owl flew off. Mary Ellen leaned in to read the cover with her. The headlines blazed across the top cover *Dumbledore hires Centaur at Hogwarts*. "Mary Ellen, it took weeks for the news about a centaur teaching classes to be reported," Dylan pointed out. "It took less than a day for the *Daily Prophet* to expose Professor Lupin, and every decree Umbridge makes appears the next issue. I wonder why the Ministry is suppressing the news about a centaur teaching classes?"

"Oh, Dylan, look," Mary Ellen said, pointing to the bottom left corner, which showed a picture of the Knight Bus parked a short distance behind a burning tree. The image changed, and a large black dragon zoomed across the upper half of the square and flamed the tree, which erupted in flames as people ran back inside the Knight Bus in the lower corner of the image. The caption read, *Hebridean Black Spotted Off Hebrides Island, page four*

Dylan scanned the brief article. "The MacFusty Clan of the Hebrides Islands, traditionally responsible for the care of these endangered dragons, admitted to reporters that

a mature female escaped confinement during her mating flight. The female was recaptured later that same day... and only two farms were burnt while the dragon was loose. Lucky, huh?"

The bottom right corner showed the same picture of Harry Potter, who looked around and waved occasionally with the words *Reactions to interview with Harry Potter, page two*, emblazoned above it. Below the picture the captions read, *Interview with Minister of Magic does he believe Harry Potter and why not? Page six. If You-Know-Who is back why is the Ministry afraid to admit it? Page seven...*

"Dylan, the Toad is looking over here," Jeannie warned her.

Dylan slipped the publication into her inner robe pocket and leaned in close to her friends to whisper. "Not one article about any strange, supposedly innocuous creature or any dribble about insupportable and unsubstantial creatures either."

"You still believe what they print?" Mary Ellen asked. "I mean, they used to write the most ridiculous articles."

Dylan nodded. "I used to read the publication for amusement, but lately they have been actually reporting real news, untainted by Ministry repression. Read together with the *Daily Prophet*, you get a bigger picture lately. Besides, Rita Skeeter is still writing for them. How off can they be?"

Out of habit, Dylan looked up at the Gryffindor table, to see where Fred and George were sitting. There was a barn owl sitting in front of them, taking a piece of bacon from the one on the left. He looked up and caught her staring at him and gave her a slight nod with a wink. She blushed and turned her head quickly, embarrassed.

A moment later another owl landed in front of Dylan, as a third swooped in carrying a small package from her parents. She had just untied the string when the barn owl, the one which had been sitting in front of the Weasley twins, dropped a small folded piece of parchment in her eggs and flew away. "Hang on a minute, Sina," she said to her mum's owl. "I may need you." She opened up the note. She fed Sina some bacon from her plate.

Dylan,

I need to see you before class.

Meet me right after lunch.

Fred

"What does he want?" Jeannie asked when she saw the name on the note. Dylan shrugged, although she was fairly sure it pertained to the Nosebleed Nougats he had mentioned before.

"Dylan!" Mary Ellen hissed. "You cannot still be... You'll get caught. No. Dylan, tell me is it?"

"I told you, one canister for one tadlowog. That was our deal," Dylan replied. "And they really want that stuff. They want to get her again, today."

"Dylan. No! That... that thing bit you and you had to go to the hospital wing! Keep this up and you'll get caught!" Mary Ellen admonished. "Besides, Professor Flitwick told you to get rid of it today. Professor Hagrid is expecting you to bring it to class."

Dylan wrote back to him.

Fred,

Yes, I need to talk to you.

I can't today. Please don't be mad.

I'll meet you at our favorite smarmy guy.

Dylan

"Sina, please take this to the red-headed twins at the other table across the hall; but you cannot fly from here to there. I need you to be discreet. So if you don't mind, fly out then come back." Her mum's owl regarded her, hooting softly, and then flew away with her reply. "I know," she admitted, turning back to Mary Ellen and Jeannie. "The two of them have almost fully matured. I have to get rid of them, but the other tadlowogs are still too immature, so no. What we have planned will have to be in two more weeks we'll just use the immature ones."

"I hate having those things in our room," Jeannie stated. "I'll be glad when they are gone, but the Toad, she's going to catch you if you keep this up."

"Not with the Weasley twins helping me. You'd be amazed at just how easy this has been with their help, so far." Dylan looked up and saw Sina swoop down on the twin that had winked at her. "Besides, it's not like the Toad doesn't deserve it."

~oOo~

Fred pulled on Dylan's arm as soon as she appeared on the sixth floor staircase heading down to lunch. "I have something for you," he said quietly, as he casually descended the stairs beside her. He grabbed hold of her upper arm, and pulled her aside on the fifth floor corridor, which was emptying quickly as the students rushed off for lunch.

"George um, Fred..." Dylan stopped short and pulled her arm from his grasp. "What?"

"Fred," he said with a wicked smile. "I suppose we have made it rather hard for you to tell us apart. Okay, remember, our Nosebleed Nougats?" She shook her head. "I have two of them for you. Trust me, they work great."

"I can't do this," Dylan answered him, surprised by his actions. "I have to get rid of those creatures today. They are fully mature, and I can't keep them in my dorm room anymore."

"This way," he said roughly, dragging her along at a run. He pulled aside a tapestry exposing a narrow recess that led to a doorway and drew her inside. "So what happened?" he asked confused. "Did you chicken out?"

"No um, Fred?" Dylan said, lowering her head. In the cramped space her forehead nearly rested on his shoulder. "The last two in the big tank are *fully matured* now and are becoming vicious. The other fifteen or so in the other tank are not mature enough."

"Yes we established that already," he stated with a smirk. Dylan stifled a laugh at his response, pleased that she actually got his name right. "So we can still do the larger two, right?"

"It bit me yesterday," Dylan tried to explain. "Madame Pomfrey asked me how I had been bitten by a grindylow. It's mature now it would be..."

"Big deal. So we leave it in her loo," Fred interrupted her.

"The tank is *big*. I can't hide it in my pocket," she explained, "and I can't fit the grindylows in my jar. I tried. That's how I was bitten! Besides, I have to get rid of them anyway. Flitwick found out about my grindylows!"

"All right," he said, leaning against the stone wall. "Let's do it now you and me."

"You have to be kidding! Didn't you hear me?" she asked. "I'm expected to take them down to Professor Hagrid today so he can release them."

"Look, we'll go get the tank. I'll be helping you get it outside and..." He paused, considering. "Well we can at least get the thing down to the first corridor... and take it from there. We have the perfect excuse to have the creatures... It will work." Dylan stifled a laugh at his trail of thoughts. "I should give you this first," he suggested, handing her something that resembled two pieces of two-tone flavored candies.

"Are these the nougats? How much?" she asked, eyeing the candy that would make her nose bleed.

"There is something I've wanted to do since this whole thing started," he said, placing his hand on the wall by her head. "I'll accept this instead..."

"What?" she asked, looking up at him. In the dim light of the recessed doorway it was difficult to read the look in his eyes.

He gently placed his fingers under her chin, lifting her face, leaning in close to her. "This." His lips met hers with an intensity that sent shivers down her spine and made her head spin. When his kiss ended he brushed his cheek against hers. "I've been thinking about your kiss ever since that night."

Dylan was thankful for the semi darkness, because that way he couldn't see her blush. "You have?" she asked breathless.

"Yes," he said as he lifted her head again, his lips seductively teasing hers and then becoming firmer, more demanding. He leaned into her, pressing her against the wall. Not sure what to do with her hands, she placed them on his waist. When he seemed to pull back a bit, she opened her mouth to say something and his tongue slid across her lip before he deepened his kiss.

When he stopped, her breathing was ragged and she felt light headed. "We better go get your tank, before this gets out of hand," he finally said. Dylan still stunned, turned as he pulled back the tapestry to let her out, and he chuckled softly.

Back in her room, Dylan applied a sealing charm on the tank and an anti-spilling spell. The grindylows looked at her akin to loathing as she picked up the tank, after sealing the top to keep the creatures in. The engorged tank was awkward to carry, and she had a hard time navigating the stairs back to her common room and out the doorway.

Fred, who had waited in the corridor, laughed as she struggled with the tank. "Here, this should help," he said, flicking his wand, making the tank lighter.

"Now why didn't I think of that?" she admonished herself. Even with the help of his spell, Dylan still found that she needed his help to carry the engorged tank down the stairs, grateful he had volunteered to do so.

They had just managed to carry the tank to the first floor corridor when Fred spied Peeves floating in the direction of the classrooms. He quickly pulled out his wand. "Dylan, I've an idea, stop just by the loos, okay?" he asked, as he sent a bolt of light after Peeves, hitting the poltergeist in the back.

"Fred, no... not..." she said, and Peeves let out a squawk and turned to see them with the tank.

"Oh, naughty, naughty..." the poltergeist sang as he soared in their direction. "Caught you rightly... being rascally..."

Dylan was terrified. "Not Peeves, please... He'll..." she started to say as Peeves lifted the tank from them.

"Nice and mucky, simply slimy... Oh, this is messy..." he said in his sing-song voice, swinging the tank above their heads.

Fred quickly spelled both the boys' loo and the girls' loo doors wide open with two jabs of his wand, as Peeves lifted the tank to throw it. "Run," he said, trying to pull her along with him.

The large tank crashed, shattering on the floor as they started to leave. The mucky water splashed across the floor, and the two, now furious grindylows slid to opposite sides of the corridor. Dylan took one look back, stopping in stunned disbelief as one grindylow disappeared into the boys' loo, the other into the girls' on the opposite side of the corridor. Students, drawn to the noise, were all ready ducking for cover, as Peeves sailed away, laughing.

Fred quickly ducked into the History of Magic classroom, dragging her with him. "You could have told me you planned on using Peeves!" Dylan hissed, trying to quell the fear rising inside her. There were a few screams coming from the corridor behind them.

"Didn't have the time; however, it was perfect!" he said grinning.

"You call that *perfect*? We nearly got caught!" Dylan hissed. "Everyone will be finishing lunch right now, heading for class, and I do not have the grindylows! They are in the loos one in the boys' and the other in the girls'!"

"I know I opened up the doors for them. They will naturally be drawn to the only source of water the loos!" Stepping around the door, Fred checked to see if the coast was clear. "Nope, he's not around," he said, opening the door for her.

"What was that?" the sticky sweet voice of the Toad asked. Fred swore silently. "Who is not around, Mr. Weasley?"

"Peeves," Dylan answered, stepping out under Fred's arm, seeing Professor McGonagall walking toward them among the throng of students that were filling the corridor.

"Miss Avondale..." Umbridge eyed the remains of the mucky water that had splashed on their robes. "Caught in the act, I see."

"We," Dylan said, indicating Fred and herself, "were carrying my grindylow tank down to my Care of Magical Creatures class, when Peeves took my tank and dropped it. Fred pulled me away before he could drop the tank on us." Suddenly there was a shriek from the vicinity of the girls' loo.

"Grindylows?" Umbridge asked curiously. Two boys jumped back out of the boys' loo, obviously agitated. Several girls were now clustered outside the girls' loo. Their shrieks and screams could easily be heard mixing with several expletives from the boys.

"Yes," Dylan said, looking completely abashed, "Gransel and Gretel... for my project. I wanted to see how they matured. Professor Hagrid knows about them." She was surprised to see that somehow, Fred managed to keep a straight face.

"Do you mean to tell me you have been *studying* them?" Umbridge asked in total disbelief. Dylan pulled a notebook from her book bag and handed it to Professor Umbridge. "What's that?"

"My detailed entries of their life cycle, for my two grindylows," she said, looking Umbridge in the eyes. "Although, I don't mention them by name in my notes, I have documented their life cycle to date."

Umbridge scanned down the notebook and then closed it with a snap, thrusting it back at Dylan. "I do not believe you have been raising grindylows in your dorm room as a project. You have been raising them and leaving them in my class. Haven't you?" she sneered, her girlish smile evaporating. "Haven't you!" Dylan and Fred opened their

mouths to refute her claims, but she stopped them. "Not one word. I know it was you. Somehow you have... Detention! The both of you."

~~oOo~~

Author's Note:

When this story was written I hadn't read DH yet so I was unaware that the Room of Requirement cannot produce the three ice-cream sundaes as I have written in the story. But since this story is strictly OoTP compliant and the last chapter is partially HBP compliant I chose to leave in the ice-cream sundae scene as I wrote it. Mostly because it's cute and I like it.

Another Visit

Chapter 6 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

The MA(NC-17) rating is for the overall content of the story, and upcoming chapters.

Dylan stood in the corridor, watching the Toad walk away, feeling rather sick to her stomach and ready to..*What? Cry... or scream?* She felt like doing both.

"I can't believe she bought that," Fred stated, looking immensely pleased with himself, watching the Toad make her way through the students in the corridor. "She will have a demon of a time getting them out of the loos."

Dylan looked up at him in shock. "It got us in detention *again!*"

"Yes, but it will take her and Filch hours to get the two grindylows out of the loos," he said, controlling his face to mere amusement. "It was brilliant. Have you actually been recording the stages of the grindylows' growth?"

"Yes, it's why Professor Hagrid let me have the pond water in the first place," Dylan replied *Oh, dear Merlin. We've been caught, the Toad knows, this has to end.*

He suddenly became very serious. "What about the other tank? Do you still have them? Do you have to get rid of the others?"

The others... I'll have to get rid of the others.. "Disillusionment Charm and disguised as polliwogs in frog scum," Dylan answered him, slightly distracted. *Mum will be so angry with me detention again! My hand... the last lines have finally healed and I'm going to have to do more of them...*

"So you still have them?" he asked, breaking into her self admonishment.

Dylan simply said, "Yes," still berating herself for the predicament she was in. *Detention again... another detention... My hand will never heal I'll be scarred for life.*

"So, are we still on to do it in her loo?" he asked, looking at her, concerned.

She wanted to say no, that she was giving up, that they had done enough, that she just couldn't do it, and that she was afraid of getting expelled... What she did say was, "Oh, yes. Now I really want to get her back," a little surprised at the venom in her voice.

~oOo~

Dylan sat cross-legged on the floor in her favorite place in the library. All she could see through the window beside her was the deep cerulean blue sky and large, fluffy clouds. Several books floated in the air as she balanced her note pad on her knee. Idly she turned a page of *Magical Insects of the Known World* with a wave of her finger, then scanned the page, writing down the names and magical properties of the insects in her notes.

"Mary Ellen said she'd be here," Dylan heard one of the twins say from somewhere near her.

Startled from her studies, Dylan looked up, trying to determine where the guys were. *Are they looking for me?* she wondered.

"We need that stuff she promised us. Somehow she got all the elements we need, so we need her," the one who had spoken continued.

"But this agreement we have with her is taking too long," the other answered, obviously frustrated.

Dylan listened, feeling a bit surprised and hurt by the statement. *They only need me because of the elements and because I have the tadlowogs! I was hoping we'd become... friends.* They were only one aisle over, but the stone pillar that supported one of the gothic arches blocked them from view.

"When exactly are we going to get more of the stuff for the last prank you two pulled?"

So that must be George, Dylan assumed.

"I hoped to corner her and find out."

Fred, Dylan decided. *At least I can almost hear a difference in their voices*

She was about to call out to them when George asked, "Have you figured out the problem with that spell yet?"

"Almost," Fred answered. "No. It only works if the twigs are separate. I can charm the lot to grow, but they can't be mixed with the wet stuff. It works best with a twig or a branch that still has leaves for the trees, rather than just a leaf or a twig. Grasses, sedges and rushes work really well, and I can charm each one to grow under the same spell. The spell itself won't make the stuff grow, unless it's done individually."

"That isn't going to work," George said. There was a long pause. "What if we charm them and pack them separate? Ya know, we can have it in two parts..."

"That might work," Fed replied. "One part would produce the aquifer, the brackish, mud and mire... Then toss in the trees, grasses, rushes and sedges... Doing it in two parts... that would work."

"We need that stuff she has, *all of it*," George said frustrated. "This is taking too long. I wonder how she got the elements. The apothecary doesn't carry them."

Dylan was deciding if she should call out to them when she heard her name from the other direction. "Dylan?" Jolliet called from the aisle behind her. "Jeanie, I don't see her."

Dylan knew Fred and George wouldn't have wanted to be overheard by her friends. "She said she would be by the windows," Jeanie said, sounding much closer. She heard the twins swear softly from the other aisle confirming her suspicions. "Over here," Jeanie called out. "Dylan, why are you always so hard to find? Do you have your notes?"

"Yes," Dylan answered. "I found half a dozen books on the insects too." *Bugger, I hope they are not upset with me* she thought as her friends squeezed into the aisle to join her. *I should have said something, let them know I was here... but, yes... they should have the stuff.*

~oOo~

Dylan waited until she thought that her roommates had fallen asleep, reading quietly. The only other light came from a wax essence burner she had given Giselle for her birthday that illuminated the far side of the room. She set her book aside and slipped silently to her trunk, pulling out the containers of chemicals from under her robes. *At this point I have given them one or two containers of each chemical element, except for these four, she surmised. It's only fair... they need them; he said so.* Dylan bit softly on the inside of her lip, considering. *If I give them these four, at least they will have every element on the list that I got for them*

She pulled on her light blue dressing gown over the white tank and powder blue pajama bottoms and put the four containers in her pockets. Looking over her remaining containers, she added another gas element and turned to her mirror. The canisters thumped uncomfortably on her hips. *Thankfully I won't feel them when I transform.* With careful concentration she closed her eyes, exhaling deeply to locate and find her center, before melding into her Eurasian lynx form. Her soft amber-brown eyes looked back at her from the mirror, but the rest of her had successfully changed. *Well, at least I know what Professor McGonagall will register as my markings: my eye color and the small birthmark on my right hip.*

Tonight it was a bit more difficult to get to the Gryffindor common room. Her first obstacle was Professor Snape, who must have seen her movement across the adjoining corridor when she ran across the space. He fired a Stinging Hex after her that Dylan swerved just in time to miss, laughing after hearing him curse the fact that the castle had too many cats. *At least he didn't get a good enough look to be able to see that I'm not your average house cat or kneazle! He probably thought I was a kneazle a big-eared, long-legged, tailless kneazle.*

Her second obstacle was her house prefect, Williams, finishing his rounds at the top of the staircase on the sixth floor. Dylan had to wait until he finished locking lips with the Hufflepuff prefect, bidding her 'good night' at least four times. She could do little else but sit at the foot of the stairs waiting. After several long kisses, she even began to hope that Snape would come by. *Did I actually just hope to see Snape again I'm losing it tonight!* Finally the girl broke free, laughing, and turned to descend the stairs. Dylan crouched as low as she could, hoping that the kissed-dazed girl wouldn't see her. Just as the girl reached the lower steps, the Grey Lady floated down, and the two of them walked away, deeply engrossed in their conversation.

As Dylan ran up the staircase to the seventh floor, she had to hide from Mrs. Norris. She quickly stopped and turned down the corridor in the opposite direction she wanted. Unfortunately, Mrs. Norris saw her and gave chase. Dylan slipped behind a tapestry, and turned about, facing the on-coming cat, ready to pounce on her if necessary. Mrs. Norris peeked into the space between the tapestry and the wall after her. With a wicked grin, Dylan swatted Mrs. Norris on her nose, scaring the snobby cat, who ran off, probably to find Filch. Afraid to run into Filch, because he might recognize her Amimagus form, Dylan ran the rest of the way to the Gryffindor tower.

Finally at the portrait of the Fat Lady, Dylan was so nervous that she almost scratched the delicate canvas when she put a tentative paw on her skirt to wake her. The lady, startled awake, scolded her, but allowed her entry. By the time Dylan eased into the dorm room on the second landing, she was as nervous and jumpy as Professor Quirrell had been.

She crossed easily to the beds where she knew Fred and George slept, laughing softly in remembrance of her last visit in this room. The bed on her right was empty, the covers neatly folded back to the foot of the bed. The other bed on her right, the occupant was soundly asleep. *Last time I chose the bed on the left, that bed, and it turned out to be Fred, so this must be George unless they switch beds as frequently as they switch jumpers.* She changed back, standing in the space between the beds, looking at the sleeping guy. *Now I finally get him all by himself... and with a good probability that he actually is George... Where is Fred? I thought that they did everything together*

She gently nudged his shoulder, and George grunted, one leg stretched out and he rolled over onto his side facing away from her. "George," she said softly, and he only grunted. *Great! He's fast asleep. I wonder if he sleeps deeper than his brother? Fred had been easy to wake up!* She tried to wake him again gently, then stood up, the six containers banging heavily against her hip. She pulled off her dressing gown and laid it gently on Fred's bed. *If I startle him awake, I don't want the nitrogen exploding if he tackles me, or worse curses me.*

Just as she stood up to consider her options, either try to wake George again, or to simply leave the canisters on Fred's bed, strong arms wrapped around her, pulling her into an embrace. "Snuck in here to see me again, have you?" His arms were slightly damp.

Dylan suppressed the instinct to scream out as he nuzzled against her neck, his wet hair tickling her. "I came here, it to see you," she faltered.

"I can see that," he chuckled. His hair and skin had a mixture of herbal scents that filled the air around him.

"You were not in your bed," she said, her tone slightly accusing, even in her own ears. *Brilliant, state the obvious.* "Where were you?" *You're being thick, Dylan. You can guess where he was taking a bath!*

"Taking a bath in the Prefects' bathroom," he said in her ear.

Dylan tried to turn around in his arms, eliciting a chuckle. "You know where it is? How to get in there...?" She suddenly realized that he was wearing only a grey T-shirt over his pajama bottoms, his wet hair making his collar damp. He'd draped his towel on the foot of his bed, next to her dressing gown.

"Obviously," he said amused. "It's on the fifth floor, the fourth door after the statue of Boris the Bewildered. If you'd like I could show you; I wouldn't mind taking another bath."

"But you're not a prefect!" she said, her voice rising despite her resolve to keep quiet.

George stirred in his bed, as well as two of the room's other occupants. "Weasley, pipe it down, will you!" a sleepy, disgruntled voice growled from across the room, simultaneously with a, "Gees, Weasley, stuff a sock in it!" from the bed near the door.

He ignored the aggravated statements from his dorm mates. "All you need is to know which door it is, and the password, and you're in. The door has a lock we'd have privacy."

"Fred! I'm not going to take a bath with you," she exclaimed in a loud hiss.

"Hush, you don't really want to wake everyone," he said, "unless you want me to wake George. Do you want me to wake George?"

"I'm already awake," George mumbled from his bed. "Hard to sleep with you and her going on like that."

Dylan tried to step back away from Fred's embrace, her cheeks flushing hotly. "I came here to talk to you about Wednesday. I can't do it I'm sorry." She suddenly felt uncertain. "Maybe we should talk tomorrow," she suggested.

"And scratch a really good plan?" George asked, getting out of bed and looking at her, disappointed.

"We need that stuff," Fred stated. Dylan nodded, about to explain her reason for being in their room again and was cut off by Fred. "All right, you said that the tadlowgs were not mature enough yet, right? So, how much longer until we can do the rest?"

"At least another week better yet, two," she said. Fred crossed his arms and leaned against the bedpost, seriously considering the delay. George on the other hand looked rather annoyed. *They have helped me get back at the Toad; it's only fair.* "Look, you have been really great about all this, and I've had a blast pulling these pranks on the Toad with you..."

"We really need that stuff," Fred stated again, cutting her off a second time.

"I don't suppose you'd tell me what for?" she asked. Fred tilted his head and raised his eyebrows while George let out a big sigh looking away. "I suppose not. Okay, as I was saying, you've really done more than enough to earn the stuff anyway, and as much as I really like doing these pranks with you, I think you deserve to have them."

Both guys stared at her, dumfounded. George found his voice first. "You mean it?"

"Yes," she said, "with a condition."

"Oh yeah like what?" Fred asked, exasperated.

"First, promise me we will still pull off the plan for her loo," she said, "and secondly promise that whatever you are planning to do with the stuff, I at least get to see it, and that it's not against Ravenclaw."

Fred started to laugh. "That is three conditions." He held up a hand cutting off any retort from either George or Dylan. "Yes, we will still pull off the plan for the Toad's loo. I'd hate to give up a perfectly good plan, especially a prank as good as that one. As for your second request, if it goes off as we plan; you won't be able to miss it. And no it's not against Ravenclaw... exactly."

"Okay, so we are on then, right?" George asked. "We'll infest Umbridge's loo a week from Wednesday, just as we planned."

Dylan shook her head. "Fred and I have a week of detentions with Umbridge..."

"Actually, I believe we have detention with Filch," Fred cut in. Dylan looked at him in utter terror.

"Which is a good thing," George stated when she looked at him worriedly.

"But he hangs students in the dungeons by their *toes!*" she said unable to control her concern. One of their roommates stirred and grumbled.

"No, he doesn't," Fred said, laughing at her reaction. "Haven't you ever had a detention with him before?"

"The only detentions I've had have been because I spoke up in the Toad's class," she replied.

"That was your only detention in six and a half years?" George said incredulously.

"Well, and one with Professor Lupin when I screamed and ducked behind him in class, avoiding a Stunning hex and accidentally setting his shoe on fire. And twice with Professor Snape: first in second year when my potion boiled over and spilled on the floor, and the other in fourth year when Professor Snape scared me and I dropped my vial on his boots." Dylan looked down at her hands. "Then there was the Boggart incident in the library my first year. I um, don't handle Boggarts well. Professor Flitwick let me do that detention with him, instead of with Filch."

"And this year, you've had detentions with Flitwick frequently," George stated.

I can't tell him it's to practice stuff from my brother's notes on Defensive spells... No one is supposed to know but us Ravenclaws... "He has us sit in his classroom and, um study," Dylan said.

"So, when do we get our stuff?" Fred asked.

"Oh! That's why I came here tonight." She grabbed her gown and started pulling out the canisters.

"I thought that you came here to see me," Fred teased.

Dylan straightened up holding up two large bottles marked 'leave in conditioner' and 'styling gel.' "I did!"

George took the containers as she turned to pull two more from dressing robe pockets. "Maybe you'd like me to pull my curtains closed and give you some privacy?" Dylan turned back to him abruptly, her eyes wide.

"Actually, I believe we were going to take a swim in the Prefects' bathroom," Fred said, placing the containers in his trunk. "I'm sure it would be okay if you came along."

"I thought that you already had your bath?" George stated with a wicked grin.

"I did," Fred admitted. "But one can never be too clean, right, Dylan? Are you up for a swim?"

"Fred, I ah... maybe no I should, um..." Dylan stammered.

"She *is* getting to the point where she can tell us apart," George said, amused.

"You were able to conjure a pig with wings a few nights ago and once I added the Levitation charm on him, he did fly," Fred said. "So we can give you your flying pigs, Dylan!"

"Doubt Fudge will turn the reins over to Dumbledore though," George said with a smirk. "He's been pretty paranoid that Dumbledore will take over his job. Somehow I don't think he'd actually agree."

"So, Dylan, we are still only two out of three? Isn't that good enough?" Fred teased, stepping closer to her. "You have us both wide awake and at your disposal. Don't suppose you'd be up for that shag? Or... at the very least we could take a nice dip in the tub in the Prefects' bathroom? It's truly amazing you'll love it."

"To quote you, 'When pigs fly, Dumbledore is Minister of Magic and you finally can sort out which of us is which.' Been working on the identify thing," George said, "but really, once we get you into it I'm sure you'll loose track anyway so the names won't really matter. Besides I don't mind if you call me Fred."

"It's really late." Dylan was starting to feel nervous.

"Yes it is." Fred eyed her as she tried to ease her way away from their beds. "But we'll make sure you won't mind a bit!" he stated reassuringly.

"I should go... I just wanted to bring you and I have so I'll just go," Dylan stammered. She turned to face George. "I'm sorry to have woken you, George."

"Not a problem," he answered with a shake of his head, grinning like he was trying to keep from laughing at her. Dylan knew she was blushing, because her cheeks felt very hot.

"Dylan, why don't I walk you down," Fred suggested, picking up her dressing gown and holding it up for her.

Dylan stepped into her gown gratefully. "Thank you," she said softly. George climbed back into his bed, laughing quietly. She just caught Fred's wink at his brother before he turned back to her, indicating for her to lead the way.

The common room was silent as they entered, the only light was from the dying fire in the grate, bathing half the room in a warm glow. Fred walked her past the array of plush chairs to the hole in the wall. "Thanks for bringing us the stuff. We really needed it and well..."

"It was taking too long to do the pranks. I overheard you in the library," she admitted. "I would have said something, but my friends showed up and..."

"I remember," he said. "Well, good night."

"Good night," she replied back shyly. She had to stifle a laugh. *This is just like Williams and his girlfriend.* "Night."

Dylan closed her eyes to find her core, felt a hand touch her face and opened her eyes just before Fred's lips landed on her mouth. As before, his kiss was strong and breath-taking as his lips claimed hers. She sighed, leaning into him, placing a hand on his chest for balance. He chuckled as his arms wrapped around her. Dylan nearly fell and her other hand slid up his arm to his shoulder for support.

His kiss became teasing caresses across her lips, and she opened her mouth slightly to speak, breathless, but the words *I really need to get back you know* was smothered when he deepened the kiss. He pulled her tighter against his body, and by their own accord both of her arms encircled him, relying on him to keep them both from falling over.

When he suddenly stopped kissing her, Dylan opened her eyes slowly, her heart racing, her breathing heavy, feeling unsteady and like Snitches bounced around in her stomach. Fred traced her face with his finger, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear. "You should go. We have detention together tonight," he said.

"Uh, uh," she murmured, not wanting him to let go of her yet.

"I know Professor Snape and Filch are patrolling the corridors tonight. I wouldn't want you to get caught," he stated. He wrapped his arms around her waist, leaning back slightly to look her in the eye. "Are you going to change into your Animagus form to get back, or do I need to see you safely back to your dorm room?"

"I was going to change when you kissed me," she stated demurely.

"Were you? So you don't need me to walk you to your dorm. They won't catch you?" he asked.

She looked up at him. "They won't see me if I change I can run all the way and my paws don't make any noise."

"That's a good thing to know," he said, grinning at her. "Too bad we didn't know that about you sooner. We could have so much fun with you, pulling stuff off around the castle." She looked up at him, biting her lip, so he kissed her again, placing soft teasing kisses on her mouth and licking her bottom lip.

When he stopped, she inhaled and opened her eyes. Unconsciously, her tongue swept her lower lip to taste him. The corner of his mouth turned up as he watched her reaction. "Most of the professors know about my form, Professor Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, Hagrid... but I don't think Filch knows." She cocked her head, regarding him. "Professor Snape usually thinks I'm a kneazle, and Mrs. Norris is usually afraid of me, unless Filch is close by... I'm not sure about the others. But my night vision is great and my hearing it's how I avoid trouble."

"I'll keep that in mind," he said, drawing her into an embrace again, placing a kiss on her temple. "What kind of cat are you? I thought you were a kneazle at first but you look different no tail."

"A Eurasian Lynx, surprisingly enough related to a kneazle although not as magical. They can't be heard unless they want to be..." She paused as he leaned in to kiss her neck, around and just under her ear, breaking her concentration on what she was saying. "A-and they can make themselves blend sort of... camouflage to match the rocks and stuff..." A soft moan escaped her throat. "Ah, Muggles think that they are nearly extinct."

"Can I watch you change?" he asked, trailing his kiss from her neck, up to her cheek.

"That's what I was doing when you kissed me," she murmured, nearly a purr.

"Oh," he said against her ear, "sorry about that." She pulled away, looking at him in disbelief. "Not about the kiss I meant I thought you closed your eyes so that ~~would~~ kiss you... I thought you wanted me too." He gave her one last kiss, cupping her face in his hand.

Dylan smiled and bit her lip. "No I mean, um, yes... I you surprised me... I really should go." Fred let go of her and took a step back. Dylan closed her eyes, opening them briefly to see if he was going to let her change. He chuckled again, and she closed her eyes to concentrate on her center. Finding the energy there, she let herself meld into it and become her lynx form.

When she opened her eyes, he smiled down at her. "I really should learn how to do that," he said as he opened the portrait for her. Dylan gave him a wink and ran out of the hole into the dark corridor.

*~*****~*

Author's Notes:

I owe a big debt of gratitude to Juliannanight, Charmed3, Notsosaintly for all their hard work and time in cleaning this story up and making it presentable. Thank you both. I

appreciate it more than either of you can know.

The Fireworks

Chapter 7 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

The next morning Mary Ellen, Jeannie and Jolliet jumped on Dylan's bed, waking her up. "Where were you last night?" Jolliet asked, grinning from ear to ear.

"Wha... I was in bed," Dylan said, stretching.

"Uh-uh," Mary Ellen said, shaking her head. "I saw you sneak out. I couldn't sleep with all of your thrashing around and I watched you transform." Mary Ellen settled down at the foot of Dylan's bed, hugging her pillow.

"Yeah, and lately you have been practically singing and grinning like a Cheshire cat." Jolliet nudged Dylan to move over so she could sit down next to her. Dylan pulled herself up to face her friends. "So give... Where did you go and what did you do?"

"Like a what?" Dylan asked, confused, shifting over for Jolliet.

"She means a Clabbert," Jeannie stated, "or that grinning cat in that Muggle book of hers the girl that falls down the rabbit hole."

"*Alice in Wonderland* and I like that story!" Jolliet said. "You're changing the subject. Where did you go last night? You had a secret liaison, didn't you? And he kissed you, didn't he?"

"How can you know that? I just... um," Dylan stammered. She looked at her two best friends and grinned at their expectant faces. "Okay, you got me yes, I snuck out last night."

"Ooohhh, I knew it! You like someone I can tell! So deny it you were with a guy," Mary Ellen squealed. "Who is it? Who'd you meet?"

Jolliet looked from Mary Ellen to Dylan, her brow furrowed. "What about Jonathan Mondragon. I thought you liked him?" she asked. "He asked about you again after dinner."

"No, that's been over for ages," Dylan said off-handily. "I went to see Fred and George Weasley, if you really must know."

"No!" all three girls exclaimed surprised.

"Dylan, whatever for? I thought that thing with the grindylows was done?" Mary Ellen asked, dropping her pillow.

"So where did you meet them? I heard Snape was on patrol," Jolliet asked, eager for the gossip. "I heard Williams telling MacClennan that Snape took points from him for snogging his girlfriend last night."

"Yeah, Snape knows all the good places," Mary Ellen said with a slight pout, then looked up at Jolliet and Dylan innocently, undaunted. "Well, he does!"

Dylan laughed at her, and Mary Ellen grabbed her foot through the covers, giving it a shake. "I went up to Gryffindor tower and..."

"NO!" Jeannie screeched in shock, as Mary Ellen cried, "No, you didn't! How did you get in?"

"So did they kiss you?" Jolliet asked.

"Jolliet!" Dylan exclaimed stunned, blushing a deep pink, then tried to laugh it off. "I went to their room to give them the stuff my dad gave me. You know for helping me get even with the *Toad*," she tried to explain and to redirect the conversation.

"You didn't! The Weasley twins in their room!" Mary Ellen said as Jolliet asked, "You were in their room? With both of them?"

"So which one kissed you?" Jeannie asked as Jolliet asked simultaneously, "Did you kiss one or both?" Mary Ellen looked at Jolliet in disbelief. Jolliet simply shrugged her shoulders, rolling her eyes, smiling.

Dylan, however, ducked her head, blushing even deeper. "She did! Look, Mary Ellen, she did! Which one or am I right, you snogged both?" Jolliet pried.

Mary Ellen's mouth dropped open, and then she made a choked laugh, looking at Dylan shocked. "So give which one kissed you?" Jeannie asked undeterred, her eyes bright and sparkling.

Dylan sighed, knowing that her friend would not relent. "Okay, Fred kissed me in their common room when he walked me down." Dylan said, then bit her lip as her friends squealed and laughed.

"So, was it nice?" Jolliet asked. "Is he a good kisser, or what?"

"Jollie!" Mary Ellen laughed and hit Jolliet with her pillow.

"Oh, yes...!" Dylan closed her eyes a moment to remember the kiss. "Oh, good goddess, he can *really* kiss!" she confessed, leaning over with a moan, her head falling

onto Jolliet's shoulder.

"Maybe I should get you to match me up with George!" Jolliet said, smirking, wrapping her arm around Dylan. "So come on, details I want details! You're holding out on me. When did this thing with Fred Weasley start?"

~oOo~

Detention with Filch turned out to be not quite as bad as Dylan had been dreading it would be. As soon as she and Fred arrived at the first floor corridor between the girls' loo and the boys', Filch arrived, followed by a house-elf, both of them pushing buckets of soapy water with a mop.

"So there you are," Filch said. "You are to mop up both of these loos. I want them sparkling." Fred looked at the mop in his bucket rather dubiously. "Yes, Mr. Weasley, you are to use the mop and bucket, just like I have to. You are to clean the boys' loo." Filch shoved a mop and bucket at Dylan. "You get to do the girls' loo; now get on with it!"

Fred took his bucket and mop and angrily pushed the bucket into the boys' loo. Dylan carried hers into the girls, looking around *Four stalls. Four sinks. Okay.* Starting in a far corner, Dylan began to mop the floor, making wide sweeps with her mop. Stopping at each stall to wipe the outside of the toilets down with the really large rectangular sponge in her bucket, and moved to the next stall. It wasn't too different from cleaning her bathroom at home only times four and she didn't have to pick up any piled and tossed laundry, wet towels, assorted bath toys, or clean up a bathtub.

She was wiping down the sinks when Fred peeked in on her. "Hey, how did you get so much done so fast?"

"What's the problem, wizard doesn't know how to use a mop?" she said cheekily.

"Well, I..." he stammered. "We only have to pick up, and then mum uses her wand at home."

Dylan tilted her head, appraising him. "If you help wipe down the sinks, I'll help you mop the loo." He nodded and entered the loo. It took no time at all to finish. "Okay, your turn let's go," she said, laughing at his confounded stare. "No problem, its fine really," she added, pointing at the door to the boys' loo. When Dylan entered the boys' loo she was surprised to see four urinals, four toilets and five sinks. The floor was damp, but it was obvious that he hadn't really done much. "I need to refill my bucket," she stated.

Immediately the house-elf was back. "Miss, you is in boys' loo," the elf stated, alarmed. "Miss is to do girls' loo."

"I'm done. I mopped that one already. I need more soapy water," Dylan said. The elf looked into her bucket, picked it up and disappeared. Seconds later the elf was back struggling with the bucket full to the brim with soapy water. "Oh, my gosh! You are amazing!" she exclaimed. The elf looked up at her pleased. "Okay, grab your mop and let's get to it, Mr. Weasley," she said in a mock order. She dragged Fred and his mop to the far corner and began sweeping the soapy water in wide sweeps with her own mop. "Come on I said help not do," she chided him.

"Argh," he growled, slopping the floor with his mop.

Stopping at the first urinal Dylan wiped it down and scowled. She pulled out her wand and uttered her mum's favorite cleaning spell, then did the next one. "We aren't supposed to use magic," he stated.

"Mr. Filch said we are to *mop* the loos. He didn't say I couldn't use magic on the urinals and toilets! Besides, I'd rather be doing something else besides cleaning loos all night," she said. "How about doing the same thing I am on the toilets?"

"How about I swipe them with the mop and you swish and flick them clean?" he suggested, using his best little boy smile.

"I'll help, remember?" she reminded him. Fred grunted. "What was that exactly?" she asked with a grin. He gave her an irked smile and began mopping the floor.

Dylan finished the last urinal, smiling, and then dumped her bucket, asking the elf for a refill, and turned to see Fred entering the third toilet. Dylan checked each stall, magically cleaning them and met up with him in the last stall. Not realizing she was standing right behind him, or that the elf replaced both buckets with fresh ones, Fred accidentally whacked Dylan's legs with his mop. "Hey, watch it," she admonished him, grabbing her sponge from her fresh bucket and chucking it at him.

Wrong move! Fred quickly grabbed her sponge and turned to chuck it back, but she ducked out. Suddenly a very wet sponge landed in the middle of her back. Dylan dipped her hand in her bucket and flicked water at him. He reached down and grabbed the sponge from his new bucket and threw it at her, hitting her waist, soaking her. She grabbed and dunked his sponge, throwing it back, and then found her own. Fred slapped her with his wet sponge on her shoulder as she tried to squish hers in his chest. Before long they were flinging water at each other with sponges and wands in complete abandon.

"Miss... Mister...!" the house-elf cried, dodging a poorly aimed spray of water. "You is making a mess!"

Dylan stood and turned, staring at the house-elf as Fred doused her side with a burst from his wand. "Oh, please don't tell," she pleaded, suddenly feeling embarrassed by the mess they'd been making. "You know that we could *never* clean a bathroom as well as a house-elf can even with magic. It just simply is *not possible*. House-elves are just too *good* at cleaning!"

The elf stood there staring at Dylan, not sure how to take her comment, finally deciding she'd given the house-elf a compliment, and smiled. "You is going to have to get up the water before Mr. Filch sees!"

Both Fred and Dylan froze at the elf's reprimand. "I suppose we could siphon it back into the buckets," Fred suggested, drying his robes and shoes, and then attempting a Cleaning Charm on himself. Dylan also attempted to quickly clean and dry her robes. Together they began trying to siphon all the soapy water off the floor. Before long the floor was cleaned up. "So we are done?" Fred asked grinning.

"So now what?" Dylan asked. "Do we wait for Filch to return?"

"I is to tell him when you is done, Miss," the elf stated.

"So then we are done," Dylan said smiling. "Thank you, by the way. I really appreciate all your help."

"I is happy to do it, Miss," the elf stammered, smiling, and bowed, then disappeared again with the buckets and sponges.

Fred grabbed Dylan's hand. "Let's get out of here, c'mon!"

"Where are we going?" Dylan asked, trying to keep up with him as they ran up the stairs to the fourth floor.

"Someplace I bet you've never been," he said, smirking, pulling her with him down a corridor. He took a staircase down a floor, turned a corner and went up three flights of stairs, before running down a long corridor.

"Where are we?" she asked as he stopped and opened up a concealed door, ushering her up a narrow spiraling staircase.

"We're near the southeast corner of the castle," he said as they climbed the spiral stairs. "There is one wide step just above you; stop and let me catch up." Dylan nodded and waited on the step. It was barely wide enough for him stand next to her. "*Expositus*," he said. The door opened to him, and he ushered her inside.

The circular room was small, with several large open windows that took up two-thirds of the circular walls. Fred took her hand and guided her to one of the windows. The sky was darkening, the sun having already dipped below the mountain ridge. Below her she could see the lights of the castle reflected on the lake. She stood transfixed at just how beautiful the sight was.

"If we move over to the next one, you can see Hogsmeade from here," he said, breaking into her reverie. She smiled up at him and followed his lead. Standing at the open window looking out, the tiny lights of the village showed up like jewels upon black velvet. The dusky sky was already filling with stars, and the night breeze wafted in, carrying with it the smell of the forest trees.

"It's so beautiful," she said in a breathy whisper.

He wrapped his arms around her from behind and hugged her. "I'm glad you like it," he said softly. She leaned her head against his shoulder, gazing at the darkening sky, and he kissed her temple.

"I must reek!" she exclaimed, surprised by his kiss.

"No worse than I do," he said as she stood up and turned to face him. "You really don't smell that bad honestly." He removed his robes, hanging them on an unlit sconce. "Want to get out of your robe?" he asked softly, his eyes dancing wickedly.

Dylan simply shook her head, knowing that the thin white shirt under her robes was still slightly damp, even after her attempts to dry off. "No, I'm fine, thank you."

Fred leaned down to kiss her, and Dylan tilted her head up to kiss him back. His arms wrapped around her waist, drawing her closer to him, and she slid her hands up his arms to his shoulders, enjoying the warmth of his embrace. He leaned against the window, pulling her with him, slightly unbalancing her, and she adjusted her feet, finding herself pressed against his body.

His hands slid up her side while he deepened his kiss, and one hand gently cupped her breast. Dylan gasped in protest, eliciting a soft chuckle from him. "Look, I won't go any further than you want to," he murmured against her ear, placing teasing nibbles just below her earlobe. Dylan closed her eyes, enjoying the light headiness he was causing.

When he straightened up to kiss her again, she noticed that he'd managed to open her robes and his hands slipped inside; warm and firm even through the thin material of her blouse. "Your shirt is nice," he said, "Soft and silky."

"Thank you," she said, slightly breathless. As they kissed Fred kept playing with her buttons, trying to open her blouse, and she pushed his hands down. It was a losing battle; as it was, he still managed to open half of her buttons with his dexterous fingers. "Fred, I'm... not oh... ready for this..." she stammered, trying to regain her composure desperately. Her breathing was heavy, and he was causing sensations that shot through her in unexpected places.

"Are you sure?" he asked in a soft low voice. She nodded desperately. "I should get you back to your common room then."

"It's really late. You don't have to walk me to my dorm," she protested, the room suddenly becoming quite cold now that he had released her. "You don't have the advantage I do. I don't want you to get caught."

"I want to," he replied firmly. "Beside, I know this castle really well. I won't get caught it'll be fine." He grabbed his robe and guided her from the turret, down the stairs and along the corridor and down a flight of stairs and into the corridor that led to her common room. He stopped just outside the portrait, still holding her hand. "I have something to do tomorrow, but maybe you'd like to get together Tuesday after dinner?" he asked.

"Yes, sure, I'd like that," she replied, feeling a flutter in her stomach because he wanted to see her again.

He cupped her face, placing a simple kiss on her lips then pulled away, his hand caressing her cheek. "Goodnight, my pretty little raven," he said before he turned and ran away.

~o0o~

Breakfast on Tuesday in the Great Hall was completely buzzing with rumors about Dumbledore having been sacked. Apparently, either the Toad tried to expel Harry Potter for breaking her decrees, or the Headmaster had been involved in undermining the Ministry. There were some that said that both Umbridge and Fudge trumped up the charges against Dumbledore because the Toad wanted to be Headmistress of Hogwarts and Fudge was afraid that Dumbledore wanted to be Minister of Magic and would overthrow him. What everyone knew for certain was that Dumbledore fired off only a two spells and easily overcame two Aurors, the Toad, the Minister of Magic and his Junior Assistant to escape.

Dylan heard that Dumbledore simply Apparated, although she knew that was impossible; *Hogwarts A History* said so. One boy said he transformed into an owl and flew away, and then later said Dumbledore became a great eagle. There were stories that Dumbledore gave the Minister of Magic horns, or turned him into a horklump, or that Fudge was vomiting up lemon drops by the buckets, had sharkskin, swollen appendages and covered in boils. Dylan discounted most of the ridiculous rumors, hardly believing that the kind, fatherly Dumbledore would hex or curse the Minister of Magic. *He probably simply Stunned everyone or did a Body-Bind, and walked out the door, and the Ministry would be too embarrassed to admit the truth. I doubt even the Daily Prophet will print what really happened.* The only person that everyone agreed knew the whole story was Harry Potter, and Dylan didn't know him well enough to ask. *But Fred will know; his brother Ron is Harry's best mate. He will know for sure*

One rumor that Dylan really liked was that the stone gargoyle that guarded the Headmaster's office would not recognize Umbridge's authority, and refused to let her into the office. *I can just picture the Toad standing in front of the stone gargoyle, yelling at him to let her in, stomping her feet, jumping up and down; that stupid bow on her head bobbing, with her face all red and her mouth stretched out like a grindylo! Priceless!*

In Dylan's first class there were notes being passed and whispers among the students. Professor Flitwick was so angry about Dumbledore that, as long as they managed to Disillusion each other, he didn't care what they did. However, in Potions, Professor Snape was in a really foul mood and nobody uttered one word. He took points from Dewbrane simply for being the last to sit down, and Crandall was docked points for having an ink mark in his Potions book. But as soon as Professor Snape dismissed the class, everyone ran from the room and gossip and rumors abound from nearly everyone.

"Dylan, did you hear?" Joanne Kauffman confronted Dylan and her friends in the corridor. "Umbridge appointed an Inquisitorial Squad! A group of students who support what the Ministry is doing and they are all from Slytherin!" Twelve students all stopped in their tracks around Dylan, she simply stared at Joanne in disbelief. "That's not all they can deduct points from anyone they want to. They took thirty points from Gryffindor and twenty from Hufflepuff after breakfast and another forty from Gryffindor this morning for stupid stuff!"

The first thing that Dylan noticed in the Great Hall during lunch was that the Headmaster's chair was unoccupied. The second thing was the sour looks on most of the professors' faces. The third thing was that Fred and George were late to lunch... and Harry Potter was not at the Gryffindor table. "Oh gods! She's going to expel Harry Potter!" she said, aghast.

"What?" Jolliet asked.

"She's right!" Mary Ellen exclaimed. "He's not in the hall and the *Toad* isn't here either!"

Jeannie passed the pumpkin juice to Jolliet. "But then he gets into loads of trouble, doesn't he?" she said.

"Trouble seems to hunt him out as well. I mean, first Vol ah, Vol..." Her friends all flinched. "Okay, You-Know-Who, he tried to kill Harry Potter, then the Basilisk his second

year, and his third year that escaped convict, Black, tried to get him," Dylan listed off in his defense.

"Rumors were that the imposter Professor Moody put Harry's name in the Goblet of Fire to kill him," Jolliet said.

"Everything does seem to happen to him," Jeannie stated. "But it also seems like he goes looking for trouble too."

Dylan helped herself to the potatoes. "Personally, I think he's unlucky well, lucky enough to get out of sticky situations, but all Vol... He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named's supporters still want to do him in!"

"The article in *The Quibbler* said that the imposter Moody was a Death Eater and he made the trophy a Portkey to send Harry Potter to He-Who-Must-N..." Mary Ellen was saying when suddenly...

BOOM

There was a huge explosion from somewhere inside the castle.

The floor shook violently; the windows rattled; even the tables and benches seemed to bounce, making many of the goblets spill, and some students tumbled from their seats. The students screamed; some ducked under the tables, and others ran for the doors. All the professors jumped up instantly. Professor Snape pointed his wand at his throat and hollered, "*SILENCE*," then ordered everyone to sit as Professors McGonagall, Snape and Flitwick forced their way from the Great Hall and out into the Entrance Hall. Professors Sinistra, Sprout, Vector, Wey, Stilfield, and Hagrid walked down the tables, Hagrid yelling over the noise for prefects to help keep their houses together until they had word.

Finally Professor McGonagall appeared and announced that several fireworks had been let off in the castle, but it was safe enough to attend classes. Oddly, she looked amused rather than angry.

Heading to their common room, Dylan and her housemates were suddenly trapped between a dragon firework comprised of green and gold sparks and a huge shocking pink Catherine wheel. "I'll get them," MacClennan declared, drawing his wand, and together with her house prefect, Williams, they tried to Vanish them. Chaos and mayhem broke out as the fireworks divided *by ten, each* sending the Ravenclaw students stumbling and scrambling, to either fall face down on the corridor or to curl up tightly in groups along the walls. "Okay! Nobody Vanish them it doesn't work!" MacClennan yelled down the corridor,

"No kidding, *Filbert the Fearful*, did you figure that one out all by yourself?" Jeannie admonished MacClennan, pulling down his wand arm.

"It would appear that wasn't the best thing to do," Williams admitted, still trying to sound as if he had the situation under control, getting up and brushing off his robes.

"Well, at least they've moved on," MacClennan said as the twenty or so fireworks made their way from the corridor.

Trying to get to class, Dylan and about twenty students were trapped in the third corridor as two sparkling dragon shaped fireworks soared in from either end of the corridor, and rockets ricocheted over their heads. Several of the older students tried Vanishing the dragons or Stunning them to get by, instantly multiplying the two dragons into thirty and the few rockets into nearly as many if not more, plus setting off a myriad of explosions as the Stunners hit. Dylan and her friends cowered in a doorway until it seemed safe enough to get to class.

By late afternoon everyone was pretty much used to having rockets shooting overhead, pink Catherine wheels bouncing along the ceilings and dragons soaring along the corridors. Twice, Dylan even saw glittering pink and silver-winged pigs flying loops in lazy circles, which made her smile. The second time one passed by her, she hit the sparkling pig with a couple of Vanishing spells just to see it multiply.

By time the toll rang for dinner, Dylan still hadn't seen Fred anywhere and was feeling a little down. She did see Fred and George at the Gryffindor table at dinner, talking animatedly with their housemates, and twice they glanced up and smiled at her.

"All right, Dylan, what gives? You're being awfully quiet," Jolliet asked as they sat in the common room doing homework trying to ignore the sparkler over head that twirled in the air writing 'Bugger' over and over.

"Yeah," Jeannie said. "You even turned down your favorite chocolate custard."

"Nothing," Dylan replied, forcing a smile. Jolliet cocked her eyebrow, giving her a disbelieving smirk. Mary Ellen, on her other side, placed a hand on her back with a questioning look. "Just thinking about something I hoped to do tonight." She stood up. "I'm going to the library, care to join?" Her friends shook their heads.

"MacClennan and I are going to meet up and revise together," Jeannie stated.

Jolliet rolled her eyes again. "Revise my foot. I'd stay away from the west battlement tonight if I were you."

"Yeah, that's the first place Snape checks on his patrols," Mary Ellen said with a pout. "It's the best place to watch the sunset..."

"I'll keep that in mind," Dylan stated as she rose from the table.

In the library, a pair of rockets zoomed around the ceiling and Madam Pince was in a fit trying to protect her books, obviously aware that she couldn't Vanish, Stun or use water to extinguish them. Dylan stood at the door, and then changed her mind. She turned and saw Fred leaning against the wall in the corridor with his arms crossed, nearly giving her a fright. "Are you trying to ditch me?" he asked, regarding her with a speculative look.

"What? No! I didn't know where we were going to meet or when... so I thought I'd get a book, but... um... There are rockets in the library," she stammered, trying to explain.

"They got in there too? Cool," he said grinning.

Dylan laughed softly and looked at him, mildly surprised. "They're your fireworks, aren't they?"

"Of course they are," he stated proudly. "You had any doubt?"

"They're wonderful! Did you make the flying pink and silver pigs for me?" she asked.

He grinned mischievously. "Especially for you," he replied, stood up and regarded her. "So where were you headed, if I may ask?"

She shrugged, biting her lip, looking up at him. He laughed at her softly. "Follow me then," he said, taking her hand. Nearly back at her common room, he stopped at a heavily framed painting of the famous Arithmancer, Bridget Wenlock, tapping on her frame seven times. The painting opened, revealing a flight of stairs, and he guided Dylan up and along a corridor until they stood at the open door to the spiral staircase that led up to the southeast turret.

Fred opened the door to the turret and Dylan slipped inside. Crossing to the windows, she leaned out to watch a pair of dragon fireworks soar over the lake, and slightly below her, a glittering pink and silver pig firework seemed to dance along the battlement. She could feel him as he leaned out the window with her, and his arm curled around her waist. She smiled as she noticed that he'd already removed his robe. "So you like our firework show, do you?"

She smiled enthusiastically. "I love them they're fantastic!" He fired a Vanishing spell at one of the dragons as it passed, and even though the firework was slightly faded, it burst into ten bright, sparkling dragons flying out in different directions. He leaned further out the window, their bodies crushed together as he hit the flying pig firework on

the battlement, exploding the sparkling pig by ten. Dylan smiled, enraptured as the new dragon fireworks soared and sparkling pigs bounced.

Fred pocketed his wand and placed his other hand on the edge of the window beside her. "Your flying pigs," he whispered softly in her ear. She stood up, turning to face him, and his arms enveloped her. He softly brushed his lips against hers. "And I'm quite sure you know which twin you are with," he said as his mouth claimed hers, crushing her to him. Dylan closed her eyes, melding into his embrace, her hands splayed against his chest, and as she moved them to hug him back, her hands slid down his chest caressing a firm abdomen and slid around along his strong back. She marveled at the muscled tone of his body, running her hands along his back muscles.

This time, as he opened her robe she didn't protest, his hands caressing her, sending shivers as they explored. Her eyes closed, feeling heady as his mouth traveled down her neck. She swayed slightly when he leaned her against the window, his body pressing into hers. He trailed one hand slowly, from her shoulder down her front cupping one breast. "Fred?" she sighed.

"Huh," he responded as his lips caressed her neck while his deft fingers undid her blouse. "What do you want?" he asked softly before he kissed her, his thumb rubbing against her nipple through the material of her bra, sending shivers down her stomach.

"I um... I don't... k-know," she said breathlessly. She explored his body as relentlessly as she dared, so he divested himself of his shirt to let her touch him. She moaned as his mouth trailed down her body, his tongue making little licks between his kisses. She hadn't even noticed her blouse was open until he released her bra, magically removing it, and his mouth covered one breast, his tongue flicking her nipple. She arched into him even as she placed her hands on his shoulders to push him away. Her mind was reeling; she wanted this... needed him to stop, instinctually reacting to what she was feeling.

"I can't..." she started to say as one of his hands moved from her hip, down to her thigh, slowly sliding until his hand touched skin. With a sharp intake of breath, she realized he had his hand under her skirt, just as his fingers slid along the elastic along her leg. "Fred, I please..." she uttered as his fingers teased her around her knickers.

"Please what?" he asked, teasing her lips with feather light kisses. "Tell me, what you want." His tongue slipped into her mouth when she tried to answer. "Do you like this?" he asked, slipping a finger into her in rhythm with his deepened kiss.

She could only moan an affirmative as his thumb rolled across her knickers sending a sudden jolt through her. "Oh, I... gods!" His fingers moved the flimsy fabric of her knickers aside, as his hand stroked her, causing sensations Dylan had never felt before. She knew she should stop him, but her body demanded he continue. Her body won against all reason. "Oh! Please... don't stop that..." she pleaded.

Fred smiled as he continued to fondle both her breast and moist folds, his thumb stimulating her, all the while his kisses firm and demanding. Leaning against the wall, she gave herself to the growing swirl and throbbing building low in her body. She placed both hands on his shoulders, saying his name as if a mantra as the sensations seemed to peak, then released as if she were melting.

"Dylan, I want to feel you," he said lustily, leaning into her, kissing her urgently. "I want you so much right now."

"You," she sighed as his lips teased hers, "have me..." she uttered and kissed him back passionately. Fred smiled as he undid her skirt, sliding her skirt and knickers to her ankles, trailing kisses on her breast, down her abdomen and back up, finally claiming her mouth again.

He supported her with one arm as he conjured a large rug of fluffy white fur. "I remember that you like these," he said, pulling her to join him on the rug. She lay down, and he propped himself up on an elbow, removing his trousers and pants, looking down at her. "If this hurts, I don't mean to," he said as he positioned himself.

His entry stung, making her gasp loudly, and he held still for a moment, looking at her in concern. When she opened her eyes, he kissed her tentatively, sliding his hand along her skin, and she kissed him back. He began to move slowly, rolling his hips slightly. She groaned, her muscles tightening. "Am I hurting you?" he asked softly, alarmed.

"Not too bad..." she replied. He stopped, holding himself deep within her, waiting for her to relax.

"Are you sure?" She looked up at his face, smiled at the worry in his eyes, and nodded. "Dylan, is this your first time?"

She shook her head, biting her lip. "No." His eyebrows rose as he looked at her incredulously. "It's my second..." she whispered, blushing. Dylan made gentle swirls on his skin with her fingertips hoping he wouldn't be upset with her inexperience.

He ran his fingers along her face, shifting his weight slightly, and she rolled her hips, pressing into him with a moan. "Are you okay?" he asked, kissing the side of her mouth.

She nodded. "I'm fine," she murmured, then turned her head to avoid looking at his eyes. "I'm sorry... I'm no good..."

"Blimey, Dylan! I'm the one I..." he said, interrupted by her kiss. "I should have been much more gentle with you." His kiss was tender as he ran his hand along her side. He began to move in her with long strokes, his lips and tongue trailing along the sensitive areas of her neck. Dylan arched her back and into him. She ran her fingers through his hair and over his body. He brought his mouth back to cover hers and Dylan made an exploratory sweep of her tongue across his lip and into his mouth.

Even as she started to kiss him, her hips tried to move with him, and Fred easily matched her rhythm. He returned her kisses as she became more ardent, urging him, and he guided her hips. She wrapped one of her legs around him so she could lift into him, urging him to move deeper. His hand gripped her flesh as he increased his thrusts, and she sighed in pleasure. Still sensitive from her first release, she began to moan, demanding more from him, and he complied.

She felt the tension escalate again, and her body reflexively seemed to tighten, his rhythmic movements becoming longer and rougher. "I'm going to come, Dylan," he said in urgent breathlessness. "Come with me, let go... come with me," he urged.

The tight build held only until she heard his words. "Fred, I... oh, gods..." she uttered between breaths, as he cried out, "Oh Dylan... Circe, Dylan...!" Her body reacted, hearing him first groan then cry out her name, and the tension within her broke, spasms rolling through her, feeling light as air and liquid as water as she cried out his name. "Fred, oh, Fred...Fred... Fred..."

~***~

Author's notes:

When Catherine Wheels collide with the rockets they make winged pigs! How convenient!!

Sorry that this chapter is so long, but I wanted to do the last scene justice.

Expositus is Latin for open, accessible, exposed

According to HP Lexicon:

Filbert the Fearful can be found on a Chocolate Frog Card for being so cowardly that he never went out of his house. He died when his roof collapsed as a result of a Defensive Charm that backfired.

Bridget Wenlock, (1202-1285) was a famous Arithmancer. She is on a Chocolate Frog card for being the first to establish the magical properties of the number seven. Wenlock was J.K. Rowling's Wizard of the month for August 2005.

Much thanks need to be said to my betas, Juliannanight and Charmed3, for all thier had work. I couldn't do this without you.

Getting Reckless

Chapter 8 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Dylan and Mary Ellen were leaving the Great Hall after lunch to head down to the new paddocks Professor Hagrid had erected over the weekend. Personally, she was a little worried about what creature or monster Professor Hagrid would have for them this time, considering what he had shown them in the past. "Dylan, what do you think he will have in those new paddocks? They look strong enough to hold a dragon," Mary Ellen asked apprehensively.

"I was just thinking the same thing," Dylan replied, trying to suppress her own apprehension. "We're seventh year and N.E.W.T. level. The goddess only knows what he would think appropriate to introduce us to!"

Fred and George pulled Dylan aside just as the girls walked out the doors and into the Entrance Hall. "Oi, Dylan, just the girl I want to see," George said, hooking her arm and pulling her aside.

"Oh, no you don't!" Mary Ellen exclaimed. "Dylan, you can't you said that you were done with all this!"

George crossed his arms, looking at both girls speculatively. "I believe we'd already planned this. Are you backing out?"

"No!" Dylan turned to Mary Ellen. "I still have the other tank, well, both tanks. The eggs remember?" Mary Ellen gave her an exacerbated and extremely disappointed look. "Okay, I Disillusioned them to look like simple pollywogs, but I...."

"So you still have them, right?" Fred asked.

"Yes," Dylan admitted.

"Apparently!" Mary Ellen's eyes became wide as she looked at her friend, stunned. "Dylan you are going to get rid of them aren't you?"

"Yes, today, right?" Fred asked.

"Now, during class," George added.

They both looked at Dylan with expectant scrutiny. "Do you still have the nougat?" Fred asked.

"Yes," Dylan said firmly, looking at Mary Ellen, then back at Fred and George. "But I'll need to get the tadlowogs. They're still in my room."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" the guys chorused.

Dylan grabbed Mary Ellen's hand and dragged her up to their room. "I'll need your waders," she said, pulling out her own.

"My wait! You have got to be kidding!" Mary Ellen shrieked as Dylan Summoned them from under her bed. "You are not going to put them in my waders!"

"If you help me, you will not have to face whatever it is Professor Hagrid has for us...*Aguamenti*," Dylan said as she filled all four waders half full with water. "Then we could simply look up the monster up in the library and not get stung, burnt, scratched, stabbed at or bitten!" Deftly, she levitated two tadlowogs into each boot and magically sealed the top, trapping the creatures within. "So, are you game?"

"I'm *sooo* going to regret this!" Mary Ellen replied with a deep sigh. "So what exactly are you going to do?"

Dylan grabbed four of the remaining element containers, shoving them into her book bag, and one of the waders. "Just giving the *Toad* her just rewards," she said, shoving a wader into Mary Ellen's bag. "C'mon, I'll explain on the way down."

Fred and George were still waiting for them when they stepped off the marble staircase. "Can each of you carry one of these? I don't have room in my book bag," she said, handing over a pair of waders.

"Sure," Fred said, as they each concealed a boot in their book bags. "Do you have the nougat? I have another if you don't same price!"

Dylan blushed and nodded. "Darn, I hoped to collect," he said as George chuckled, and they walked from the Great Hall together. "So I'll see you in the hospital wing, then?" Fred said, giving Dylan a quick kiss on the cheek, just before they separated.

Dylan smiled, blushing. "Yeah," she said, standing as if rooted, watching Fred and George head down to the greenhouses. Mary Ellen teasingly bumped Dylan, breaking her out of her trance, laughing at her. The girls turned and ran down to the new paddock that was standing just inside the Forbidden Forest, near Professor Hagrid's hut.

There was a large, grayish-purple creature inside the paddock, with two long, very sharp looking horns, and hard, cloven-hoofed feet, pacing menacingly. Its lavender eyes sparkled dangerously in the sunlight as it regarded each student standing around the barrier. "Isn't he beautiful? Say 'ello to Spike!" Professor Hagrid said proudly. The whole class stood staring at the animal, stunned.

"Graphorns come from the mountains 'o corse. They're tricky animals, Graphorns, got ta be righ' careful around 'em. Their horns are real useful for potions, and Graphorn hide is even tougher than dragon's, an' you can't easily kill one 'cause they're skin, it'll also repel spells," Hagrid explained to his bewildered and stunned class.

"Aren't they extremely dangerous, Professor?" someone asked, his voice cracking in fear. Dylan quickly pulled out the Nose-Bleed Nougat in case Professor Hagrid decided to ask for volunteers.

"Nah, Spike he's all right. So, if yeh wan' ter come closer ter the paddock," Professor Hagrid suggested, beaming at the fierce creature as if it were his newest pet, "yeh can get a bet'er look at 'em." Dylan quickly bit off the darker end of the nougat, wondering just how long it would take for her nose to start bleeding. "No one?" Professor Hagrid pleaded, looking at the class expectantly.

"Oh, my gods! Dylan!" screamed Mary Ellen as Dylan's nose began to flow. "Professor!"

"Wha'? Hol' on," Professor Hagrid said, alarmed. "Oh my! I gotta get yeh up ta the hospital wing," he said nervously, looking from the creature in the paddock and back to Dylan, obviously not wanting to leave the class alone around the paddock.

"I'll take her, Professor," Mary Ellen suggested quickly. Dylan tried to suppress her smile, knowing that her friend was as terrified of the Graphorn as she was.

Professor Hagrid looked relieved. "Righ' then, yes. Yeh take her on up then. Thank yeh, Miss Glass."

As Mary Ellen led Dylan into the hospital wing, she saw both Fred and George on separate beds, drinking Blood-Replenishing Potion. "Oh my! Miss Avondale, what happened to you?" Madam Pomfrey asked, quickly handing Dylan a hand towel and ushering her to a bed.

"My attention was on the Graphorn Professor Hagrid had for our lesson, and I wasn't watching where I was going, I'm afraid," Dylan lied. Mary Ellen looked at her with an incredulous frown.

Thankfully, Madam Pomfrey didn't catch her look. "Very well, take the bed next to Mr. Weasley. I'll have you patched up in a jiffy." As Dylan sat down, she popped the rest of the nougat in her mouth. The bleeding ceased by the time Madam Pomfrey finished her healing charm and magically cleaned most of the blood from her robes. Dylan drank the Blood-Replenishing Potion and was excused to return to class.

Fred and George were waiting in the hall. "Here's the boot," Mary Ellen said, as they hurried down the corridor. "I can't do this, I'm sorry. I'll take what notes I can and let you copy them. Just please don't get caught."

"No problem, I won't I'm with experts! I'll see you later," Dylan answered as both Fred and George chuckled. She followed the twins as they raced through the castle to Umbridge's private rooms.

She was surprised how many 'short cuts' the twins used to avoid the occupied classrooms and equally impressed at how quickly Fred and George managed to undo the Toad's wards and gain entry. *They make it look so simple!* Dylan thought amazedly, recognizing the counter spells to the simplest of magical wards. *But then the Toad isn't as adept at spell work as they are either. Getting into her rooms really isn't all that much of a challenge after all.*

"Dylan, stop up the sink and tub and fill them with water," Fred directed her once they entered the loo. "Ready, George?"

"Oh, definitely ready," George replied, grinning wickedly. "Okay then, one in the sink," he directed as they each flung a tadlowog into the bowl just as Dylan finished turning off the tap.

"Toilet and the tub..." Fred said as he dumped two tadlowogs into the toilet, and George dumped two into the tub. "That leaves two more."

Dylan meanwhile was taking down the Toad's shampoo and conditioner containers from the shelf by her tub. She flicked her wand, changing the label on the shampoo to read 'conditioner' and visa-versa. Setting them back, she took down the curl enhancer and styling spray, grinning wickedly. She pulled out her ink well and unscrewed the tops, adding in a few drops of the ink in each. "What are you doing?" Fred asked.

"Just leaving a surprise for her," Dylan said, placing the bottles back on the shelf and picking up the bath salts. She pulled out the container of sulphur she intended on giving him and mixed in a generous amount of yellow sulphur into the yellow bath crystals, setting the jar back on the shelf.

George stood watching her, amazed. "You know that you can be downright wicked?" he said, although he sounded impressed.

"So is making students write lines with a blood-oath quill and scarring them for life," she said, leaving a small jar of quagmire marked as 'facial mask' next to the sink. The tadlowogs floating in the sink grabbed her hand and Fred hit the little creatures with a quick Stinging Hex to make them let go. "So, are we done in here?" she asked finally, making one good check of their work.

"Two more tadlowogs to place," George said, holding up a boot.

Fred glanced around the room. "I saw a water jug on her bedside table," he suggested.

George nodded, looking around. "A vase?" Dylan suggested. "She always has flowers all over the place."

Fred shook his head. "There is one next to her bed. But the tadlowog won't get at her..."

"Until she has to change the water. When she exchanges the flowers for new ones, the tadlowog will get her," Dylan said. "Even magical flowers don't last forever."

"Okay, water jug and vase," George said deviously. "We got to go we still have to get back to the hospital wing so that we have credible alibis."

Leaving Umbridge's room, Dylan felt invigorated and smug. All three of them quickly ran back to the hospital wing, eating their Nose-Bleed Nougats on the way. Madam Pomfrey was surprised to see them return, but quickly ushered them back onto beds, making each change to pajamas and lie down. For the second time that day, Dylan drank the Blood-Replenishing Potion, handing her robes to the house-elf who came to collect the bloodstained garments.

~oOo~

Dylan, Fred and George were munching on slices of cake and Chocolate Frogs when Madam Pomfrey said that they could go and join their friends for lunch. Dylan nearly laughed as she licked the last of the chocolate from her fingers. "Aren't you coming to the Great Hall?" George asked as she turned to head up the stairs to the fourth floor.

"No, I'm not hungry any more," she replied. "Between the large dinner last night and the breakfast this morning the house-elves brought us, and the food my friends gave us when they visited, I'm full."

"So, where were you planning on going?" Fred asked with a mischievous glint in his eye.

"My common room, I suppose," she replied, *although if you have something else in mind.* She tilted her head as she waited to see what he was going to suggest.

George began to snicker. "I think our raven is up for some fun," he said, ginning. "How about it? Feel like exploring?"

"I have to exchange my books first... but sure," she replied, trying to suppress the big grin on her face and look serious.

Fred looped his arm around her. "Go quickly then, and we'll meet you by the portrait of Ignatia Wildsmith just down the corridor from your common room."

Dylan took off running for her common room. She had a free class period after lunch and hoped that Fred and George would show her another part of the castle she hadn't

seen. Just as she turned to run up the stairs to the fourth floor, she bumped into the Toad. "Miss Avondale, what are you doing here? Why aren't you in class? Classes haven't been dismissed yet."

Dylan wanted to ask her the same thing. "I was just released from the hospital wing and I wanted to...."

"Not a very likely story, you have been skiving class. Ten points from Ravenclaw," the Toad said with a wide toothed grin.

Dylan bit back the retort she wanted to say, simply replying, "May I go now, Professor?" as politely as she could muster.

Umbridge looked her over with a scowl. "Yes, I expect to see you at lunch then." The Toad walked away with a quirky bounce to her step and Dylan really wanted to hex her.

Instead she ran up to her room and was placing her *The Magical Beasts, Great and Small of Europe* in her trunk, when she glanced at her tanks sitting on the window sill. The one tank was now empty, but the other still held several tadlowogs floating happily in their mucky water. Hoping that the twins would be up for it, she Vanquished half of the water in the empty tank, shrunk its size and flipped two of the tadlowogs inside and sealed the top. When she slipped into the corridor from her common room, both Fred and George stood waiting by a portrait of a dour-looking witch holding a jar of silvery powder and surrounded by green flames. "I don't suppose that wherever you've planned to take me would by any chance require us to pass through the first floor, would it?" she asked, still feeling slightly miffed.

"Why? What's wrong?" they chorused.

Fred put his hands on her shoulders to make her look up at him. "What happened? You were in such a good mood before."

"The Toad..." she said, nearly a growl. "I... that Hag!"

"Okay, but why go to the first floor?" George asked. Dylan simply pulled out the shrunken tank and held it up for him to see. He chuckled, shaking his head. "Oh, we've been a good influence on you... Are you game, Fred?"

"I was thinking about the hidden tunnel behind the portrait of Almerick Sawbridge," he said, laughing, "but sure, well stop by the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom on the way to the lake. Does that sound good?"

Of course it took only minutes for them to get inside the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, two minutes to fling the tadlowogs into the water pitcher and glass on the desk and exit the castle just as Hagrid was coming up the stairs.

"Oi, Miss Avondale, how are ya feelin'?" Hagrid asked.

"I'm doing much better, Professor, thank you," Dylan said, smiling warmly.

"Aren't yeh goin' ta lunch?" Hagrid asked.

Dylan shook her head. "After spending yesterday and all of this morning in the hospital wing, I just felt like getting some fresh air and sunshine for a while."

George stepped down the stairs to stand closer to Dylan and Fred. "Besides, the house-elves fed us already..."

"And we are full," Fred added.

"Well 'en, I 'on't keep yeh," Hagrid said, moving aside. "Yeh three have a nice walk by the lake that'll make you right'. Bye now."

Dylan, Fred and George ran down to the lake, laughing. They spent the lunch hour skipping rocks, splashing each other, and taking a nice long stroll along the shore.

~oOo~

As Dylan, Jolliet and Mary Ellen entered the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom later that week, all three girls stopped dead in their tracks. For the first time ever, the Toad was not sitting at her desk. She was standing at the door, checking the book bags and pockets of each student as they entered her classroom. "Open your bag please, Miss Hatley," the Toad asked in her girlish twitter.

"Professor! Your hair you... um, colored it," Roseanne stammered in shock ahead of them. Surely enough, Umbridge's normally mousey-brown curls were instead a dull muddy black and a bit limp.

Umbridge's sweet smile instantly fell into a snarl. "Yes, Miss Hatley, I did. Move along. Miss Glass, Miss Avondale, your bags please," she said, glaring at Dylan and Mary Ellen. As the Toad checked Mary Ellen's pockets, Dylan noticed two things: one, the Toad had several long slender scars on her hands and across a cheek, and her upper lip was still quite swollen and had obviously been bit by a tadlowog or tadlowogs, as in plural. The other was that Dylan felt someone remove the glass jar from her pocket, just as Jolliet passed in front of her to have her book bag checked. "Fine, Miss Stewart, you may enter. Miss Avondale, your bag, please," Umbridge said, her girlish twitter a bit strained.

Dylan held up her bag and the Toad looked inside. "Fine then, dear... Next." Dylan nodded, but just as she entered the room Roseanne, who had been waiting for Jolliet, tripped and fell, the contents of her bag falling out, making Dylan, unfortunately, trip over Roseanne, and she landed on top of her. In the same instant, Fred Weasley fell forward, knocking the Toad against the open door, and he landed on Dylan and Roseanne as well, the contents of his bag falling out and sliding across the floor. "Mr. Weasley! Get up at once and show me what you have in your book bag and pockets!" the Toad admonished him angrily.

Fred struggled to climb off Dylan and Roseanne. "Pretty much all I had in my book bag is now on the floor, Professor," he said, offering a hand to help both girls to their feet. When Dylan leaned down to get her book bag off the floor, she wasn't all that surprised to feel the jar had been placed back in her pocket. Fred gave her a quick wink as he, Mary Ellen and Roseanne began to gather his and Roseanne's things off the floor.

Dylan retrieved two copies of *Defensive Magical Theory*, by Wilbert Slinkhard, noticing that one book looked rather new and the other was well used and had pages that extended slightly beyond the cover. "I believe that this book is yours," she said, handing the used book to Fred, "and Roseanne, I think that this book is yours," she continued, handing her the second book.

"Would you all please go sit down!" the Toad said impatiently from the door. Mary Ellen, Dylan and Roseanne carried the items collected from the floor to Fred and George's desk to sort it all out.

George nudged her and Dylan looked up nervously. "She'll see! She's checking everyone's bags she suspects," Dylan said, nervously.

George shook his head. "Nah, she's checking Wang's pockets. Do it now."

Dylan apprehensively pulled the jar from her pocket. Fred gave her a wink and a nod as she opened the jar.

"Dylan, no," Mary Ellen admonished in a hiss.

"Ready?" George whispered to Dylan. "Let's do it while she's at the door. One two three," he counted, and the two tadlowogs sailed into the water pitcher. "I thought that you were going to aim for her glass?"

"Oops!" Dylan said, collecting her things.

Fred sat down in his chair, leaning over by Dylan as he adjusted his book bag next to his seat. "Everything, okay? George said you missed," he asked. Dylan simply shook her head discreetly, and she took her seat as the Toad walked by, limping. Dylan tried to control her nervousness as Umbridge looked tentatively into her water glass before taking a sip.

Dylan opened up her book, a disguised copy of Mulliens' *The Ride of the Aethonon Raiders*, tucked magically into the cover of her Defense Against the Dark Arts book. She sat, happily engrossed in the amusing anecdotes and comical situations the heroes of the tale, Harold Hardsoven and Bernard Burleson, kept getting themselves into, and trying desperately not to laugh. Fred passed her a note midway through class. Dylan opened the note and read:

I want to see you after dinner.

Meet me at the statue of Boris the Bewildered on the fifth floor at half past seven.

Plan on getting wet.

Do you know how to swim?

Dylan turned to him with a confused, questioning look, and he winked at her. When the bell rang, everyone quickly fled from the room, but she was unable to catch up to him before he left the classroom.

~oOo~

Dylan propped up her book at dinner, still engrossed in the story as Harold Hardsoven had become cornered by mountain giants and Bernard Burleson was using the echoes in the caves to confuse them to help his friend escape.

"Earth to Dylan, hey aren't you speaking to us?" Jolliet asked, tossing a roll at her.

"Um, yes," Dylan replied. "I'm sorry I got caught up in the book you lent me. It's hilarious."

"Mary Ellen and I are meeting up in the library to study. Are you coming?" Jolliet asked. Mary Ellen leaned around her to look at Dylan with a questioning lift off her eyebrows.

"Oh, um... I can't... I've I'm meeting Fred," Dylan replied quietly. She showed Jolliet her note, biting her lip shyly. Jolliet giggled and handed it back. "I think he wants me to go swimming with him. I hope he doesn't mean the lake. Hey, Jolliet, do you think you could help me transfigure my knickers into something like that thing you wear to swim in?"

"Of course I can," she answered, giggling. "But why bother, just go swimming in your knickers. I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

Both Dylan and Mary Ellen pushed their shoulders into Jolliet. "Ohhh, you are sooo bad," Mary Ellen admonished her.

~oOo~

Dylan walked as casually as she could down the fifth-floor corridor, looking for the statue of Boris the Bewildered. She wore a simple black dress under her school robes, but it was the skimpy 'swimsuit' Jolliet transfigured from her black knickers and bra that had her nervous. She hadn't really changed them all that much, except to make them waterproof so they wouldn't stretch in the water, and she changed the eyehooks on her bra to one large, single hook. However, her demi 'swim' top and matching string bikini was really skimpy. Nevertheless, they did at least slightly resemble the two-piece swimsuits in Jolliet's Muggle catalogue, just with a touch of lace.

Halfway down the corridor she saw Fred leaning against the wall next to the statue. "Hope I didn't keep you waiting too long," she said.

"No problem," he replied. "So you never answered my note." She cocked her head confusedly and he laughed. "Can you swim?"

"I've never drowned, if that's what you're asking," she replied. "Streams, pools, the ocean occasionally on holiday... I'd really rather *not* go swimming in the lake though."

He smiled as he pushed away from the wall and led her casually down the corridor. "No, some place I've tried to get you to go with me now twice," he said, smiling at her confused expression. He stopped at a door and said softly. "Black Raspberry." The door opened, and he ushered her inside and bolted the door behind them.

It was the most beautiful room Dylan had ever seen. A crystal candelabrum hung from the ceiling, illuminating a room of all white marble. The most prominent feature was a swimming pool set into the floor, lined by hundreds of jewel-encrusted faucets, and a long marble bench that ran along one wall. "This is a... a swimming pool? Inside the castle? How did they...? Are the floors really that thick?" she asked softly, looking up at Fred. Suddenly what he had said hit her. "You have been trying to get me in here? Twice? When? You never mentioned an indoor swimming pool before. I would have remembered that."

"Ever since that first night in my room when you gave me the suggestion of taking a bath with you," Fred said lazily as he began turning taps, filling the pool-sized tub with foamy water and bath oils. He carefully chose all the fruit and woody scents. "You remember? Shampoo... bath gel..."

She blushed, remembering what he'd said when she gave him the first four canisters. *Maybe you'd like to do this in the bath? What do you say? Here or in the bath?* His words echoed in her mind. *The prefects' bathroom?*

"This is the prefects' bathroom," he said, sweeping his hand, indicating the room. "So, are you up for a swim, little raven?" He walked over to her and pulled Dylan into an embrace. "I assure you we are quite alone."

"But what if we get caught?" Dylan said, looking at the frothy water, wishing that they could enjoy a good long swim.

"Change into your cat I mean lynx form, and I'll talk our way out of any trouble," he said suggestively in her ear before kissing her. "Besides, Chen gave me the password in exchange for some Fever Fudge, so technically I have permission to come in here." Fred pulled his robe off, wearing little more than his jeans and boots.

He looked different in this light, but then this time she could actually see him. He had strong arms, a firm build to his chest and a flat, rippled stomach. *But then he is one of the Gryffindor Beaters. You have to have strong arms, shoulders and legs in order to manage your broom and swing that bat strong enough to knock a Bludger and I've seen him make some spectacular plays on the Quidditch field.*

Dylan shyly removed her robe and folded it carefully, laying it on the bench. She slipped off her shoes and taking a deep breath slipped off her dress, laying it neatly on top of her robe. She suddenly wished that her 'swimsuit' covered more skin. Exhaling slowly, she turned around to see him standing in nothing more than plaid boxer pants, staring back at her. *Relax, Dylan, he said a swim... You're just going for a swim... Merlin, he has a great body and nice legs too!* She felt utterly self-conscious as she walked over to the swimming pool tub, and sat down on the edge. The water was warm and silky on her toes. Fred climbed in and pulled her into the water holding her close. Apparently he could touch, although when she tried putting a tentative toe down, she knew immediately that she wouldn't be able to.

They floated a while, swimming the length of the pool and back, Fred keeping up with her with an easy pace. She tried again to touch the bottom and sunk, coming up choking on bubbles and foam. He reached out his hands to keep her up. "Too short?" he teased her. She simply nodded, sputtering as she wiped her face. He laughed as he gently brushed away some of the foam before he pulled her to him and kissed her.

Feeling weightless in the water, Dylan allowed herself to be completely supported by him. She wrapped her arms around his neck, letting her body press against his. The warm silkiness of the bath water made his skin feel slick, and she wiggled in his arms to feel herself slide against him. The smooth luxurious feel of wet soapy flesh on flesh was purely delightful. "Gods, Dylan, you're going to undo me," he moaned, as his hands cupped her hips tightly against him, and she could feel his erection pressing into her stomach through his boxers.

"You just feel so good in the water," she responded innocently, gasping as his fingers played along the edges of her transformed knickers and slipped inside her. "I just wanted to feel you, that's all."

His fingers left her moist folds, and she had a moment of regret that she had said anything as he pulled away slightly from her, and then came back, wrapping his arms around her again. Instantly, she clung to him, wanting to feel his skin against hers. He grabbed her hand, bringing it into the water. "All right, touch me," he said, placing her hand fairly low on his stomach. She gently caressed him, her fingers tracing out the ridges of his stomach, up his chest and he laughed deep in his throat. "No, like this," he suggested, bringing one hand lower, making her fingers brush against his erect cock. "Go ahead, it won't hurt you," he teased, guiding her fingers.

His penis was silky, the texture so different than what she expected, and she said so. He closed his eyes as she stroked the length, marveling at how nice his hard cock felt to touch, and noticed how he reacted. She rolled her fingers along the underside and pulled gently, sliding down and back, watching the expression of extreme pleasure on his face. "You like this?" she asked, and he groaned in affirmative before leaning her against the marble side of the pool size tub, pinning her.

"Merlin, girl! Yes, I like that," he stated, his mouth covering hers in a demanding kiss. She gave into his kisses with abandon, one of her hands sliding up his back, the other continuing to stroke him. Somehow, still pressed against the wall, he managed to remove her transformed bra, tossing it out of the water, and slid his hand into her knickers, sliding them down her bottom and off her legs.

His fingers found her sensitive nub, expertly rubbing on it, sending intense waves to shoot through her lower body, making her knees weak. Dylan's thoughts erased into nothing but the sensations he was causing in her as she stroked him, luxuriously enjoying sliding her hands on his penis while they kissed. Slowly, her breath hitched, the growing intensity in her core grew and began to ripple through her, and Fred held her firmly until they passed. She desperately wanted him to slide his penis in her, but felt unsure if she should ask.

As if reading her thoughts Fred finally stopped kissing her. "Wrap your legs around me," he urged her.

His cock teased at her opening as Dylan allowed him to help pull her legs up and around his slim waist, and in the soapy water he easily slid inside her. His entry made her breath catch and Dylan tried to lean into him, squeezing her bottom muscles against his thrusts, enjoying the feel of him filling her. "Oh, good gods, Dylan, you are so tight," he moaned.

She started to say, "I'm sorry I didn't mean to..." but he interjected with a slight, throaty chuckle, saying, "I mean that you feel good," as she continued uninterrupted, simultaneously stating, "It's just that you feel so good."

"I am so glad that you think so," he said and carried her to the steps. He set her down, lifting one of her legs to his shoulder and leaned into her, thrusting in and out of her slowly. One hand moved between them and his fingers began to fondle her, sending shocks in waves through her core. Dylan moaned, leaning back, giving into the sensation. "That's it, Dylan, come for me," he said softly, his voice thick and strained.

"I like this too much," she said, feelings like ripples intensifying into rolling waves were building within her again. "Oh, please..."

"Please what?" he asked. "Tell me."

Dylan was breathing hard, mentally lost in the feelings he was giving her. She had no idea what she wanted, only that she didn't want him to stop. *I suggest again...*

"Oh!" *He'll stop Circe...* "Harder," she groaned. He pushed into her, his thrusting becoming more urgent, forceful, and his fingers still rubbed against that sensitive nub he'd introduced her to. She began to groan in small feeble pleadings, that became breathy, incoherent words, as the built up sensation seemed to consume her in spasms. Her release felt like she would melt into the water around her. She cried out his name, grabbing for him, trying pull him into her, his name echoing around the room in her voice, and she heard him say her name in a fierce growl.

He fell forward, the weight of his body supported over hers by his arms on either side of her. Her heart was pounding, her breathing heavy, and she felt lightheaded. Water dripped from his hair, landing on her cheek, and his breathing was as labored as hers. "Are you all right?" she asked tentatively.

His grin was smug, satisfied and wicked. "Oh, I am great," he said. "You how are you?"

"I'll let you know was soon as I catch my breath," she said, watching his lips widen into a smile. "Right now I'm so... limp weak... I think I would drown."

He shook his head, sending several water droplets to fall on her face. "I won't let you drown." He sat down on the steps and pulled her into his lap. Dylan rested her head on his shoulder as he held her.

"Thank you for bringing me here," she said at last.

"I'm glad you finally decided to come," he replied. Dylan closed her eyes, listening to him breathe, feeling content to lounge there in his arms. They sat that way for a while, and Fred began drawing lazy circles on her skin, making her feel all squirmy and occasionally ticklish.

"I should get you dressed and back to your dorm before you fall asleep," he stated, disturbing her blissful serenity.

"Not yet," she said dreamily, turning to face him. She tentatively leaned down and brushed her lips to his and became bolder when he kissed her back. She shifted in his lap, making him laugh at her. "If we stay too long, we'll shrivel up like prunes."

Sighing, she gingerly climbed out of his lap and exited the pool, drying off with one of the luxurious towels. Fred Summoned their 'swim' clothes from the pool and dried them, handing her her 'bikini' to put back on. As Dylan wrapped a towel around her and began drying her hair, he turned her to face him. "Dylan, there is something I need to do. It will feel odd..." he said and waved his wand, performing a softly mumbled spell on her. She looked at him quizzically. "Contraception Charm, you know, to remove my... come."

She blushed. "That wasn't taught in class. How did you... Where?" she asked, quickly pulling on her undergarments and dress.

"All boys are taught this one by the house prefects." He laughed at her when she looked at him, confounded. "Don't worry, I we guys know how to do this spell very well."

After Dylan pulled on her robes and began to run her fingers through her hair, she heard someone try to open the latch on the bathroom door. Dylan froze, looking around for a place to hide, her eyes sweeping the room. Fred pulled her into an embrace, "Relax, they cannot get in unless..." He was cut off as the latch unlocked.

Author's Note:

Okay... When I mentally picture Fred and George I see James and Oliver Phelps: tall, lean and 6 foot... not exactly canon as being on the shorter, stockier side of the family genetics like their second older brother Charlie... sorry.

According to HP Lexicon:

The witch in the painting surrounded by green flames is Ignatia Wildsmith (1227 1320), famous for inventing Floo Powder and appears on a Chocolate Frog card. Wildsmith was the "Wizard of the Month" on JKR's website for December 2004.

Almerick Sawbridge (1602 - 1699), famous for conquering the river troll that was terrorizing crossers of the Wye River.

An Aethonon is a breed of winged horse, chestnut in color, which lives mainly in Britain.

Much thanks need to be given to Luminere and Music5, for reading my first drafts and Juliannanight, Charmed3 and Notsosaintly for giving this chapter a thorough clean up and making it presentable. I appreciate the time and extra effort very much.

Striking Back

Chapter 9 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

Dylan quickly transformed as the door began to open and found herself being held roughly against Fred's chest. She began to panic as Professor Snape entered the room, his glaring sneer changing into a malevolent smirk, giving her a fright as he walked up to them.

"Mr. Weasley, what are you doing in the prefect's bathroom...?" he started to ask in his cold, silky voice.

Dylan let out a feline scream and, scrambling out of Fred's arms, rebounded against Professor Snape's chest, knocking him to the ground as she bolted for the door.

"*Circe!* No!" Fred exclaimed, making Dylan halt outside in the corridor. She slunk into the first doorway she passed and crouched against the rough rock, trembling.

"What was that creature?" Snape bellowed, his voice echoing off the marble walls and out into the quiet corridor.

"Circe, Professor," Fred said. "She is my kneazle."

"If in fact that was a kneazle, Mr. Weasley, which I fervently doubt," Professor Snape said slowly. Dylan could hear the scrape of his boots as if he was pulling himself off the floor. "What were you doing with it in the prefects' bathroom?"

"My roommate, Chen, gave me the password so that I could wash my kneazle, sir," Dylan heard Fred explain, though he sounded a bit flustered. "She's kind of shy around strangers. I really should go and get her, Professor."

"A kneazle, Mr. Weasley, has spotted fur, large ears, and a lion-like tail. That creature did not have a lion-like tail," Snape challenged.

"She has a kind of muted spotted-stripe pattern to her, sir, that's just barely discernable, probably because of some tabby mix in her. But she does have the prominent long legs and large ears with tufts. Although, her tail has been bobbed short," Fred explained. Dylan smirked inwardly, not realizing that he had examined her that closely the few times he'd seen her in her Animagus form. "I think that's why she's so skittish. I think someone hexed her tail off."

"And how, pray tell, did you acquire a kneazle?" Professor Snape inquired.

"She was slinking around in the forest, sir, and saw me and my brother down near Hagrid's hut," Fred's voice carried softly through the door.

He had seen her? The day of her lessons? No he couldn't have. However, Dylan could hear his every word very clearly.

"She must have followed us back to the castle. She jumped up on my bed one night, and she's been hanging around me ever since." Dylan chuckled at how effectively he was twisting the truth into a semi-believable lie.

"Really," Snape sneered in a low growl. "You expect me to believe that?"

"It's the truth, sir." There was a long pause of silence. Dylan held her breath. "Sir, if I don't go find her, she will claw her way into the common room. If you don't believe me, you can come ask the Fat Lady yourself. It's how she gets in. The Fat Lady has complained to me a fair few times about Circe." There was a soft growl and Fred asked, "Pardon me, sir?"

"Mr. Weasley, firstly, you are not given leave for the use of this bathroom. It is strictly for prefects and team captains. Secondly, I do not appreciate your animal attacking me; thirdly, you are now out after curfew. So I will be enjoying your company in detention each weekend for the next three weeks." Dylan could almost hear the crooked smile and smug look. "Now, get yourself back to your common room where you belong."

Seconds later, Fred bolted from the door, and Dylan easily caught up to him, although he let out a startled yelp, "Bloody hell!" when she jumped out in front of him. "I didn't even hear you! Is he following us?" Dylan listened and then shook her head. "That went rather well."

Dylan looked at him incredulously, then transformed into herself. "It landed you in detention," she hissed, the thick timbre of her lynx form still in her voice.

Fred ignored her. "I love it when you just change back. You sound so sexy," he said, reaching out to pull her to him. "And I just want to pounce on you."

"I should just say good night and go to my common room," she said softly, this time allowing the feline purr to thicken her voice.

"Or we could just go to our turret?" he whispered seductively in her ear.

"I'm a little worn out from our swim, never mind our encounter with Snape," she said reluctantly. "I should go..."

Fred kissed her, holding her tight, and she wrapped her arms around his neck and closed her eyes. When his lips left hers, she opened her eyes slowly to see him smiling

at her. "Then I should say good night, unless I can change your mind." Dylan shook her head, staring at the Gryffindor colors on his tie. "Walk you to your common room? I know a few short cuts."

"Tempting," she replied. "But I've gotten you into enough trouble already." She pulled away to go. "Besides there is always tomorrow, isn't there?" She transformed before he could change her mind, looking back up at him.

He was grinning at her mischievously. "I accept your date, my little lynx. I'll see you in class tomorrow." He turned and ran off in the direction of Gryffindor tower.

I asked him for a date? she thought, stunned, as she made her way to her own dorm. *I asked him... I asked Fred out on a date. What is he expecting? That I'll take him to some place in the castle he hasn't been? Is there anywhere in the castle he HASN'T been? I'd better ask Jolliet for suggestions.*

~o0o~

Dylan and Mary Ellen raced from the library in order to get to Defense Against the Dark Arts class on time. Both carried books on or about Defensive Magic by some of the most renowned Dark wizard-catchers of their age. They had just entered through the door as Umbridge cleared her throat. She looked up, scowling, as Dylan and Mary Ellen quickly took their seats. Dylan reached down into her book bag pulling out a small jar containing two tadlowogs onto her lap then withdrew her quill.

"*Hem, hem...* Very well, Will you all please pass your essays forward and pull out your books," she said in her little-girlish voice. "Please turn to chapter thirty-two and begin reading..."

Umbridge was cut off when a resounding, "*CONSTANT VIGILANCE!*" bellowed from the book when Dylan opened it to retrieve her essay, in the all too familiar voice of Auror Alastor Moody. A second later a repeated, "*CONSTANT VIGILANCE!*" rang out over the snickers of her classmates when she turned several pages to pull out a second sheet of parchment.

"Miss Avondale! What in the name of Merlin was that?" Umbridge asked in high-pitched, breathy screech.

"*Method of Madness: Thwart, Shield and CONSTANT VIGILANCE* the unauthorized and hexed biography about the infamous Alastor Moody, Professor," Dylan said as she handed Fred her essay nonchalantly, winking at the twins. "He is a Ministry of Magic Auror and a famous Dark Wizard catcher, so I thought this would be acceptable reading for class assignments."

Umbridge was now on her feet, although she was too short for that to really make a difference. The act actually made her shorter rather than taller. "We are reading chapter thirty-two of *Defensive Magical Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard," she said in her high-pitched twitter.

"I've read that chapter twice. How about if I just read *When Up Against A Monster* by Almerick Sawbridge instead? I noticed that your signature was on the lending card," Dylan stated as she set the mentioned book on top of her pile.

"Oh, let me see! His portrait is supposed to hang near Gryffindor tower," Roseanna pleaded. Dylan held up the book passing it to Roseanna. The portrait of a very swarthy, bare-chested and bare-armed very well-muscled man took up most of the cover. His dark eyebrows, beard and moustache framed a handsomely roguish, masculine face that made Felicia and Wendylene nearly swoon as they leaned forward to see the picture.

"Oh, look at his biceps!" Felicia cooed. The portrait of Almerick winked at the girls and looked at them with a flirty gaze. "Oh, he was dreamy."

Umbridge came around her desk as several girls all leaned in to see the picture. "Miss Avondale, that is not a class approved text. I was quite clear when I assigned today's reading assignment." Umbridge made her way to the fourth row following the large tome.

Dylan removed the lid of her jar and caught Fred's eye. He grinned as they quickly pulled out their wands and flung the two tadlowogs into the pitcher on Umbridge's desk. Dylan shrugged as Fred gave her an annoyed glance and shrunk her jar to fit easily in her pocket. They had barely tucked their wands away before Umbridge stomped back to Dylan's desk, thrusting the book at her. "What are those?" she demanded, pointing at the other books on her desk, the girlish tilt sounding strained and no longer had the usual high pitch.

"Professor Moody's unauthorized biography, *Defensive Magic and Protective Magic Spells*, by Galatea Merrythought and *Practical Magical Defense* by Norvel Twonk. I used them as references for my essay."

"Then you'll be receiving another 'D' on your essay assignment," Umbridge said, her girlish twitter returning along with her annoying toothy grin.

"No matter, my mum liked my essay enough. She apparently showed it to her friend, Mitilida Scribbington from *Witch Weekly*," Dylan sat with her hands folded neatly on the desk, looking innocently up at the Toad, watching her smile fade. "Apparently she liked it so much, it will be published in their next issue."

"Well? You are to read chapter thirty-two, *Assertive Creative Communication Skills* with the rest of the class today. I suggest you begin," Umbridge said, trying to lean over the desk to glare down Dylan.

Dylan sat up straight, which brought her eye level with the Toad, and she tried her best to keep a pleasant smile on her face. "Which part of the chapter would you like me to quote for you?"

Umbridge regarded her with a look that bordered on abhorrent animosity. Dylan tried to keep her expression somewhere near a benevolent gaze. Fred tried to hide his smile and several students began to snicker. Everyone knew that Dylan probably did have the chapter memorized since she'd quoted the book frequently enough in class before. "None of it you are to read it again *in class*." Finally Umbridge walked to her desk and sat down. "Well, what are you all waiting for?" she yelled at the class, pouring herself a glass of water. Several students openly snickered as a tadlowog slipped into glass as well. "Begin your reading assignment!"

Her shriek might have been heard from anywhere in the castle. Umbridge threw her glass away as the little creature clamped onto her nose and chin, biting her upper lip. The glass shattered next to Mary Ellen's feet, as the Toad tried to disengage the tadlowog, which fell onto her desk. Instantly George was on his feet wand drawn. "I'll get it!" he declared as he quickly levitated the tiny creature into the flower vase on the desk.

"Augh! Not in my vase, Mr. Weasley!" Umbridge screeched as she jumped back, pale and breathless. "W-who h-how did t-that get in my glass!" she shrieked angrily. "Who did this? Tell me NOW!"

"Oops, sorry, Professor," George apologized. "I wasn't thinking."

"It was in the water pitcher, Professor. You put it in your water glass when you filled it," Mary Ellen stated. She had repaired the shattered glass and was walking up to the Toad's desk to return it to her. "Here is your water glass, Professor," she said politely, setting the glass on the Toad's desk.

Umbridge stared at the glass a moment as if it offended her, then looked up at Mary Ellen, then at George, her face livid. The Toad's lips were already beginning the swell and turn a deep red. "Get out, *get out, GET OUT OUT...*!" the Toad repeated, hopping mad and stomping her feet. Everyone gathered his or her things to bolt for the door, happily. "You four," Umbridge roared, pointing at George, Fred, Dylan and Mary Ellen. "Detention, all of you tonight!"

Mary Ellen was near tears as they left the classroom. Fred looked at Dylan as she tried to console her friend. "I don't want to scar up my hand with that quill of hers..." she sobbed, looking up at Dylan.

"Neither do I, Mary Ellen," Dylan said soothingly. "Can't we come up with something?" she asked, looking at the twins.

George shrugged. "We've tried boils, fevers, nosebleeds, fainting, even vomiting," Fred answered. "She won't buy any of it."

"I wish I was at home for Easter holidays. Too bad we can't get to Hogsmeade and see your brother," Mary Ellen sobbed.

"Why?" the twins asked.

"*WE* could give her a good case of jiggling from some jigger stings or make the Toad laugh with giddiness and levitating off the floor from a couple of billywig stings... or spewing sentimental sappiness because of a sulmouth mite bite," Mary Ellen ranted, nearly whining. "I'd even settle for hallucinations from a furnwort bite or... I don't know muscle jitters from a kleigerid sting!" Both Fred and George shrugged. "Bugs *insects!* Dylan's brother is Eldrich Avondale... He's a Magical Entomologist!" she exclaimed as if they should know him and surprised that they didn't.

"Oh, we've heard of him," George stated. Mary Ellen beamed with pride.

"You just want an excuse to see my brother!" Dylan said, smirking. Mary Ellen blushed a deep red. "My brother has a cottage in Hogsmeade, and he just came back from Southeast Asia. He has a shop of sorts that takes up his great room and front sitting room," Dylan tried to explain. "But I don't have permission to visit him until this weekend." Both Fred and George grinned. "What? I know that look."

"Fred, we seem to suddenly have free time instead of a Defense Against the Dark Arts lesson, lunch and then another period of free time. I could use some potions supplies, and possibly a few Fizzing Whizbees... maybe..."

Fred looked at Dylan and Mary Ellen, grinning. "Of course it's worth the trip. I need a few things as well. Maybe get some butterbeers. Dylan, you did ask me out on a date after all do you two care to make it doubles?"

"But we can't!" Mary Ellen nearly shrieked as Dylan asked simultaneously, "How would we get out of the castle?"

"Haven't you learned to trust us *yet?* C'mon," Fred said, taking Dylan's hand.

George placed his hand on Mary Ellen's waist. "It'll be fun, and you can introduce us to this famous Magical Entomologist of yours!"

To Dylan's surprise, Mary Ellen looped her arm with George, smiling brightly and followed him eagerly. "Can you really get us to Hogsmeade?"

Fred and George had a harder time getting Mary Ellen to run the length of the tunnel once it narrowed and the walls became rock than they had to convince her to go with them to Hogsmeade. She had been eager enough at the statue of the one-eyed witch, but Mary Ellen liked beetles, flies and crickets not spiders. *It is one of the things that Eldrich found adorable about Mary Ellen when he was a student and the reason he still answers her letters; a common interest in insects,* Dylan thought in amusement. *And it wasn't something Mary Ellen developed an interest in just to flirt with him either. Although, Mary Ellen's favorite subject in school is Herbology and Charms, I suspect it has more to do with the creatures Professor Hagrid brings to class than a lack of interest in magical creatures themselves.* If Dylan had her way, she was going to talk some sense into her brother, and get them together, after she and Mary Ellen finished school.

They emerged in the cellar of Honeydukes and entered the shop. Mr. Fume, although quite surprised by their entry into his shop on a school day, wasn't the least bit put out by Fred and George's sudden appearance. He happily allowed them to select their sweets, adding a few freshly made cockroach clusters and fudge truffles to their purchases.

Out on the cobbled street they quickly ran in the direction of Eldrich's cottage. The two story Tudor-style home had a large front garden with an arched trellis over the front gate and front door covered with flowering vines. All along the fence bordering the garden were all types of flowers and aromatic herbs. Both large front windows had overflowing window boxes, full of flowers and there was a little sitting area beside the walk with a table and four chairs surrounded by flowering plants and a small potted geranium on the table. *Not your typical bachelor's house, but then my brother is a bit unique* The house once belonged to their great grandmum, and the groundskeeper was a woman who made perfume. *What an arrangement they have. She tends his garden, keeps the place blooming... giving her two properties to grow her scented flowers.*

Eldrich was such a well, a geek in school Dylan mused. *Whose best friend just happened to be the star Quidditch player in his year. He's also a fairly good mountaineer and tree climber, all for the pursuit of those hard-to-get insects in their natural habitats.* Charlie taught Eldrich how to fly a broom and Eldrich taught Charlie how to rock-climb; both belaying and abseiling. They would fly in practice together, racing each other as they chased the Snitch, and spent Easter holidays on mountain expeditions, or camping with Dylan's family. But in appearances, good looking, athletic, well-built Charlie was the physical opposite of Dylan's brother.

Dylan's brother was tall and thin with shoulder-length blonde hair slicked back from his face and darkly tanned skin. He wore glasses and short homemade tunics with big pockets, and trousers with multiple pockets that he purchased through a Muggle military supply shop in London. "Dylan, Mary Ellen, what a surprise! I didn't expect to see you until Saturday!" he said, stunned as opened the door to see the four of them on his doorstep. Eldrich had an excitable, yet deep baritone voice and a crooked smile, caused by a wound in his left cheek from a moonstinger sting four years previously. Both Dylan and Mary Ellen hugged him as he ushered them into his cottage.

Sitting at his kitchen table, Fred and George were fascinated by the hundred or so glass jars, cages, terrariums and aquariums that filled nearly every available shelf and counter. Eldrich passed around butterbeers and sat down, watching Fred and George curiously. "So, Dylan, Mum tells me you are dating Fred Weasley?" he said, pointing at first George, then Fred, confused. Fred lifted his hand, smiling. "Yes, well, I know your brother, Charlie. Nice chap. Calls me when the dragons get infested."

"I remember that the two of you were friends; he always thought you were cool," Fred replied casually. "Said you were really good with defensive spells, too."

George turned the little basket on the table, looking at the three tiny rainbow crickets inside. "He said you helped him get through Charms."

"We used to practice those together too; he hated taking notes in class." Eldrich smiled in remembrance. "Your brother spent hours trying to talk me into playing on the house team just so we could really compete against each other out on the pitch. Although, we spent plenty of time racing each other for the Snitch during his practices. Of course, he always got it before me... Great guy, Charlie. So, what are your ambitions? Your brother tells me loads about you two. Any thoughts about what's next, after years of causing trouble, mischief and mayhem at school?"

"Joke shop," Fred stated proudly. "We already have a mail order business and plans to buy a premises. You're looking at the owners, inventors and proprietors of Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes!"

"They're really clever, make all kinds of stuff already," Mary Ellen said, shyly watching Eldrich's every move, blushing when he looked at her.

"Speaking about stuff... Eldrich, I need some bu-ug..." *He hates it when I call them bugs stay on his good side* "Insects." Dylan showed her brother her hand. "I don't want to keep using that horrible blood-oath quill! You are my last hope, Eldrich. You've got to know some way to help me!"

"Geeze, sis!" Her brother flinched at the red lines scarred into her hand. "Dylan, I don't know what I can do! I don't know what you want."

"I want to destroy those quills!" she said in anguish. Eldrich smiled. "Don't you have a bug or parasite that would I dunno, destroy or eat them?"

Mary Ellen was examining a cage on the china dresser containing large beetles with pretty green shells and striped wings. "Oh, these are pretty. What are they?"

"What's in here?" George asked, eyeing a glass terrarium full of feathers that sat on the table next to the crickets.

"African flamboyant flower beetles, Mary Ellen," Eldrich replied with a smile, watching her face light up with interest, and then turned back to George. "Chizpurfle, a fairly invasive magical parasite that lives in the fur or feathers of some magical creatures..." Dylan reached for the egg-shaped glass container to examine the insects inside. "Sis, no you cannot... they are a pest! At a place like Hogwarts they could become an infestation!"

Dylan examined the feathers inside the terrarium. "They infest magical items," she said wistfully. All she could see were tiny little fuzzy brown winged dots on the white plumes.

Fred and George eyed the terrarium in her hands with expectant faces. "And the entire castle!" Eldrich exclaimed, alarmed. "You cannot be serious..."

"So... don't they die if sprayed with ammonia and salt? I'm sure you have a spray bottle of the solution somewhere?" She looked at her brother, tipping her head so her eyes would be wider and biting her lip in a way that always worked on him. "Please, I only need a few."

"Oh, bugger! Sis, Professor Snape is a very good customer, and now that Professor Umbridge is teaching, and Madam Pomfrey's needs have increased, my Hogwarts orders seem to have doubled."

Dylan tilted her head the other way and smiled at him, blinking demurely.

"I cannot afford to lose him as a customer. No no...no."

"You could always add us to your list of customers," George said eagerly. "We've heard that you're on-call at Gringotts from our brother, Bill, when the curse-breakers have to deal with unusual insects or infestations."

Fred sat up straighter in his chair. "Sure, it's always good to know a capable and well-stocked Magical Entomologist! Charlie always said you really know your insects; topped him in Care of Magical Creatures in school."

Eldrich leaned back in his chair regarding the twins seriously. "A joke shop, huh?"

~oOo~

Dylan, Mary Ellen, Fred and George raced back to the castle and entered the first floor corridor just as everyone was heading to lunch. Mary Ellen fidgeted with her potpie, looking lost in her own world. Dylan smiled inwardly, remembering the look in her brother's eyes when he gave Mary Ellen the little cage that now rested in her lap. The beautiful African flamboyant flower beetle scurried restlessly in the confined space. "Why don't I ask Professor Flitwick to let you come with me to Eldrich's on Sunday?" Dylan asked, helping herself to a baked apple. "Do you think your parents will give you permission? Mum and Dad are going to come."

"Oh, Dylan, may I?" she answered, her eyes wide and hopeful.

"I already have Mum's invite; she was going to owl your parents and Professor Flitwick this morning. I just forgot that I hadn't asked you yet." Dylan rolled the apple in a napkin and took a few cookies. "Okay then, it's settled. You'll have Easter dinner with us. I'm off to the library. See you in the common room unless you come looking in the Care of Magical Insects section for me!"

Ironically, Fred and George caught up to her as she approached the corridor that lead to her common room. "Going the wrong direction, aren't we?" George called after her.

"You cannot be serious! Now?" Dylan asked, coming to a halt and turning.

George reached her first. "No time like the present," he said mischievously.

"We could dump one of the infected feathers on the desk in her office and the other in her classroom," Fred stated, smiling wickedly.

"You're wicked," she said, smiling. "Her office... should I get a tadlowog too?"

"Go!" they chorused.

Dylan ran the whole way, enlarged the jar in her pocket and pulled two tadlowogs from the tank. Only three more remained. They managed the entry into the Toad's office easily. George carefully levitated one of the infected feathers from the glass jar to fall into the Toad's quill cup and put another one in her desk drawer, while Fred sprayed the floor around the desk with the ammonia and salt mix. Dylan left a tadlowog in the flower vase on the desk, and they quickly left the office, resetting the simple warding spells.

Fred, George and Dylan waited in the library until nearly the end of their free time, reading randomly selected books. Just before the bell sounded, they walked down the stairs to the second floor, stopping near the door to the Defense classroom to wait until the classroom emptied. Fred pulled Dylan through the throng of students as Umbridge walked out of the classroom and climbed the stairs. The Toad was dabbing at her nose as she passed them, obviously having been attacked by the second tadlowog and heading to see Madam Pomfrey.

They raced down the corridor and into the classroom before the next class could arrive and quickly searched the desk for the blood oath quills. Fred found them when he unlocked the top left drawer of the desk. Dylan smiled as George simply dumped the infected feathers on top of the offending quills, using a quill from the quill cup on her desk to straighten them out and quickly dumped the now contaminated writing quill back into the cup. Fred once again sprayed the floor around the desk with the insecticide solution and the first row of desks.

Dylan had meanwhile dumped the last tadlowog, water and all, into the Toad's water pitcher and turned to go. They had just reached the door when a few second-year Gryffindors entered the classroom. "Look, free Canary Creams if none of you tell," George said to the stunned second years.

"And butterbeers if you all cover for us," Fred added. Every one of them nodded eagerly.

Well, that will use up the butterbeers they'd purchased from the Three Broomsticks before running back to school Dylan tried to ease from the room, worried. *I hope the second years hate the Toad as much as we do...*

"What did you do?" one boy asked. Dylan felt her heart pound in her chest.

"Oh, you'll find out as soon as class starts, I assure you," Fred said, smiling. "Now enjoy the show and pay attention."

"Oh, yes, one more thing. Keep your book bags closed if you're near the front of the class," George warned. "Otherwise they might infest your belongings. Bye be good, or be good at it." All the Gryffindors took the seats at the back of the classroom as Fred and George left, pulling a now confused and very nervous Dylan with them. "It will be fine," George said reassuringly.

"They love our Canary Creams," Fred said, kissing her cheek and ushering her off to her next class. "Now you'd better git."

~oOo~

That night as Dylan and Mary Ellen descended the stairs to head for detention, they were both really apprehensive. They both knew that the Toad would be in a foul mood,

especially after what they had overheard on the way to dinner. The towheaded second year Gryffindor, who Dylan recognized, sought out Fred or George as they entered the Entrance Hall before dinner calling out. "Fred! George! Wait up! Got a minute?" The second year, apparently unable to tell them apart, said their names as if they were one hyphenated name, and began telling them excitedly what happened in class. Jolliet and Mary Ellen pulled Dylan aside to listen, allowing the students going to dinner pass between them and the guys they were trying to overhear.

The boy explained that first the Toad had carefully inspected the water in the ceramic water pitcher, tilting it to try and see if any creature hid inside. The mucky water from the tank must have obscured the tiny creature because she poured herself a glass. The Toad shrieked at the disgusting water, dropping the glass and the pitcher on her desk. The tadlowog, having landed on the desk among the shattered glass and ceramic pieces, attacked her hand, clamping its teeth into her finger. Umbridge immediately began to holler, flinging her hand around in the air, trying to dislodge the creature to the great amusement of the students.

When the creature did finally release her finger, it went flying into one of Umbridge's kitten plates and landed on the bookshelf, half dead. A student in the first row levitated the tadlowog, tossing it into the wastebasket. According to the second-year boy, Umbridge went into hysterics demanding that someone confess to putting the infested water and tadlowog in her water pitcher. Of course, no one admitted putting the creature and the mucky water into the pitcher, so the entire lesson was spent writing lines of; *It's not funny putting dangerous creatures in your professor's water pitcher* Somehow, Dylan didn't think any of the second years would ever believe that lesson, no matter how many times the Toad made them write it out.

The girls continued to the Great Hall with Jolliet laughing so hard, her eyes filled with tears. Fred and George joined the girls on the stairs, teasingly admonishing them for eavesdropping, then parted once they all entered through the doors together. As Dylan sat down, she noticed Umbridge staring at her, then over at Fred and George and back to Dylan with a glare that sent shivers down her spine.

However, that night the scene in the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom wasn't at all what Dylan expected when she and Mary Ellen opened the door. Since Dylan and Mary Ellen knew about the chizpurples, they'd left all their magical items, except their wands, in their dormitory, and wore their oldest robes in case the chizpurples had started spreading around the classroom.

What they hadn't expected to see was Umbridge swatting away at a little cloud of brown dots that surrounded her and her desk. Filch was swinging a duster trying to help her, and Professor McGonagall raising her voice, trying to get both of them to desist so that she could get rid of the pests.

Apparently, neither Fred nor George, who were leaning against the last row of desks laughing, remembered to tell Filch that chizpurples*iked* feathers and that swinging an urvogel goose feather duster would only excite the tiny parasites.

"Dolores! Calm yourself. Mr. Filch, would you please both of you stop," Professor McGonagall admonished, backing up as Filch missed her hat by mere inches.

"Filch, Stun them! Do, (sputter), something! They *uff*, are getting in my (gag), mouth!" Umbridge was saying as the tiny brown chizpurples buzzed around her head.

"Yes, Headmistress," Filch wheezed, swishing his duster. Fred and George were both trying to contain their laughter, clearly amused.

Mary Ellen tried getting the professors' attention. "Excuse me, Professor."

"Really, Argus! Enough! They will spread if you keep batting at them!" Professor McGonagall continued to admonish him.

Mary Ellen tried again to get the attention of either professor. "What is it, Miss Glass?" Professor McGonagall said irritated.

"If you please, Professor," Mary Ellen said timidly, "I think they are chizpurples... or they could be. At least they look like a chizpurple swarm." Dylan turned to her friend, stunned.

"They *fft*, w-were, (gag), all o-over *sfft*, my quills! Ruined *fft*, them!" the Toad said between spluttering. "They *spm*, they did this! I *sfft*, I know they *sfft*, did!" Umbridge made a revolting hawking sound in her throat.

"Now, Dolores... Mr. Filch please cease that swatting," Professor McGonagall said, and then turned to Mary Ellen. "Explain yourself, Miss Glass."

Mary Ellen took a deep breath. "Tiny, brown, winged insects chizpurples, that infest magical creatures... they prefer feathers and..."

"I *sfft*, know what a, (hak), chizpurple is," Umbridge spat.

Mary Ellen nodded, suddenly intimidated. "Ammonia and salt gets rid of them, Professor; you need to spray them with a solution of ammonia and salt if they are chizpurples, that is."

The Toad continued to gag and cough, apparently having swallowed some of the insects. Filch dropped his duster to pound Umbridge on her back. Fred and George were now openly laughing at the pair, and Dylan was so worried over what they had done, she wished she could simply Apparate away. "Mr. Filch... ARGUS! Go get some ammonia and salt solution in a spray bottle now, Argus! Before they spread from this classroom!" demanded Professor McGonagall. "Dolores, stay here until he returns. Do not move." Suddenly she turned facing Dylan, Mary Ellen, Fred and George. "You four to my office now! I'll deal with you in a moment."

Fred and George quickly left the classroom, taking Dylan and Mary Ellen with them. "Excellent!" George exclaimed, as soon as they were in the corridor.

"What's excellent?" Mary Ellen nearly sobbed. "She knows! The Toad *knows!* And now we are going to be expelled for infesting the school with a *pestilence!*"

"No, we're not," George said, trying to reassure her.

Fred laughed, opening the door to let the girls enter into McGonagall's office first. "Yeah, we'll just answer some questions and serve out our time feeding critters or cleaning out the cages in the Transfiguration classroom. No big deal," he said.

"Yeah, we've had detention with her loads of times," George stated, offering Mary Ellen a chair and handed her a beige handkerchief. Fred sat in the other chair facing the desk, pulling Dylan onto his lap, and George sat on the edge of the desk, picking up some kind of stone. "Hey! She still has this plufforizzle we turned to stone in third year."

Fred laughed, gripping Dylan's knee under her skirt to make her wiggle in his lap. "Yeah, well, it did bite you as I recall."

Professor McGonagall swept into her office. "Mr. Weasley, please get off my desk."

"Sorry, Professor, there are only two chairs, and *I know* how much you dislike me sitting in yours," he stated, standing up quickly.

"Yes, well... Miss Avondale, you can rise off Mr. Weasley now, if you please, young lady." Professor McGonagall conjured two more chairs as she crossed the room to sit in her own chair. "Now, explain yourselves."

"I'm sorry, Professor, I didn't mean to..." Dylan started to say, watching Professor McGonagall sit, and feeling uneasy under her stern stare. "We really shouldn't have..."

Professor McGonagall raised her hand. "My dear, I understand that you and Mr. Weasley are a bit of an item lately. What I meant was why did you have detention with Professor Umbridge. I'm a bit confused as to the offense." She said, interrupting her and reached for a pretty tin, passing it to Mary Ellen. "Here, Miss Glass, have a biscuit and please pass the tin down."

Mary Ellen took a lemon cream from the tin and passed it to George, then Fred. Fred answered first. "Well, Professor, there was something, a critter in Professor Umbridge's water on her desk..."

"And when she took a drink it tried to bite her, so she threw her water glass across the room," George explained.

"It did bite her," Fred stated and Mary Ellen nodded. "I don't think she meant to, but I believe she threw her water glass at Mary Ellen."

"It landed on the floor near her feet, I think," George added. Mary Ellen nodded again.

"George tried to flick the critter into the waste basket and overshot his aim," Fred said as he handed Dylan the tin and she took a biscuit, nervously. "I think it landed on her desk..."

"It went into her vase," Dylan said softly, unable to lie to Professor McGonagall.

"Oh, yeah, that's right," Fred stated with a smirk, "And then Mary Ellen repaired Professor Umbridge's glass from the floor..."

"And she handed it back to her," George finished as Fred took a bite of his biscuit. "I think that's when she put us in detention."

Professor McGonagall sat a moment, her lips pursed tightly. "Do either of you girls have anything to add to Messrs. Weasley's statement?"

Both Mary Ellen and Dylan shook their heads. *As convoluted as their version of the events are, the story they made up is, well, it is the truth*

"Very well, then. Now, if you will please stand, I must check that none of you were infested by those insects." She stood, drawing her wand, ushering all four of them to their feet and making sweeping circles while casting a charm. Dylan briefly felt a light breeze sweep around her, but nothing happened. "Oh, very good nothing. So, Miss Glass, how did you know that the insects were chizpurples?"

Mary Ellen blanched, then blushed and lowered her head. "I like insects, Professor. It was an assumption; by the way they swarmed, their color and size... and Professor Umbridge said that they'd infested her quills."

Professor McGonagall listened intently to her explanation, and then smiled. "You were apparently correct, they were chizpurples, and your suggestion of the ammonia and salt solution worked wonderfully. Twenty points to Ravenclaw for your assistance. Now, I have a few second years cleaning out the cages in my classroom; however, the animals need feeding." She rose from her chair and indicated that they all stand. "So if you four will follow me, I think it best you serve out the remainder of your detention with me."

~*~

Author's notes:

According to HP Lexicon:

Norvel Twonk, died in 1957 saving a Muggle child from a runaway manticores.

Almerick Sawbridge, (1602 - 1699) Famous for conquering the river troll that was terrorizing crossers of the Wye River. Appears on a Chocolate Frog card

Galatea Merrythought, Defense Against the Dark Arts professor from c. 1895 to c.1945; Retired after teaching for nearly fifty years.

As far as canon goes, I'm not sure if these renowned wizards ever wrote books about their exploits but wouldn't it have been great if they had?

I want to thank both Lumiere and Music5 for proof reading this story and to Juliannanight and Charmed3 for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable.

Crescendo

Chapter 10 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

The Easter holidays were a welcomed reprieve. First the weather was turning, becoming breezier, brighter and warmer. Sunlight poured through the windows in pale, golden beams of light every morning, and in the courtyard, many of the plants were blooming. Out on the school grounds, flowers could be seen nearly everywhere. This was Dylan's favorite time of year at school; however, with all the revisions and essays the seventh years had to do, there just didn't seem to be enough time to enjoy it all. With the exception of the three weekends during the holidays when Dylan and Mary Ellen went to Eldrich's house, she and the rest of the fifth and seventh years were trapped inside, revising for their upcoming O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s respectively.

If it weren't for the fact that the entire wizarding side of Dylan's family was spending Easter holiday in Hogsmeade, she wouldn't have gotten her Easter packages from her parents, grandparents or brother for at least a week. It took nearly a week to get anything past the Toad's newest 'security' measures, the new screening process of the now infamous Inquisitorial Squad. Dylan was sure that members of the squad confiscated some of the more interesting, fun and expensive items being sent by loving parents, and any letter that mentioned He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was delivered instantly to the Toad for her inspection.

Dylan told her mum about the violation of mail, so her mum came up with an ingenious solution. When Dylan sprayed the back of her mum's and brother's letters with her new 'perfume,' hidden messages appeared, giving Dylan updates of what was happening in the world outside of school. Several of Dylan's housemates even asked for the

secret, and her mum was selling both the ink and perfume to families she knew well.

For Easter, Eldrich gave Dylan a beautiful butterfly pin. He gave Mary Ellen an egg-shaped terrarium containing a white-eyed assassin bug, *Platymerus biguttata*, which made Mary Ellen so happy, her eyes fill up with tears.

Dylan felt sorry for Fred, still feeling guilty for getting Fred into detention with Professor Snape, knowing that he spent his Saturdays in the gloomy dungeons with the sourpuss professor. But somehow, he never seemed to mind and brushed off her apologies for landing him in detention nonchalantly as if it was non-consequential. Still, as an apology, she bought Fred a huge chocolate egg from Honeydukes both weekends. The first one was filled with Pepper Imps, Malt Balls, Wart-spot soap and Dumbombs packages, which truly amused him. The second egg was filled with Fizzing Whizbees, Whizzing Worms, Stink Pellets and Crackle-Snaps. He was quite impressed with her determination to make amends and finally convinced her that he didn't blame her at all.

During the week, Dylan, who'd always preferred small groups to crowds and generally kept to herself, began avoiding the library, preferring quieter surroundings. She generally sought secluded places hidden deep in the library or perched on one of the benches in the courtyard, or up on the open airy battlements, doing her revision, simply because it seemed like half the school was spending nearly every waking moment at the tables in the library.

Somehow, even when Dylan sought out the quietest corners of the castle or sat in the most secluded windowsills in an empty corridor, Fred always seemed to be able to find her. He would suddenly appear next to her, a friendly distraction with a mischievous grin. Several times, she was so engrossed in her revision that he startled her when he snuck up on her from behind, giving her a hug or a nibble on her neck. More than once, as she walked down a corridor, he would just suddenly appear or seemed to emerge out of the walls. And on occasion, she would turn a corner to find Fred leaning on the wall as if he were waiting for her. It seemed as if he had a crystal ball that showed him exactly where she was at any time of the day.

Frequently, he would try to get her to go off on an adventure, exploring the castle or to slip up to their special turret, but Dylan usually protested, often making him help her with spells instead. However, revision or practicing spells with Fred Weasley typically turned into snogging, leaving Dylan feeling like she was walking around on a cloud in a perpetual glow, but also growing slightly apprehensive about her N.E.W.T.s.

It didn't help that pamphlets, leaflets, and notices started showing up on the common room tables and in the library or tacked onto the notice boards, reminders that this was their last year of school and come June, they would all be applying for either apprenticeships or jobs. "Oh, look at all the career options for the fifth years to consider," Jolliet said as she tried pushing them aside to make room on a table in the library.

Dylan sat across from her friends and reluctantly picked up several colorful pamphlets and leaflets to shift them aside. *So you'd like to work in Muggle relations?* She read aloud a pale blue leaflet. "The department of Muggle relations.... Can you imagine what a difficult job that would be I mean how can you have *relations* with Muggles and still keep them ignorant of our world? I wonder if they mean Muggle relatives of witches and wizards or just having to cover up accidental exposure."

"Probably both," Mary Ellen replied. She picked up some leaflets and pamphlets as she sat down next to Jolliet. "This one has a picture of a troll blocking the entrance of a bridge. *Have you got what it takes to train security trolls?* she read, laughing. "Or how about this one *Do you love fantastic beasts?* That must be for yep, dragon keepers. I heard the Siberian Fields was hiring."

"Gringotts has two this year *Do you enjoy the thrill of discovery? Fancy a job with travel and adventure?* Jolliet read aloud. "Dylan, here are two for you. *Do you enjoy being the first to read the next best seller?* That's from Whizzhard Books. *Be the first in the know of the latest in magic* this is from Obscurus Books. They are both hiring editors."

Mary Ellen leaned over to read the pamphlet in Jolliet's hand. "Says here you get to test out the spells and potions... That might be fun, Dylan. Oh, you'd need at least an Exceeds N.E.W.T. in each of the subjects listed but you are taking them all."

"Thanks, I'll keep that one in mind *IF* I pass everything," Dylan replied. "*Keep our parks and trails safe for Wizard and Mugglekind join the parks and recreation services.*" she read softly to her friends from a purple and white pamphlet. "I didn't know that the Ministry of Magic has wizards in the forestry department?" she asked, turning the page. "Oh, it's to keep tabs on giants and trolls and keep them in line... No, thank you," she stated and set the pamphlet down.

"*Are you a Quidditch enthusiast, but not so hot on a broom?* Quidditch international mediwizards are needed same course requirements as a Healer," Jolliet stated, examining two more booklets. "St. Mungo's has a full-color booklet this year. That's what I'm hoping for."

"Which, mediwitch or Healer?" Dylan asked.

"Tuh, mediwitch Quidditch players! Need I say more?" Jolliet asked, grinning.

"I'd like to work here in Hogsmeade," Mary Ellen said softly, examining two leaflets from both the Hog's Head and from Gladrags Wizardwear. She picked up a yellow notice and a green leaflet. "*You Too can Cultivate Fungus..* Oh, that sounds delightful!" she said, scrunching her nose in disgust. *Make enchanted candles and illuminations...* Oh, Illustrious Illuminaries is hiring."

"Mary Ellen, you should apply for that one, or at Gladrags," Dylan suggested with a knowing smirk. "At least until there is an opening at Avondale's for an entomologist." Mary Ellen blushed and then looked up at something across the room.

Jolliet looked up and grinned. "So, Dylan, what about you?" she asked with a twinkle in her eye. "Are you considering *ocation* in a joke shop?"

"Well, considering that most of my marks come from my essays and not so much for my spell work I always considered *myocation* would be in research," Dylan replied. "Why?"

"I'm not so sure I'd agree with that," one of the twins said, standing behind her. "You do good in Transfiguration and Potions."

Dylan turned as both Fred and George sat down on either side of her. "You do fairly well in Charms, too," Fred stated.

George looked at Dylan, and then over to Fred with a sly smile. "Course if you had your heart set on a job in a joke shop..."

"We might consider hiring a product production assistant," Fred said teasingly.

Jolliet looked at both guys, then looked questioningly at Dylan, cocking her eyebrow.

"So you're really going to open a joke shop?" Mary Ellen asked.

"Oh, I bet it will be grand! Where? Do you have a place in mind yet?" Jolliet asked.

"Yes, we're going to open a joke shop in Diagon Alley," George said to Mary Ellen, laughing, then turned to Jolliet and Levitated her quill right out of her hand. "And thank you we think we'll be smashing," he said as he made her quill brush against her face. Jolliet grabbed at her quill, laughing at his antics.

Dylan cocked her head, smiling at Fred. "With the marks I get from Professor Snape, I'm surprised you'd consider me."

"You must have gotten an Outstanding O.W.L. since you're *in* Potions," Fred countered.

George slid several leaflets and pamphlets aside as he set his books down. "From what I've seen you're good at Transfiguration," he stated.

"But my best subjects seem to be Herbology and Care of Magical Creatures this year... and that's only because my professors like my essays!" Dylan said. "I just know I'm going to fail miserably at Defense this year not to mention Potions."

"As much as you study?" Fred asked with an annoyed smirk. "I can hardly believe you." Both Jolliet and George chuckled while Mary Ellen rolled her eyes.

"I've noticed that you're not doing much lately. Um... I mean... you've been behaving yourself these last few days," Dylan stated, blushing at his comment, hoping to change the subject.

George smiled at her. "What's the point of disrupting leisure time?" He made Jolliet's quill tickle her nose.

"Besides we'd have messed up people's revision time, which would have been rude," Fred stated, making the book Mary Ellen was reading Levitate slightly.

George laughed. "I mean these are all potential customers," he said, sweeping his arm to indicate everyone sitting in the library. "They're going to need good jobs in order to buy our products, aren't they?"

"I miss your antics and our little adventures," Dylan said, shaking her head at him with a chuckle.

"Don't worry," Fred said, placing his arm across her shoulder. "It's business as usual after the holidays." He leaned close to her ear. "Of course we could go off for a bit of adventure now if you like... There are a few places, some secret passages that I haven't shown you."

"Oh no you don't!" Mary Ellen admonished them, trying to force her book to lie on the table. "You promised to help me revise for Transfiguration, Dylan."

"Later," Dylan whispered to Fred and opened up her Transfiguration notes.

~o0o~

That evening after dinner, Dylan sat in a crenel of a west battlement, reading through Eldrich's Defense notes, determined that if she was doomed to fail her Defense N.E.W.T. practical, she was at least going to do exceptionally well on the theory part of the exam. If her brother's notes were any indication, Professor Larkin had been quite thorough with his N.E.W.T. level class, and Dylan was thankful that Eldrich had taken such assiduous and comprehensive notations during his lessons. She was so engrossed in the explanation of the Patronus Charm that she didn't even hear Fred approach her until he stood right next to the merlon she was leaning against. "What are you reading?" he asked, causing Dylan to jump as he leaned toward her to kiss her on her cheek.

"O-oh! You you... Don't sneak up like that!" she said, playfully smacking him. "My brother's notes from his Defense Against the Dark Arts N.E.W.T. year. I just don't believe the *Toad* that we aren't going to need this stuff for our practical," she replied, setting the notebook on her knees. Fred cupped her face and placed a soft kiss on her lips. When the kiss ended, Dylan blushed and looked down at the notebook, then back at him, grinning.

He looked down at the page and smiled. "Patronus, huh? I'm quite certain that Umbridge would not approve of you learning that."

"But it might come up," Dylan protested. "Don't you remember that day in class when the *Toad* said that all we have to do to avoid a Dementor was *toduck*? I could've screamed. You remember what they were like; they were swarming around the school grounds our fifth year! They're terrible creatures."

"Must have missed that one," Fred said with a shake of his head and a chuckle. He leaned forward again and nuzzled her neck. "They were bothersome, cut down our excursions into the forest." He tried to kiss her, but Dylan pulled away.

"This is the only known defense against a Lethifold or Dementors," she stated, worried. "And, apparently, if you can distinguish the effects of a Pogrebin, you can also use the Patronus to escape their spell. I even found one case where the Patronus Charm was used against a vampire."

"And you think you're going to run into a Lethifold or a Pogrebin?" he asked. Dylan bit her lip and shrugged. "I could show you how if you like," he offered, pointing at the notebook.

"Would you?" she asked and put the notebook on the stone next to her, then turned around to face him. "You know how to do a Patronus?"

"Yeah, sure." He shifted her legs on either side of him, slowly sliding his hands along her thighs. "What do I get if I show you?"

Dylan felt shivers as his hands trailed from her knees to her hips and his arms encircled her waist. "What do you want? You already have all the chemicals."

"How about a kiss," Fred said.

"Show me first then I'll give you your kiss," she countered.

Fred feigned a look of indignation. "Don't you trust me?"

"You're too tempting a distraction," she said, running a hand along his arm. "You'll forget."

"Are you sure you're not a Slytherin?" he asked, grinning at her.

Dylan laughed, gave him a gentle push to back away and hopped down to her feet. "Nope, Ravenclaw just like my mum."

"Okay then, draw your wand." He drew his and held it firm. "The wand movement is more of a point, than a swish. Just think of something happy and say *Expecto Patronum*. Watch." He did the spell and a shapeless silvery mist whooshed from the tip of his wand, took the form of an orangutan that seemed to swing in the air, with its arms and legs flailing and brandishing about, and then faded.

Dylan was rightly impressed and laughed at the silver orangutan form before it vanished.

"All right then, your turn," he said, lowering his wand. She nodded and then looked at him for direction. "You have to think of something happy, a very happy memory. Hold onto the memory and the happy feeling in your mind, let it fill you up, and then say the incantation."

"All right then," Dylan said resolutely. She had many happy memories with her family and friends to choose from, but selected a happy memory of a time her mother took her flying, the day she received her first broom. "*Expecto Patronum*." A pale, silver mist flowed from her wand tip like thick smoke.

"Not bad, try again," Fred encouraged. "Think of something happier. That might help."

Dylan nodded and tried to think of something happier. *When Dad took Eldrich, Charlie, Mary Ellen and me to a carnival that was a fun day. That's a happy memory* She held on to the memory of the four of them laughing while they were spinning in a huge teacup and tried the incantation. The wispy, silver mist thickened forming swirls and ringlets from her wand.

Her next try produced a flare of bright, silvery-white light. "I'm not doing it right," she said with a scowl.

"You made a shield Patronus at least. Try to think of a really happy moment, or something you've done, that made you the happiest you have ever felt," Fred said, standing close behind her. "Personally, I chose our night in the turret."

Dylan blushed a deep pink. "And my sparkling pink pigs?" she asked before trying the spell again. However, it took many tries, and Fred's encouragement, before Dylan's silver projection began to take shape. A thick, silver mist burst from her wand, swirled and folded, then formed a shadowy, four-legged shape and dissipated. Dylan jumped up and down, turning to Fred, delighted. "Did you see it? I did it! Not as good as yours but I did it!"

"Yes, I saw it," Fred replied and kissed her as a reward for nearly making a corporeal Patronus.

Dylan laughingly wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back. "Thank you," she murmured. He deepened his kiss, pinning her to the stone and nearly bending her into the crenel space, effectively ending the lesson. Only when Fred's hands began to slide down her body did she push away from him, grinning. "You may want to rethink this... It's late, nearly sunset, and this is the first place Professor Snape comes to when he starts his patrol. He loves to catch couples that come up here to watch the sunset together. I'd hate for you to get more detentions with him on my account."

"Then either I Disillusion us, or I'm taking you up to our turret," he said lustily. "Because I have no intention of stopping."

"Oh, really?" she replied, wavering a bit on weakened knees, "How presumptuous of you."

"Absolutely," he said, claiming her mouth in a demanding kiss, then stopped abruptly, pulled away from the wall, pausing only long enough for Dylan to grab her books, and dragged her with him. "Come on. We can watch the sunset from your favorite window."

Fred hardly gave Dylan time to catch her breath or set her books down when they entered the turret before he threw off his robe and swept Dylan up into his arms. "So now, where were we?" he asked, his eyes alight and a huge grin on his face.

"I believe you were showing me how to produce a Patronus, Mr. Weasley," she chided him, drawing circles on his chest with her finger.

He eased her robes from her shoulders as he nuzzled her neck. "You have to think of a very happy memory," he said, trailing kisses just below her ear, "a very strong..." he added as her blouse opened up and he kissed her collarbone, "vivid and powerful memory."

Dylan reached up to wrap her arms around his neck, and Fred grabbed her hips, lifting her up to straddle him as he pinned her to the wall next to the window that overlooked Hogsmeade. "It's hard to even think with you doing that," she purred as his kisses trailed up to her ear again.

"Good."

~o0o~

That night, sitting on her bed, Dylan tried to produce a corporeal Patronus, using the memory of Fred's interruption of her revision, and the silvery mist burst from her wand tip into a large, shimmering, silvery lynx, which bounded around the room. All six of her dorm mates sat up, amazed at the silvery phantom shape, and clambered over to Dylan's bed to find out how she learned to do the Patronus.

~o0o~

Dylan, her mum and dad, Eldrich and Mary Ellen were leaving Madame Puddifoot's tea shop on Sunday after lunch, having spent the last day of the Easter holidays shopping in Mrs. Avondale's favorite stores. Both Mary Ellen and Dylan carried bags with sweets from Honeydukes, new quills and ink from Scrivenshaff's, and bath and body products from Auntie Ett's. Dylan had shampoo and body wash for Fred that she intended to give him that night as a joke.

As they said good-bye to her parents at the train depot, Dylan could have sworn that she saw Fred and George, but dismissed it as wishful thinking. However, on the walk back to the castle Dylan was positive that she saw something in the trees along the path. "Oh, Dylan, what is that?" Mary Ellen whispered nervously, confirming Dylan's suspicions.

"I'm not sure... If you want, I can transform and see?" Dylan offered. Both girls pulled out their wands, as they continued uneasily toward the castle.

Mary Ellen began to panic and moved closer to Dylan. "Don't leave me! It could be *anything*, Dylan! Dark creatures... werewolves!" From beside them in the trees came a wolf howl, making Dylan shake her head and Mary Ellen jump.

The girls aimed in the direction of the wolf cry and fired two Stunning Spells into the trees, and Dylan added a Jelly-Legs curse. A loud yelp confirmed Dylan's suspicions. "I don't think we have to worry about werewolves, Mary Ellen. I have a feeling it's friendly."

"If you thought we were friendly, why'd you fire off hexes?" they heard George complain.

"I thought you *liked* us." Fred walked out of the trees, supporting George, who was walking with noticeable difficulty.

"Boy, you have good aim!" George exclaimed.

"What were you planning on doing?" Mary Ellen admonished him angrily, now that her fear had ebbed away.

"Jump out and surprise you, of course," Fred answered. George could barely stand without his support. "Why did you fire a curse at us?"

"Didn't know it was you," Dylan stated. "Besides, you were the one who helped me with the Stunning Spell." She smiled as she pointed her wand at George to do the counter curse. He flinched before the bolt of turquoise blue hit his leg. "I only used the Stunner and a Jelly-Legs I could've picked something worse."

George stood up, shaking out his leg. "Thanks. Geeze, girl, you nearly took my legs off!"

Dylan shrugged apologetically. "Sorry. When you're good, you're good," she said, stowing her wand.

"But when you're bad you're *really* good," Fred finished for her, grinning at Dylan.

"I thought that the saying was, 'Be good or be really good at it!'" Dylan said flippantly, bending to pick up the packages she'd dropped. Fred retrieved a few of them for her.

"Same thing," they chorused as George reached down and picked up two packages Mary Ellen dropped.

"Just come back from shopping, I see?" George asked. Mary Ellen nodded shyly, but he shook his head when she reached to take them. "No, its okay, I got them. Heading back to the castle?"

"Yes. Hang on you were waiting for us... You were going to ambushus?" Mary Ellen asked.

"Nah, just coming to say hello," Fred replied, taking Dylan's free hand in his.

"By hiding in the trees?" asked Dylan as she looked up at him, stunned. Fred gave her hand a gentle pull as they started back to the castle. "I thought that you were laying off pranking people until *after* the holidays?"

"Well we did," they chorused again.

"Besides, the holidays are over, so it's back to business as usual," George said with a mischievous grin.

"You cannot be serious!" Mary Ellen exclaimed, stopping and looking at the twins. "You're going to do more stuff to Umbridge? Dylan, I thought you were that all that stuff was that you were done?"

Fred turned to face her and asked, "Umbridge is still here, isn't she?"

"And she's still trying to take over the school, isn't she?" George asked.

Mary Ellen nodded to each question.

"So until Dumbledore comes back she's fair game. Besides she is such an easy target," Fred stated. "Oh, by the way... We're doing it tomorrow... Something big our crowning achievement just after our lessons."

Dylan looked at Fred, then at George, her eyes wide. "Is this what all the chemicals were for?" she asked. Mary Ellen went slightly pale and her mouth gapped open.

"Ah, yeah, it is," they said in unison again, both with identical, wicked smiles.

"Are you going to tell me what it is?" Dylan asked, and Mary Ellen gaped at her friend, stunned.

George tried to give Mary Ellen a reassuring smile. "Let's just say you won't be able to miss it," he said proudly.

"It's going to be grand!" Fred added, equally as proud. "Oh! I'd stay out of the east wing tomorrow. Try to avoid Gregory the Smarmy's corridor around five o'clock, if you can."

"Then how will I get to see it?" Dylan asked. "I mean, if I'm to stay away from the corridor..."

"Don't worry," Fred said interrupting her. "It isn't something that will just happen it's much better than that. You'll see. Just don't be in the corridor when we set it off."

Dylan nodded, still feeling let down. *Dragon fire! I wanted to see it I wanted to watch them..* "Okay," she said trying to hide her disappointment.

Fred gave her a hand a squeeze. "Don't worry you'll see it. It will be great!"

~o0o~

Dylan was apprehensive all day. She really fought with her desire to be in the fifth floor corridor of the east wing. Still, she heeded Fred's warning, mostly because Mary Ellen refused to let Dylan go and spy on the twins when five o'clock approached. When the end of lesson bell sounded, Dylan regretfully left the library with her friends to head to their common room. However, as they began to ascend the stairs, there was a great commotion in the castle. There were several explosions from spells echoing from above her and doors slamming from both above and below in the castle. Students were yelling and several were running down the stairs, covered in mucky mire and mud with remnants of green algae and moss. A few also had remnants of grasses and twigs stuck in their hair and robes. Dylan was swept up in the crowd as they moved down to the Entrance Hall.

Standing on the stairs, Dylan could see students, teachers, even the ghosts, forming a large ring around Fred and George in the Entrance Hall. Umbridge stood in the center, bearing down on the twins, and the members of the Inquisitorial Squad stood in a circle, holding back the crowd. All around in the growing crowd, many students were still covered in mucky quagmire, algae and moss with varying expressions of anger, annoyance and stunned disbelief. Fred and George stood together; both with the unmistakable look of two people completely cornered, wands drawn, shoulder-to-shoulder, ready to defend themselves. Dylan's heart raced in her chest as she watched.

"So!" said Umbridge, triumphantly. "So you think it amusing to turn a school corridor into a swamp, do you?"

Several girls standing near Dylan covered in mire and muck, began to ask those standing next to them, "They made the swamp?"

"Yeah, they made it they must have," a boy answered.

"Pretty amusing, yeah," Fred said without the slightest sign of fear.

"How did they it's huge!" a girl exclaimed, stunned. There were replies of assent from others. "It looks real right in the middle of the corridor. It takes up the whole floor!" Dylan tried to block them out, trying to hear what would happen to Fred and George, wondering how the twins would get out of this mess.

They did it! They made a swamp? Dylan's mind raced, as she watched the twins. Well, I saw him create and demolish a tree but a whole swamp! Galloping Gargoyles! Gregory the Smarmy's corridor... fifth floor... Just don't be in the corridor when we set it off, he'd said.

Filch arrived, pushing his way through the gathering crowd. "I've got the form, Headmistress," he said hoarsely, with a huge smile on his face. For the first time ever as far as Dylan could recall, he actually looked happy! "I've got the form and I've got the whips waiting... Oh, let me do it let me do it now," he said, wheezing obviously from running.

Dylan gasped, mortified.

"Very good, Argus," the Toad said, never taking her eyes off Fred and George. "You two are about to learn what happens to wrongdoers in my school." Several students inhaled loudly, and others started muttering. In Dylan's ears, their whispered talk sounded like billywigs.

"You know what?" Fred said defiantly. "I don't think we are." He turned to his twin and addressed him as if this were merely a poorly directed play. "George, I think we've outgrown full-time education."

George made a grand gesture of assent. "Yeah I've been feeling that way myself."

Dylan sucked in her breath with apprehension, stunned by the twin's declaration. *They couldn't mean that! Talk your way out of this...please! Filch can't McGonagall wouldn't really let him...*

"Time to test our talents in the real world, d'you reckon?" Fred stated dramatically.

"Definitely," George said, mimicking Fred's pose, and before Umbridge, Filch or the Toad's precious Inquisitorial Squad could react, Fred and George shouted, *Accio brooms!* Dylan almost thought that she could actually feel the surge of magic jet up the stairs past her.

Instantly a loud crash echoed from the next floor. Nearly everyone turned around just in time to see two brooms, iron rings still clamped tightly on the handles, and one broom trailing a heavy chain and iron bolt, came hurling down from above, sweeping down the stairs to the twins. Everyone ducked or dove out of the way to avoid the swinging chain and lethally swinging bolt and then scrambled back to their feet.

"We won't be seeing you," declared Fred defiantly to Umbridge as both Fred and George grabbed hold of their brooms when the matching Cleansweeps swept up in front of them, the iron bolt clanging loudly on the stone floor. Umbridge was slowly climbing back to her feet, and the members of the Inquisitorial Squad were shoving people off them as they tried to control the crowd.

"Yeah, don't bother to keep in touch," George challenged, and in one fluid movement they both mounted their brooms. The exhilaration on their faces was hard to miss.

"If anyone fancies buying a Portable Swamp, as demonstrated upstairs, come to number ninety-three, Diagon Alley Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes," Fred announced in a loud voice. "Our new premises!"

Murmurs of wonderment and bewilderment spread throughout the students on the stairs around Dylan. The words 'Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes' repeated over and over as if by thousands of echoes. Dylan was awestruck! *Portable Swamp? Swamp... the library... the books... the elements...*

"Special discounts to Hogwarts students who swear they're going to use our products to get rid of this old bat!" George proclaimed pointing at Umbridge.

Oh my Goddess! They're going too far she'll expel them for sure. Don't they realize? Dylan's mind raced as she watched the twins, slowly feeling a sense of panic. *But they can't really mean to leave school this close to N.E.W.T.s! They can't just LEAVE!*

Suddenly Umbridge snapped out of her dumbfounded paralysis. *"STOP THEM!"* she screamed, causing Filch and the members of the Inquisitorial Squad to snap out of their similar stupefied trances, and they all dived for Fred and George, albeit too late; for Fred and George had already leapt into the air on their brooms, the iron peg swaying dangerously from George's broom.

"Fred! No no you can't!" Dylan didn't realize she'd screamed. Several students below did scream, some already beginning to applaud and cheer *But but... You can't not now... Fred! They are just going to... just leave.... "Oh, Merlin no!"*

They made a wide sweep of the Entrance Hall, making Umbridge, Filch and the Inquisitorial Squad fall on their faces, as well as all the students under them dive and duck again. "Give her hell from us, Peeves!" Fred shouted at the poltergeist on his last sweep of the room.

To Dylan's amazement, and probably to the amazement of every one watching, Peeves did the unthinkable. She was flabbergasted as she watched Peeves, who, instead of blowing raspberries or making some kind of rude retort or hand jester... Peeves, who never did *anything* anyone *ever* asked him to do let alone *accept an order from a student* swept his belled hat from his head and gave Fred a *salute!*

Every student in the hall, on the marble staircase and standing in the open doorway of the great oak doors, stood stunned. For a brief second of silence the world stopped. Then the students began to applaud. The noise of the cheers escalated and became tumultuous as applause, stomping feet, whistles, cheers, even some snaps and crackles literally reached a crescendo. The sound literally reverberated off the walls. Fred and George waved a final salute to the crowd and shot out of the open doors literally flying off into a glorious sunset and out of Dylan's life.

~***~

Author's notes:

You know that this cannot be the end... sorry, only one more chapter.

I want to thank both Lumiere and Musci5 for proof reading this story and to Juliannanight and Charmed3 for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable and to Notsosainly for making it presentable.

Quotes and some descriptions in the 'great escape' scene was taken directly from: JK Rowling, *The Order Of The Phoenix*, (Raincoast Publishing, Canada, 2004), p 567-568, simply for continuity of the story, and is thus borrowed. I don't mean to plagiarize JK's fabulous work, but if I knew her to ask her permission I would. I just hope that she doesn't mind.

The timeline seems off here: On HP Lexicon, Easter Holidays is shown as starting April 2nd and going until the end of the month either April 27th or May 4th. According to a UK calendar for 1995, Easter is on April 16th and Easter Monday is on the 17th, so if the students get two weeks off for Easter, they would return to lessons on May 1st. This makes better sense and fits my story better. Thus, for the story, Dylan has permission to visit her family at her brother's house on the weekends of: April 16-17, 23-24 and 30-31.

For those of us who grew up in America, in regards to terms used: the battlements are a walkway on the top walls of a castle and are decorated with defensive crenellations the distinctive pattern of notches or regular rectangular spaces along the battlements of castle walls. The openings are called crenels, while the raised portions are the merlons.

I have no idea what form Fred's Patronus would take. However, if the animal form has anything to do with one's personality an orangutan or chimpanzee just seemed a perfect fit: cute, mischievous, rather clever, fairly inventive, will cause mayhem and havoc when left unattended, and will usually give their keepers an innocent look when caught doing something naughty. Doesn't that just describe the twins?

Platymerus Biguttata is the white-eyed assassin bug. If you like bugs, it's a rather interesting looking beetle.

Epilogue

Chapter 11 of 11

The Weasley twins are very clever practical jokers, masters of mischief and mayhem, staunch adversaries of authority, pretension, and known to be disrespectful to teachers in general. Is it any wonder that they took on Umbridge?

So what happens when a fellow student turns to Fred and George, asking for help in getting even with Umbridge? How far will they go in pestering and teasing her, flaunting their wicked sense of humor and inventiveness, and blatant shenanigans? And why would she be gullible enough to go along?

For the most part, law and order seemed to fly out the great oak doors along with Fred and George. Chaos, mischief and mayhem became the norm around the castle. Practical jokes and pranks were made against Umbridge, Filch and any member of the Inquisitorial Squad, or any student from Slytherin for that matter, throughout the day and even at night. Although, all the other professors were for the most part exempt from receiving the brunt of the mischief and pranks, general rule breaking reached an all time high. There were so many Stink Pellets, Dungbombs, Crack-Snaps and exploding firecrackers in the corridors it actually became fashionable to wear the Bubble-Head Charm as soon as you left your common room.

Rumors of Fred and George's great escape ran rampant throughout the castle, and their story was retold so often, Dylan was sure that it would eventually become another Hogwarts legend. The swamp remained in place as none of the professors made any attempt to remove it, and Umbridge was obviously utterly incapable to handle the clean up. So every day Filch was required to punt the students across so that they could all get to their classes, causing long queues on either side of the swamp and making students late to their lessons. Anyone who had Defense Against the Dark Arts went out of their way so that they had to cross the swamp to get to the Toad's classroom. Many of Dylan's classmates arrived with the hems of their robes soaking, reeking of stagnant water and leaving muddy boot prints on her floor.

Also, the now famous door from Umbridge's office had been removed. The rumor was that it had been hidden in the dungeons, but it had in fact been placed in one of Filch's storerooms. Dylan found the storeroom quite by accident and took the door, shrinking it, so that she could hide it in her trunk. Possibly, if Fred ever answered any of her letters, she would owl it to him, but for now, she held onto the door like a cherished treasure.

Members of the Inquisitorial Squad had it especially rough, as they found themselves attacked on a daily basis and frequently from more than one student at a time. Pansy Parkinson was hit by a Pig-Nose Transfiguration Spell one day, Snot-Running Hex another, and an Antler Hex the next. Cillian Warrington was given the Reverse-Foot Hex one morning, Knocking-Knees Jinx the next and some curse that seemed to cover every inch of exposed skin in something resembling cornflakes, the following afternoon.

Adrian Pucey had just recovered from a rather well done Serpent-Spine Curse when he was apparently pelted with Stinksap, which didn't mix very well with the bubotuber powder Dylan saw a fifth-year throw at him. Even Larissa Celford was hit with a Stretching Hex and a Knee-Reversing Hex simultaneously that landed her in the hospital for a few days. She had just been released when Dylan hit her with the Bat-Bogey Hex Fred had taught her.

Even third-years became fairly adept at animal-appendage Transfiguration spells, engorgement, thickening and lengthening jinxes of every possible type, from eyebrows to fingers and toenails, and Jelly Curses for every possible body part as well as Trip Jinx, Langlock, Body Binds and Stunning and Immobilizing Jinxes. Leg-Knotting Hexes were fired at random at passing Slytherins and many adaptations were created that seemed to affect any *appendage*: fingers, elbows, knees, legs and arms. Twitchy-Ears was also adapted to affect nose, eyes, lips, every other appendage, even hips of Inquisitorial Squad at random.

A Flitterbloom bush appeared in the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, sitting next to the Toad's chair. Apparently the Toad couldn't even tell the difference from a Flitterbloom plant and Devil's Snare, and the plant scared Umbridge so much she refused to go near her desk. Amusingly enough, Professor Sprout was too preoccupied with pruning her plants to be able to help her. Twice, niffers were put into Umbridge's office and nearly bit her fingers off trying to get her rings.

Dylan's idea of sabotaging the Toad's water sparked the imagination of a few others. Someone managed to put Swelling Solution in Umbridge's water pitcher in one class, and the next day someone slipped the Toad a Babbling Beverage. Unfortunately after drinking some Treble-Draft Dylan slipped her, the Toad no longer kept any water on her desk. But, that didn't stop Dylan and Jolliet from leaving bubotuber pus on the chair in her office, along with a huge bouquet of Fanged Geraniums on her desk, and a pile of Mallowsweet stalks hidden in her Floo, then jamming the Floo closed so that the smoke would fill her office rather than rise out.

Every Defense Against the Dark Arts class, from the first-years through the seventh, began to skiv off lessons. Fevers, nosebleeds, fainting, vomiting, boils and rashes broke out on a daily basis. *If these are all from Fred and George's candies and sweets* thought Dylan, *they have a very good start on their shop* As it was, Dylan had become rather prone to nosebleeds herself, thanks to a box of nougats from Fred, and was getting quite used to the taste of Blood-Replenishing Potion. She was taking it so often, she was contemplating learning how to brew the potion herself.

On another day, Dylan and Jolliet broke into Umbridge's loo, switched her shampoo and conditioner labels, put quagmire in her facial mask, and set off some Dungbombs.

Every night Dylan slept with her window open so that her mum's owl, Sina, could fly in. Each week, in the dead of night when Sina delivered her mail, Dylan would send her off to Fred and George with a lengthy letter, letting them know about any shenanigan, prank, or mischief she heard about around the castle. She only hoped that they would figure out her hint about the perfume spray she'd sent them. However, Fred never answered her letters.

The next thing Dylan knew N.E.W.T.s were upon them. Every moment of her day was spent either revising for the upcoming N.E.W.T. written exams or practicing with her friends for the practical exams.

One morning, before Dylan's Charms N.E.W.T. practical, Dylan was stunned by the news that Umbridge and four other wizards tried to sack Professor Hagrid in the middle of the night. Professor McGonagall had tried to intervene on his behalf and was hit by no less than four Stunners to her chest. Dylan had gasped in shock at the news.

Professor Hagrid apparently tried fight off all five wizards, defending Professor McGonagall and barely escaped with his own life by running out the front gates, carrying his dog, Fang, in his arms. Worse, students said that Professor McGonagall was so badly hurt that she had been taken to St. Mungo's because Madam Pomfrey couldn't cure her. Needless to say, Dylan had a hard time concentrating in her Charms practical; her nonverbal Cheering Charm was too strong, and her Patronus scarcely took form and lasted only a minute. She walked out of the Great Hall feeling like she barely passed her exams. Nevertheless, she hurried to the owlery to ask her parents to send flowers to Professor McGonagall to cheer her up.

Throughout the week, the castle was rampant with wild rumors. The strangest Dylan heard was about five students from Gryffindor and Luna Lovegood from her own house. One rumor was that apparently Umbridge, for some unknown reason, followed Harry Potter and his friends into the Forbidden Forest, but that they pulled a Weasley and escaped. The other was that Umbridge went into the forest to try and evict the centaurs... or she attacked them... something like that and ended up abducted by the herd. What seemed to be definite was the story that Harry Potter and his friends had left school.

The next day Luna strolled into the common room, said good morning to Dylan, Jolliet and Mary Ellen, and walked casually to her room. Half the girls followed her to try and find out where she'd been. All Luna said was that Harry Potter had to save the Ministry of Magic and that Dumbledore was back. No one believed her until breakfast the next morning when they all saw Dumbledore sitting in his chair at the High Table table. Apparently, the news that Dumbledore had returned and had taken back the school had been correct. Dylan felt that she would never distrust or doubt Luna again.

It was on Sunday, when the truth came out. *The Daily Prophet* carried the story of Thursday night's events, detailing that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and his followers attacked Harry Potter, Ronald Wesley, Neville Longbottom, Hermione Granger, Ginevra Weasley and Luna Lovegood in the Department of Mysteries, inside the Ministry of Magic itself. The Ministry was finally admitting that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named had returned and that Dumbledore and Harry Potter had been telling the truth all along. Somehow, Dylan felt only deep sorrow and great apprehension about the news and ended up in her dorm room crying. She wrote one final letter to Fred and George telling them everything, this time not bothering to use the special invisibility ink, but her dark blue instead. There was no point. With Dumbledore back the owls were not being intercepted anymore. Things were beginning to settle down to normal at Hogwarts.

The day that Professor McGonagall returned, Dylan slipped down to the fifth floor corridor in the east wing to see the remains of Fred and George's swamp. The huge swamp that for weeks had taken up the entire corridor, had been reduced to a manageable puddle that covered only half the corridor under the window. A thick braided cord roped off the remains of the swamp, and Dylan walked the length of the barrier, sliding along her finger along the silky cord, staring into the murky water. She pulled out a small plaque from her pocket, tapping the back with her wand, then touching the wall, saying the Permanent Stick Charm and set the plaque in place. For the first time in days, she smiled and walked away.

Her plaque read:

Fred and George Weasley

Gryffindor House from 1989 to 1996

They stood up for what was right.

Brought smiles to all who knew them.

They considered this swamp their finest achievement.

But their legacy will be the fun, laughter and brevity

their mischief and creativeness added to our lives.

Class of 1996

~o0o~

It had been months. Dylan's family had been worried all year and decided to spend the hot summer months in Greece. As September neared its zenith, Dylan moved to Hogsmeade to stay with her brother. She had sent owls to several job possibilities, but few of the offers seemed to entice her.

As Jolliet suggested, Dylan did apply to both WhizzHard Books and Obscurus Books, as well as to *Witch Weekly* as an editor. She had interviews set up with all three. Dressed in her best dark blue robe and a simple black dress, she left the offices of Obscurus Books, feeling like the offer made by Wilbur Raincoast, the editor and chief, was rather generous and wondering to herself why his decision to hire her didn't excite her. Her mood was as blank and empty as some of the shop windows she passed. She had wanted an ice cream, a rich ice cream sundae with plenty of caramel and whipped cream, but was deeply saddened that Florean Fortescue's was boarded up. So were Ollivander's and the second hand robe shop. Twilfitt and Tattings had a sign that read 'By appointment only,' hanging over the 'closed' sign in the window.

She stood outside the door of the Magical Menagerie, staring at the posted notice, showing the photographs of four of the escaped convicts from Azkaban with a sense of dread before entering the shop. "May I help you, miss?" the proprietor, a woman with heavy black spectacles, asked.

"I'm interested in a kneazle," Dylan replied. "Or a half-kneazle would do."

"Of course, miss. Excellent animals to have around in times like these, aren't they... Yes of course they are," the kindly witch replied. "We have several half-kneazle kittens all adorable." Dylan was shown the pen. She sat down, watching the kittens carefully, and waited until one showed the proper interest. Two of the kittens rubbed against the wires, but one in particular seemed to sit, looking back at her as if regarding her as a potential owner. It stood and stretched, then sat down again. The kitten almost looked like a Siamese or Burman snowshoe cat with a fluffy, dark tail and dark ears, a beige body with white around its nose and on all four feet. The little kitten had bright azure eyes. However, the kitten was long and gangly, likely to grow into a rather large cat, and the medium-length, fluffy fur bore the subtle spotted pattern, obviously carried over from its kneazle parent. What impressed Dylan most was the way the kitten regarded her, intelligent and thoughtful.

"Hello," Dylan said softly. "You're a pretty one, aren't you?"

The kitten twitched its tail in response.

"And how would you like to come home with me?" she asked.

The kitten's azure eyes stared at her, intently, and its tail twitched again.

"Although, I can't see why you would..."

The kitten stretched and stood again, taking a few steps in Dylan's direction and sat down as if making up its mind.

"Of course, I'm job hunting... Living on my small savings... and haven't a home yet... I'm staying with family for now... Actually my brother's house... and, well... I'm choosing my options... but I don't know what I want."

The kitten yawned and looked up over Dylan's head as she continued talking. "I just haven't decided yet, I suppose. But I'm a cat of sorts myself. I suppose I'm really just looking for a companion... and a friend someone to love and curl up with. Are you interested?"

"Definitely," Fred said, standing behind her.

The kitten stepped to the edge of the pen and plopped over, rolling on its back, purring. However, Dylan's attention was now focused on Fred. "Fred! I um... Hi. How are you?" she asked surprised to see him.

"Doing well," he replied.

"I missed you. I wrote you several times," she piped up and then looked away. "But... I suppose you've been busy."

The kitten made another attempt at getting Dylan's attention, then sat next to the pen, purring louder, looking up at her.

"You wrote me?" he asked, crossing his arms. "I received the cologne you sent not my type of scent, by the way... and loads of blank sheets of parchment. Every Revealing Spell I tried only showed me copies from some spell books. George and I thought you were trying to single-handedly continue our lessons. However, I only received *one* letter."

"It's not exactly cologne it's chemicals that react to the ink... If you had sprayed it on the pages... You thought they were only copies... You never read my letters?" she asked stunned.

He shook his head. "No, the only one I got was a novel telling me about Umbridge getting sacked, Luna's account at the Ministry of Magic and Dumbledore retuning and a long story about our swamp." He looked down at her with a bemused smile on his face. "It's been made into a memorial, huh."

Dylan blushed a deep pink. "Seemed appropriate," she said.

The kitten let out a loud meow.

Dylan leaned down and picked her up, and the kitten began to purr again. "Professor Flitwick said that was quite an amazing demonstration of magic. He felt it was a shame to have to remove it, so he left a sizable amount of it under the window."

He nodded, regarding her thoughtfully. "So, what brings you to Diagon Alley? I saw you walk past the shop. Why didn't you stop by?"

"You never answered my letters," she said, unable to meet his eye. "I thought... maybe... you didn't want to see me again."

"Yeah, I follow every girl I don't want to see again into the Menagerie," he stated with a sweep of his hand. "You didn't answer my question. What brings you to Diagon Alley?" he asked again.

The proprietor chose that moment to walk up to them. "So have you found a match, dear?"

"Yes, I think so," Dylan answered, turning slowly from Fred's questioning stare. "I'll take her."

The proprietor smiled. "Lovely. She will be eight Galleons. And is there anything I can get for you, Mr. Weasley? Some puffskein pellets, perhaps." Dylan pulled eight Galleons from her pocket for the proprietor.

"No, not today, I was just looking," he said. The proprietor gave Dylan a lovely carrier basket. "You never answered my question," he persisted.

"I've been offered a position at Obscurus Books by Wilbur Raincoast," she answered as they left the shop. "I'm to owl him with my decision tonight... but well, I'm

considering the position. I also received an offer from *Witch Weekly*, which I'm also considering as an editor."

She hadn't realized it, but Fred had gently steered her in the direction of his shop. "What's holding you back? I thought that you wanted to be an editor?"

"I'm not sure what I want to do. Yes, I wanted a job that involved research... but I wanted something... of a challenge... I can't decide," she answered, although she couldn't keep the uncertainty from her voice. "My parents are moving down to Greece, and Eldrich is planning a long trip to Africa."

"So, where are you staying?" he asked, although Dylan was certain he was just asking to be polite.

"For now... at Eldrich's house," Dylan said. "Mary Ellen and I are going to watch the place until he gets back. She took a job with Illustrious Illuminaries."

"How did you do on your N.E.W.T.s?" he asked as he opened the door to his shop.

Dylan was momentarily shocked by the bright colorful packages and displays. "Thanks to you I passed Defense with an Exceeds," she said, looking around in complete awe. "Mostly because I was able to produce a reasonable shield Patronus," she said, finally looking back at him. "My other N.E.W.T.s were all right. I only received an Exceeds in Charms, an Outstanding in Transfiguration... I transformed, impressed my examiner. I'm registered now."

"Are you?" he asked. Nervously Dylan examined the various exploding items on a shelf. "What markings identify you?"

She was about to answer when George approached. "Dylan! Hi! Finally come to see the shop, have you?"

"George. Hi. It's good to see you," she stammered, smiling at him. *It is good to see him. I never realized just how much I've missed them* Fred was watching her intently and George was smiling. "Fred, he brought me uh, here." She felt awkward under Fred's stare and tried to keep her focus on George. "I bought a cat."

"We don't sell cats do we sell cats, Fred?" George asked, teasingly, watching Fred. "We have Pigmy Puffs and exploding salamanders, ever-leaping togs... no cats that I recall." He turned back to Dylan. "I loved the concealed copies from all the spell books by the way. I suppose you didn't want us to fall behind in our lessons?"

"Apparently there are concealed messages on those pages. I was supposed to use my new cologne on them," Fred answered before Dylan could explain.

"Thank Circe, that stuff smells god awful," George stated. "Although, we did manage to reproduce the scent for our men's trick de-odorant and our trick aftershave. Revealing Cologne, huh? Imagine that. Don't suppose you'd sell us the formula?" Fred turned his head, his expression undecipherable. George smirked at him and turned back to Dylan, smiling. "So, are you staying for dinner? Love to have you... unless you made plans with Fred?"

"No, no plans..." Fred grabbed her arm and pulled Dylan to the back of the shop and into a work area, and then stood facing her. "So what's going on, Dylan? I thought we had something going, and then you jaberknolled up. I was rather miffed that you didn't write me." He crossed his arms, his eyes betraying his hurt.

"But I did write you! Only everything was being searched... censored, and I had to find a way to send letters that couldn't be read except by you... and I had to use my mum's owl in the dead of night to send anything. Even then she was caught twice," Dylan tried to explain. "I you never wrote me... I thought you that after..." She looked at her basket and the sleeping half-kneazle kitten. "After you left school... and I never heard from you, I assumed things were over."

"I did write you. What I got back looked like blank parchment and a bottle of a strange, bloody awful smelling cologne." He sounded slighted and a bit angry.

Dylan looked up at him, confused. "You did?"

"I sent you three letters, but finally gave up," he stated, exasperated. "Then, when you finally did write me a letter all twelve parchment sheets front and back but you didn't give me any explanation just a lengthy accounting of the events at school. What was I to think?"

"I never got any letters from you," she said, surprised.

He tilted her face up to look her in the eye. "So, where are we, Dylan? What do you want? Why are you here, now... What do you expect?"

"I don't know..." she answered. Her heart was pounding and her mouth went dry *What do I want I want you... What do I expect what DO I expect? Nothing. For you to turn me away to forgive me...* "What do you want?"

He was silent as he looked at her, regarding her with a look of scrutiny. "I don't know? I thought that you that we had something."

"We did do. I still want us, but if you don't if you..." She had to say it or she'd always wonder, but the words wouldn't come out. *still love you* "I thought I'd lost you when you left school. It wasn't the same after you'd gone," she confessed softly.

The kitten stirred and Fred took the basket and set it on the worktable.

"Whatever you want... I'll anything." Her heart was thumping just above her gut.

"I want this," he said softly as he cupped her face and kissed her.

Dylan's mind was floating, time froze and her arms immediately wrapped around him. She kissed him back, and his response was as eager as hers, needy and hungry, firm and demanding. She clung to him, pressing her body against his, and she opened her mouth and his tongue slipped inside and sought hers. He was seeking satisfaction from her, and she responded to him, melding with him, taking pleasure in kissing him, wanting so much more. A moan escaped her as he began teasing her with his tongue and lips, playfully taunting her, drawing her to kiss him. She reached up and kissed him back fervently, months of doubt ebbing away into a feeling of bliss.

When he broke the kiss, her knees felt weak. He tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear. "So, are you staying for dinner? I'd love to have you?"

"Yes, I'd like that too," she said, nearly breathless, and he tightened his embrace, holding her as if he would not ever let her go.

"Good."

Author's Notes:

A great deal of gratitude goes to some betas who really helped me a lot with this story:

I want to thank both Lumiere and Music5 for proofreading this story, and to Juliannanight and Charmed3 for their time and efforts in helping me shape this story up into something readable, and to Southern_Witch_69 for making this story presentable for reading.