

Chapter 26

“So, we’ve got Banshees, Sirens, and the Drekvac,” Hermione said. “They’re all known for loud screams.”

Harry rocked his chair back on two legs, threading his fingers behind his head with a sigh.

“Well, the scream of a Banshee would have killed me, and Sirens usually imitate women in distress to attract men, so I don’t think it’s either of those,” he said. “I have no idea what a Drekvac is.”

“It’s native to eastern Europe and looks like a dog or a fox with the back legs of a kangaroo,” Hermione told him. “It’s said their scream heralds death.”

Harry grimaced.

“Lovely,” he said.

He propped his feet up on the table, but Hermione quickly slapped them aside, causing his chair to slam back on all fours.

“Stop that before you get us kicked out,” she hissed. “And besides, we shouldn’t rule out a Banshee. I doubt a recording of a scream would hold the same power as if it came from the real thing.”

“Banshees are native to Ireland, aren’t they?” Harry asked.

Hermione nodded.

"It's probably that then."

"But we can't be sure," Hermione said pointedly. "I'd like to listen to the egg myself so I can judge it better."

Harry shrugged, "It's your eardrums. You can come to the train after dinner and I'll show it to you."

She perked up excitedly.

"Is that allowed?" she asked.

"I didn't ask," Harry grinned.

"Well, maybe you should," Hermione said, beginning to pack away her books.

"I've found it's better to ask for forgiveness rather than permission most of the time," he smirked.

Hermione rolled her eyes and muttered, "Of course you do."

But as she tried to jam another book into her overstuffed bag, he noticed an envelope with her name on the outside written in familiar handwriting. Smirking, he snatched it from her bag.

"Is this from Michelle?" he asked.

Hermione ripped the letter from his hand with a glare and stuffed it deep in her bag.

“Not that it’s any of your business, but yes, we’ve been corresponding,” she said haughtily.

Harry grinned.

“I know you two would have a lot in common.”

Hermione blushed lightly as she finished packing her bag and they left the library.

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After dinner, while Tonks went off with Jennifer and Amanda to get started on her homework, Harry escorted Hermione to the Ilvermorny train. The air was crisp and cool as they traversed the ground. They waved to Hagrid on their way past his hut, and Harry pulled open the door with a flourish. A set of metal steps neatly unfolded from the side of the car.

“After you,” he said.

Hermione stepped inside, and Harry smiled as she gazed around in wonder. The car they’d entered was at the front, just behind the engine, and used as their common room. Several students were lounging on couches and in chairs near a gently cracking fireplace. Most of them had books in their laps, but one couple had tucked themselves into a corner and sat amorously close.

“What do you think?” Harry asked.

“It’s nice,” Hermione smiled. “You know, other than being much bigger on the inside, I’m surprised by how Muggle everything feels.”

“American wizarding society is much closer to No-majs than they are here in Britain.”

The response hadn't come from Harry, and Hermione turned quickly to face Professor Turner.

"Oh, hello, Headmistress Turner," she said, doing a nervous half curtsy. "I didn't mean to intrude, but Harry invited me to help with his egg."

"You're more than welcome, my dear," Professor Turner smiled. "Mr. Potter isn't doing anything against the rules... this time."

They both turned to look at him.

"What?" he asked innocently.

"If he gives you any problems, give him a good hex," Professor Turner said, patting Hermione on the arm.

"Hey!" Harry protested loudly. "That's harassment!"

"Feel free to make a complaint," Professor Turner said as she turned to talk away.

Harry smiled and shook his head as she entered her quarters and closed the door.

"Come on," he told Hermione. "My room's all the way at the back."

"You two seem close," she noted as they traveled down the hall.

"I've spent a lot of time in her office," Harry admitted with a grin.

"Are you ever not in trouble?" she asked.

“Of course,” he smiled, to which he received a disbelieving look. “Hey, believe it or not, I get away with stuff much more often than I get caught.”

He opened the door to his room and stepped inside while Hermione shook her head.

“That’s not a good thing,” she muttered.

Stepping inside the room, she looked around curiously while Harry uncovered the egg in the corner of the room and set it on his study desk. Hermione walked over and studied it closely.

“The clasp is on top,” he said.

Stepping back, he covered his ear as she reached up and gave the clasp a twist. The three leaves of the egg sprang open with a click, and then a disturbing scream filled the room. Hermione backed away and covered her ears with a cringe. She stared at the glittering, wobbling center of the egg for several seconds before uncovering her ears and snapping the egg closed. Harry uncovered his ears as blissful silence reigned.

With a furrowed brow and a puzzled look, Hermione dropped into his chair and crossed her arms over her chest.

“What do you think?” Harry asked, grabbing Dora’s chair and pulling it over.

“Well, before I saw the egg, I would have said a Siren was the least likely, but that bubble of water in the middle *has* to be a clue, and it fits. Sirens live near water to attract sailors.”

“Okay, so it’s a Siren,” Harry said.

“But it doesn’t make sense,” Hermione said, bouncing her leg agitatedly. “Sirens aren’t dangerous if you know what you’re dealing with, and I don’t think they would scream like that. There must be something we’re missing.”

She bit her lip thoughtfully before suddenly springing to her feet.

“I need to go back to the library.”

Harry didn’t even have time to get out of his chair before she was out of the room. Leaning back in his chair, he smiled and folded his hands behind his head.

“Less work for me.”

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Showing Hermione the egg wasn’t as helpful as he’d hoped. They spent a week researching after class and hadn’t found anything useful. A Siren was still their best guess, but neither of them was confident that’s what he would be dealing with. In the meantime, Harry started looking into spells to control and manipulate water, since they were both convinced the second task would be in or near water.

On Saturday, they took a much-needed break, in Harry’s opinion, from the library. Early in the morning, while Dora was in the shower, he snuck out of the room and jogged over to the greenhouses where he borrowed a handful of red roses. He made it back just as Dora was leaving the bathroom and presented them to her with a flourish.

“Happy birthday!” he said cheerfully.

Smiling, Dora took the roses, grabbed the front of his shirt, and pulled him in for a searing kiss.

“Thank you,” she said softly. “So, what did you get me?”

Harry grinned.

“What? Couldn’t find it?” he teased.

“No,” Dora pouted. “Now, gimme.”

Smirking, Harry walked over to her wardrobe and dug through the clothes piled at the back. A few moments later, he returned with a small, flat, colorfully wrapped package.

“Sneaky,” Dora smiled. “I’ll have to remember that for Christmas.”

Taking the package from his hand, she tore it open gleefully. Inside were two front row seats to The Weird Sisters. Dora squealed and hugged him tightly with a wide smile on her face.

“You’re the best!” she exclaimed.

Setting the roses and tickets on the desk, she grabbed him by the hand and led him out of the room. They made their way up to the castle with Jenna and the rest of their classmates and had a quick breakfast before they were back outside, waiting in line for the carriages. Harry’s attention was pulled away from Hermione, who was describing Hogsmeade, when he spotted the black, skeletal, winged horses pulling the carriages.

“Whoa, what are those?” he asked, stepping closer for a better look.

“What are what?” Hermione asked.

“The things pulling the carriages,” Harry said.

The girls shared an odd look.

“Harry, there’s nothing there,” she said. “The carriages pull themselves.”

Harry snorted, “No, they don’t. Look.”

He raised his hand and patted one of the horses on the back. It felt as bony as it looked, but huffed happily at the attention.

“Whoa, let me try,” Dora said.

She walked over and waved her hand through the air searchingly. Harry grabbed her by the wrist and guided her hand until it rested on the horse’s back.

“Sick,” Dora grinned. “I wonder why I can’t see it.”

“Only those who have seen death can see Thestrals.”

They turned and saw Professor Flitwick had made his way to the front of the line.

“Oh!” Hermione gasped. “Why didn’t I think of that!”

“They’re quite rare,” Flitwick said. “And while I hate to ruin a learning moment, there’s quite a line starting to form.”

Harry looked back over his shoulder and saw a line of students going all the way back to the entrance of the castle.

“Right, sorry,” he said.

With an apologetic wave to the growing crowd of cold, grumbling students, they boarded the carriage. The Thestrals seemed to know the moment everyone was aboard, and without a visible signal, they began to move. It took several minutes for them to reach the village of Hogsmeade. They climbed down from the carriage, and Harry gave the Thestrals a farewell pat on the shoulder.

“So, where do you want to go first?” Hermione asked.

“We’re not meeting my parents at the Three Broomsticks until lunch,” Dora said. “Why don’t you just show us around until then?”

“Alright,” Hermione said, looking around briefly before picking a direction. “Over here is Zonko’s...”

Hogsmeade was tiny compared to Salem, and fairly boring in Harry’s opinion, but it was quaint, and the people were nice. He was also surprised to learn that parents didn’t visit on the weekends. There were always a few visiting Salem to see their kids. It seemed like parents just sent their kids off to Hogwarts and forgot about them until the holidays.

As the village clock chimed noon, they made their way back to the Three Broomsticks. Sirius, Marlene, Andy, and Ted were already there, chatting with the busty barmaid. On the table sat a small pile of presents and a large, white cake.

“There they are!” Sirius said loudly, drawing the attention of everyone in the pub. “Happy Birthday!”

Hermione looked torn on whether she should stay or not, so Harry grabbed her by the arm and dragged her over to the table. Several of their Ilvermorny friends stopped by to offer their congratulations and brought with them some of the friends they’d made at Hogwarts. Some

professors, like Flitwick and Hagrid, stopped by briefly, though they spent most of their time talking to Sirius, Andy, Ted, and Marlene.

While Dora was busy opening her presents, Harry sidled up to Sirius.

“Did you get them?” he whispered.

Sirius grinned crookedly, reached into his pocket, and pulled up a pair of plastic cards. Harry glanced at them quickly. They were a pair of Muggle IDs. Then he took a closer look at the names and scowled.

“Harold Potter the third?” he hissed.

“I thought it would make you sound older,” Sirius smirked, “you know, and a bit more posh.”

“Older? It makes me sound like I’m sixty with a combover.”

“Exactly!” Sirius grinned.

“Dick,” Harry muttered, stuffing the IDs in his pocket.

“You’re welcome,” he said cheerfully.

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A few hours later, Harry and Dora left the Three Broomsticks and made their way to the edge of the village. Arm in arm, they turned on the spot and Disapparated with a *crack*!

A moment later, they reappeared in an empty alley in the middle of London. Carefully, they stepped over a couple of trash bags, wound their way between some bins, and stepped out onto the sidewalk. Harry led Dora to a restaurant Ted had recommended, where they shared a light dinner before making their way back out onto the streets of London.

For two hours, they explored the city and did some shopping. Dora stared longingly at a tattoo parlor, but ultimately walked away. Permanent ink didn't work well with a constantly shifting body. As they wandered down the street, they came across a nightclub with glowing neon lights and thumping bass. Grinning, she pulled him over to the front door, which was guarded by a very large man with a bald head wearing a black t-shirt and carrying a clipboard.

"IDs," he said boredly.

Harry handed them over, and the man looked them over. Then he looked at Harry, looked back at the ID, and looked back at Harry before handing them back.

"You," he said, pointing to Dora, "can go in." Then he pointed to Harry, "You'll have to wait in line."

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, gesturing to a long line of people that ran down the sidewalk and around the corner. Irritatedly, Harry pulled a small wad of twenty-pound notes out of his pocket and slapped them on the clipboard. The bouncer looked at the money, glanced back at Harry, and raised an eyebrow.

"I'm going to kill Sirius," he muttered.

He slapped a hundred-pound note on the clipboard. The bouncer smiled, pocketed the money, and unclipped the velvet rope blocking the entrance.

"In you go," he said.

Harry took Dora's hand and pulled her into the club. The bass was so loud inside that it thumped through his whole body. Purple lights light up the large main room they stepped into. On the left sat a long glass bar worked by three very pretty bartenders with low-cut tops. The center of the room was a wide open dance floor filled with people. On the right, on a raised platform, a DJ stood over his equipment, bobbing his head to the music.

Grinning, Dora pulled him out onto the dance floor. Over the next few hours, they downed a dozen drinks and danced until their feet hurt. Eventually, they stumbled back out onto the street and drunkenly ambled down the sidewalk.

"This has been the best birthday ever!" Dora declared, kissing him on the cheek.

Harry smiled, wrapped an arm around her waist, and kissed the top of her head. Coming to a crossroads, he paused, looked both ways, and furrowed his brow.

"Er, which way do we go?" he asked.

"I don't know," Dora shrugged.

Harry sighed.

"Alright, let's find an alley and we'll just Apparate back to Hogsmeade," he said.

Dora frowned and jabbed him in the side with her finger.

"We're not Apparating drunk," she told him firmly.

"We 'll be fine," he said, drawing out the word 'fine.'

"I'm not getting Splinched on my birthday," Dora said.

"Fine," Harry said.

Looking closer at the signs, hoping to see something he missed, he spotted a blue and white sign with a familiar name on it.

"I know how to get us back," he declared confidently.

They walked down the street for several more minutes before they reached a large stone building with two massive, half-circle windows. Dora squinted at the sign that read 'King's Cross Station' and frowned.

"This isn't the Leaky Cauldron," she said tiredly.

"I couldn't find it," Harry smiled. "But I have another idea."

Pulling her into the station, he led her over to the pillar between platforms nine and ten and leaned against it casually. Together, they disappeared into the wall and stepped onto platform nine and three-quarters. The gleaming red Hogwarts Express sat on the tracks amongst the empty platform.

"There's no one here," Dora muttered.

"Not a problem," Harry grinned.

Letting go of a confused Dora, he climbed onto the engine car and opened the unlocked door.

"Harry!" she yelled, climbing on after him.

It took her a little longer to get to the top than it did Harry, and by the time she was inside, he was already twisting valves and pulling levers.

“You don’t know how to drive a train,” Dora said, crossing her arms over her chest.

“How hard can it be?”

Harry pulled his wand out of his pocket and focused on a single thought as he gave it a flick.

Drive.

A lever shot forward, the brakes hissed, and then the train chugged into motion. Harry turned and grinned at Dora as the train slowly left the station.

“See,” he said.

“Harry, we can’t just steal a train,” she said.

“It’s not stealing, it’s using,” Harry argued. “It’s meant to take students to Hogwarts. We’re students, and we’re going to Hogwarts.”

Dora shook her head and stumbled as the train took a turn. Rushing over, Harry caught her before she could fall over.

“Come on, let’s find you a seat,” he said.

Leading her carefully back through the train, he led her over to a couch in the first car and took a seat next to her. Dora crawled into his lap and kissed up the side of his neck. She paused briefly to nibble playfully on his earlobe.

"You're lucky I'm too horny to be mad at you," she murmured.

Harry smiled as she slipped her hands under his shirt and pushed it over his head. They kissed as they slowly stripped each other, taking long breaks to kiss and suck at the newly exposed skin. The last article of clothing to be removed was Harry's pants. Dora fell on her ass as she pulled them free with a tug. Crawling back up to her knees, she wrapped her hand around his erection.

"I love your cock," she murmured drunkenly.

She shot forward and wrapped her lips around him. Harry groaned as she quickly bobbed her head up and down. His hand landed gently on her head, and his fingers curled in her bright pink hair. With a gentle push, he sent her lips lower until she'd swallowed his entire length.

"Fuck," he grunted.

Looking up at him with violet eyes, she hollowed her cheeks. Harry groaned, grabbed a handful of her hair, and dragged her roughly back up until her lips came free with a *pop*. Tilting her head back, he kissed her passionately before pulling her to her feet. They stumbled as he backed her up to the large window.

He spun her around. Dora gasped as her chest pressed up against the cold glass, and then groaned when Harry slipped into her depths. The dark countryside rushed by as he began to thrust harshly. Dora's sweaty hands squealed against the glass, scrabbling for something to hold onto.

Harry yanked her head back roughly and swallowed her moan with a demanding kiss. His hips hammered forward steadily but roughly, his thighs crashing against her ass with a loud slap.

With a trembling, warbling moan, Dora came undone around him. Her body went taut, muscles vibrating like a bow string, before she sagged and nearly collapsed. Reaching back, she pressed a hand against his stomach.

“Wait,” she said.

Harry paused, and she stepped forward so that he slipped out of her. Spinning around, she leaned back against the window breathlessly and crooked a finger with a sultry smirk on her lips. He surged forward, lifted her up, and speared back into her welcoming depths.

They went at it for over an hour, all over the train car, until they were finally spent and passed out, Dora stacked on top of Harry, on one of the sofas.

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In the early hours of the morning, Madam Rosmerta woke to the sound of squealing brakes and the hiss of steam. She rolled over to go back to sleep before she registered what she'd heard and sat up abruptly. Throwing off her blankets, she quickly climbed out of bed and walked over to the window.

The sun was just starting to peak over the horizon, so it was still too dark to see much, but she could make out the hulking silhouette of the Hogwarts Express. She blinked curiously at the sight, unheard of for this time of year, when she spotted movement along the platform. There was just enough light to make out a man and a woman stepping off the platform and running, hand in hand, toward the road to Hogwarts.

“Sirius wasn’t kidding,” she muttered tiredly.

Shaking her head, she walked back to her bed and climbed under the covers, grateful that when the Aurors investigated, she could honestly say she hadn’t seen who got off the train.